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Teenager walks free after involvement in Queensland home invasion that led to Emma Lovell's murder

19-year-old sentenced to 18 months in prison but released with time served for role in deadly North Lakes burglary

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Emma Lovell and husband Lee Lovell were attacked by two youths at their North Lakes home in December 2022. One of the teens involved has now been released. Photograph: Facebook: Lee Lovell

Joe Hinchliffe

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A teenager who broke into the home of Emma Lovell, alongside [another teen who stabbed her to death](#) on Boxing Day 2022, has been released upon sentencing for his role in the home invasion after being detained for almost two years awaiting the verdict.

The now 19-year-old - who cannot be named for legal reasons as he was 17 on the night Lovell was murdered by his companion - was also charged with a string of other offences committed in months prior to that fatal home

invasion, including breaking into another home while its occupant was home and stealing her car.

Lovell was murdered by the teenager's companion on the lawn outside her North Lakes home, north of Brisbane's CBD, on the night of 26 December 2022.

On Wednesday, Justice Michael Copley sentenced the 19-year-old to 18 months' detention and ordered some, but not all, his convictions be recorded in a Brisbane court.

In late October, he was found not guilty of murder, manslaughter and malicious act with intent.

He was found guilty of one count of burglary by break in the night in company, and one count of assault occasioning bodily harm in company.

He has been in detention for 710 days.

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Queensland's attorney general, Deb Frecklington, condemned the sentence.

"I know this sentence will not meet community expectations; it does not meet mine," Frecklington said in a statement on Wednesday evening.

She said she would be considering "all aspects" of the sentencing and "obtaining further advice about the legal options available to me".

"My thoughts are with the Lovell family," Frecklington said.

Crown prosecutor David Nardone had sought up to 12 months' probation upon the release of the young offender for his own good and the community's safety.

Nardone cited the youth's "fairly lengthy criminal history" of more than 100 offences, ranging from not paying for fuel in a stolen car to other instances of breaking into homes at night, while residents were home.

Nardone said the majority of offences were dominated by property and dishonesty related offences, but also included the offences of violence and robbery.

But his defence barrister, Laura Reece, argued the young man had expressed "remorse and concern about the consequences of the break and enter at the Lovell residence" and had been working towards turning his life around and seeking employment in the construction industry or defence service.

She also noted he had spent 110 days alone in his cell for more than 22 hours because of staffing shortages in youth detention.

The court heard that he had been exposed to intergenerational trauma, raised in a house rife with drug use and domestic violence, had a father who

was frequently incarcerated and had been taken into custody by child protection services.

Justice Copley noted the disadvantage which the young man had faced.

“None of this excuses your offending, but it puts it into a broader context,” he said.

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Emma Lovell’s **husband, Lee**, who was also stabbed twice in the back and kicked in the head in the attempted robbery, addressed the young man who broke into his home almost two years ago in the moments prior to his sentencing.

“I like to think our family was like any other family out there trying our best to make it in life,” Lovell said.

“We had our ups and downs but, as a family, we were rock solid, enjoying each other’s company and making our family and home a place of love and affection.

“I feel like Boxing Day 2022 was like a sliding door moment for us. Our life should have been going in one direction and yet, here I am, because of the actions of you and your co-offender taking away my family’s right to expect peace, security and safety within our family home.

“Now I am forced to play a role: the role of a grieving husband, a victim of assault and father, trying to make his family feel safe in our home again.”

Lovell said he was considering moving his family back to the UK, had trouble sleeping and knew his daughters’ lives would never be the same again.

“Australia was supposed to be our dream come to life, but I can’t help feeling completely let down and broken,” he said.

“I don’t believe I will ever recover from this. I still feel like I am holding breath all week, only to be able to have a brief exhale of relief when Friday night comes around and I can be with Scarlett and Cassie.

“However, this moment of relief is short-lived.”

Outside court, Lee Lovell expressed his frustration at what he perceived to be a lenient sentence, arguing the teenager should have faced the same sentence as his co-offender, who was sentenced to 14 years’ jail.

With the second Boxing Day since his wife's murder fast approaching, the Lovell family is now faced with deciding what to do on a day that was once a "joyful and happy time" now for ever marked by "the worst tragedy imaginable".

"I might just go and sit on a beach somewhere and try and reflect a bit," Lee said.

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