

***The Queen v Cook* [2015] VSC 406 (19 August 2015) – Supreme Court of Victoria**

‘Denunciation’ – ‘Deterrence’ – ‘Murder’ – ‘Physical violence and harm’ – ‘Sentencing’

Charges: Murder.

Hearing: Sentence.

Facts: The victim was the male offender’s de facto wife. After drinking 15 beers at their house party, the offender started punching and pushing the victim. A friend tried to intervene but was pushed away. He then picked up a steel-framed chair and hit the victim with such force that that one of the legs went through her skin and bone and penetrated her brain.

Decision and Reasoning: Elliot J sentenced the offender to 21 years and six months imprisonment with a non-parole period of 17 years and six months. In passing this sentence, His Honour made some general observations on domestic violence at [28]-[30]:

‘The courts clearly recognise that they must forcefully condemn domestic violence (See, e.g., R v Earl [2008] VSCA 162, [23]). When domestic violence manifests in murderous conduct, that conduct must be denounced in the strongest terms (Felicite v The Queen (2011) 37 VR 329, [20]; Portelli v The Queen [2015] VSCA 159, [30]).

Moreover, general and specific deterrence have special significance in cases involving domestic violence. In such circumstances, general deterrence is more important as “[t]he victims of such violence are often so enveloped by fear that they are incapable of either escaping the violence or reporting it to the authorities” (Pasinis v The Queen [2014] VSCA 97, [57]).

Also, specific deterrence is often more important, as it is in this case, because “women who are killed by their husband, boyfriend or de facto partner have frequently been assaulted by them many times previously” (Pasinis v The Queen [2014] VSCA 97, [53]).