



# Forensicare

## Neurodivergence and the Verdins Principles: A clinical perspective on the impact of a diagnosis of autism and sentencing outcomes

Dr Joseph Sakdalan

Principal Psychologist

Vivien Leung

Senior Psychologist

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## "A Spectrum of Colours"

Painted by : **Maria Watson-Trudgett**  
Language Group: Wiradjuri

My vision for this artwork was to highlight the diversity of autism by using many colours and movement in my painting.

- All colours, dots and wavy lines represent the diverse spectrum of autism.
- Black band represents Aboriginal communities.
- Coloured circles represents Aboriginal family units and their individual family journeys with a child on the spectrum.

# Introduction

- Autistic individuals are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system despite the lack of evidence of increased offending compared to their neurotypical counterparts (Collins et al., 2023; Railey et al., 2021).
- Emerging evidence suggests that autism-related characteristics and traits such as social naivety, emotion regulation issues, difficulties interpreting social cues, 'empathy' problems, special interests, can contribute to problematic or criminal behaviour (Allely & Cooper, 2017).
- Since **Autism** is recognised as a mental disorder in the DSM-5-TR and ICD 11, it **can be treated as a mental impairment for the purposes of sentencing in Victoria**. Courts therefore consider whether autism affects an offender's mental functioning, vulnerability, insight or capacity to respond to punishment.
- This creates the legal foundation for applying the Verdins principles in autism related sentencing cases.



# Verdins Principles (Verbatim)

*R v Verdins & Ors [2007] VSCA 102, at [32]:*

The Court of Appeal held that impaired mental functioning may be relevant to sentencing in at least six ways:

1. “It may reduce the offender’s **moral culpability** for the offending conduct.”
2. “It may affect the **type of sentence** that is imposed and the conditions in which the sentence is to be served.”
3. “It may reduce the weight given to **general deterrence**.”
4. “It may reduce the weight given to **specific deterrence**.”
5. “It may render the offender an inappropriate vehicle for imprisonment because a given sentence will **weigh more heavily** on the offender than it would on a person in normal health.”
6. “It may mean that imprisonment will have a **more severe impact** on the offender than it would on a person in normal health.”

# Verdins Principles

The Verdins principles are as follows:

**1. Moral culpability**

Mental impairment may reduce the level of responsibility that can fairly be attributed to the offender for their conduct. Impaired cognitive, emotional or social functioning can shape the way the offending occurred or the way choices were made.

**2. Choice of sanction**

The impairment may affect what type of sentence is appropriate, or the conditions under which it should be served. Courts may consider whether alternative dispositions or modified conditions better account for the offender's mental functioning.

**3. General deterrence**

Less weight may be given to general deterrence where the offender's impairment reduces moral culpability, or where applying general deterrence in the usual way would be unfair or ineffective. Courts recognise that impairment may limit the relevance of "sending a message" to others.

# Verdins Principles

## 4. **Specific deterrence**

Specific deterrence may be moderated where the impairment reduces the offender's capacity to learn from punishment or adjust behaviour in response to consequences. The court may conclude that increasing punitive severity would not meaningfully reduce re offending.

## 5. **Disproportionate Burden**

*A custodial sentence may weigh more heavily on an offender with mental impairment than it would on an offender of ordinary mental functioning. This includes greater difficulty coping, increased distress, reduced access to supports, or heightened vulnerability.*

## 6. **Custodial Hardship**

*Imprisonment may have a more severe psychological impact on an impaired offender, including risk of deterioration, heightened vulnerability, or reduced capacity to navigate custodial environments. Courts may mitigate a sentence to avoid undue exacerbation or deterioration of their mental condition.*

# Verdins Principles and Neurodivergence

- The cases in this study involve individuals whose sentencing materials included autism diagnoses or descriptions of autistic traits. In this context, neurodivergence refers specifically to how autism was discussed within the court record.
- We use the term “autism” throughout the presentation in recognition of community preference, and reserve “ASD” only when referring to diagnostic criteria. Formal diagnoses in the sample were based on DSM-5-TR or ICD-11 criteria, or earlier editions where relevant.
- Autism is classified within these diagnostic systems as a mental disorder, which brings it within the scope of “mental impairment” for the purposes of applying the Verdins principles.
- Previous work by Gabrielle Wolf (2021) examined eight sentencing decisions involving autistic defendants across Australian jurisdictions between 2014 and 2020.

# Verdins Principles and Neurodivergence (Wolf, 2021)

- The relevance of the Verdins principles to autism in 8 representative cases (Wolf, 2021) included : -
  - ***Verdins Limb 1 – Moral Culpability***
    - Four of the cases did not appear to have taken into account how certain Autism traits might have contributed to the offending and therefore reduce moral culpability.
  - ***Verdins Limb 2 – Choice of Sanction***
    - The courts contemplated imposing and/or did impose alternative sanctions to lengthy incarceration due to the need for treatment for mental impairment in four of the offenders in the examined cases
  - ***Verdins Limb 3 – General deterrence***
    - There were discussions whether this principle was applicable and whether the sentences could be taken account the offenders' impairments without moderating the objective of general deterrence (R v Durovka [2015]).

# Verdins Principles and Neurodivergence (Wolf, 2021)

- The relevance of the Verdins principles to autism include:
  - ***Verdins Limb 4 – Specific Deterrence***
    - Courts in all the examined cases considered the objective of specific deterrence but none moderated it owing to these observations.
  - ***Verdins Limb 5 – Disproportionate Burden***
    - The courts mitigated the sentence for all offenders except R v Gray [2018] because it was recognised that prison would be more difficult for them due to their Autism.
  - ***Verdins Limb 6 – Custodial Hardship***
    - This principle was not applied in any of the examined cases even though courts acknowledged expert evidence that the offender's mental health could deteriorate in prison (Davis v the Queen [2020], R v Durovka [2015]).

# Aims and Objectives

- This presentation can be considered an extension and expansion of Wolf's (2021) study which aims to explore the impact of the Verdins principles on sentencing decisions involving autistic offenders from a clinical perspective.
- Drawing on recent Victorian cases (2021-2025), we aim to develop a better understanding of how psychological evidence can assist the court in recognising the potential relevance of autism to sentencing considerations.
- This study aims to develop a better understanding of the implications of Verdins principles when sentencing autistic offenders who have committed serious offences within the Victorian Courts.



# Research Questions

Our study explores four broad domains (within the data set):

## 1. Who are the offenders?

- Demographic and offence profiles
- Offence categories involving autistic defendants
- Co-occurring mental health and neurodevelopmental conditions
- Timing of Autism diagnosis
- Use of diagnostic instruments

## 2. How are the Verdins principles being applied?

- Verdins limbs raised and associated offence types
- Impact of Verdins on sentence severity
- Diagnosis basis for Verdins considerations



# Research Questions

## 3. What autism-related functional factors were discussed in relation to offending and sentencing?

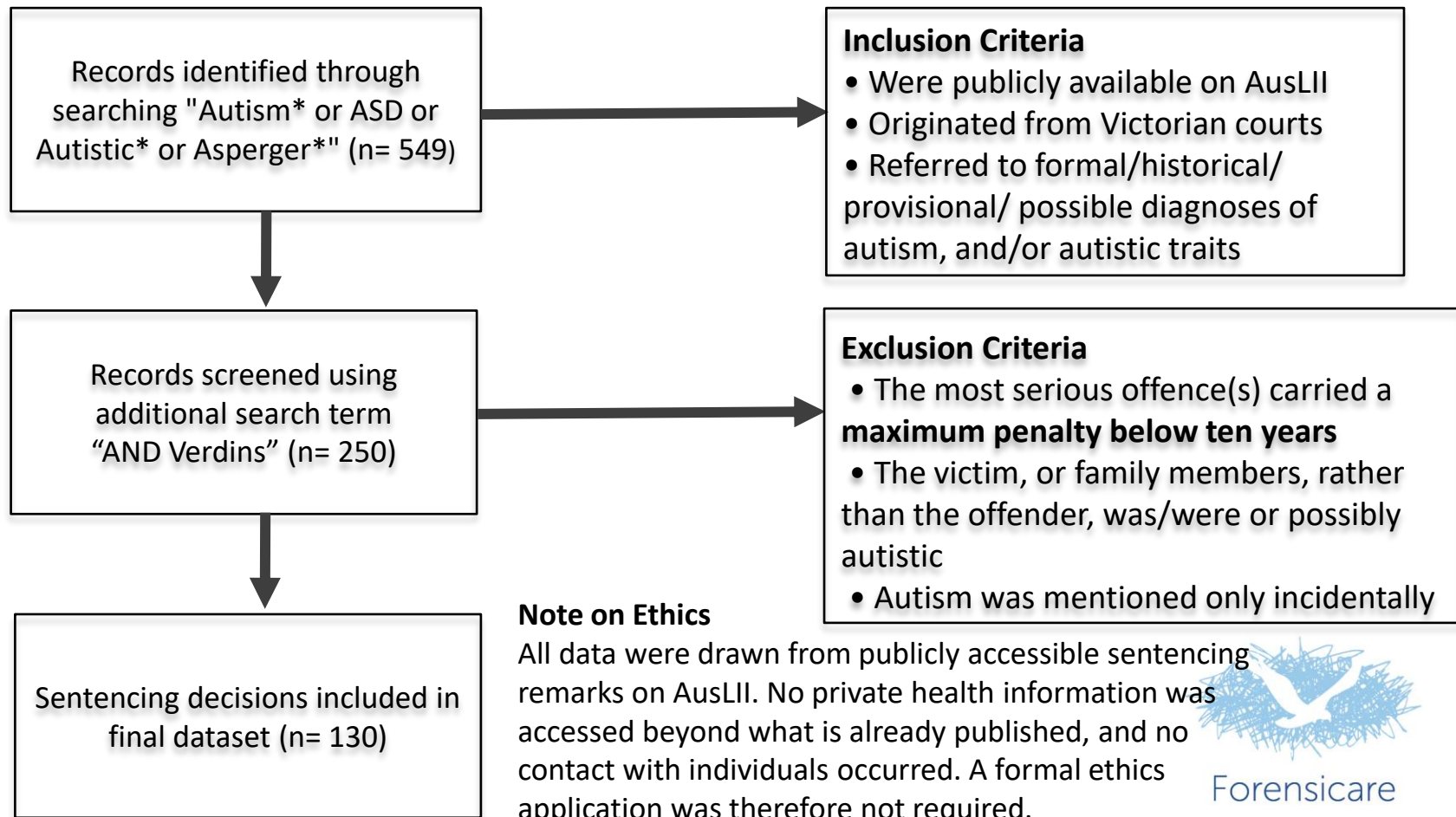
- Autism related characteristics referenced in relation to specific Verdins principles
- Functional explanations used in judicial and assessors' reasoning
- Judicial recognition (or non-recognition) of autistic cognitive features

## 4. How are the courts using expert evidence?

- Psychological and psychiatric reports
- Weight placed on expert opinions
- Information perceived as most useful or influential



# Search Strategy



# Study Variables

- **Study variables include:**

1. Age at the time of the offending
2. Sex assigned at birth
3. Type of offence (e.g. sexual, violent, drug-related, etc.)
4. Number of charges
5. Co-occurring conditions (e.g., intellectual disability, ADHD, PD)
6. Verdins principle/s considered
7. Diagnosis of Autism (e.g., prior to the charges, at the time of the charges)
8. Autistic characteristics/relevant
9. Assessor/s involved (psychologist, psychiatrist)
10. Maximum penalty
11. Sentence imposed



**Research Domain 1:  
Who are the offenders?**

# Study Results

## Characteristics of the Study Sample

	Category	N	%	Notes
Age at Offence	10 – 19	27	20.8	M = 28.2 (SD = 9.6), range = 14 – 67
	20 – 29	59	45.4	
	30 – 39	25	19.2	
	40 and over	14	10.8	
No. of Charges	1	30	23.1	M = 4.5 (SD = 6.6), range = 1 – 56
	2-5	74	36.9	
	6+	26	20	
Sex assigned at birth	Male	123	94.6	1 reporting trans experience
	Female	7	5.3	
Courts	Magistrates	1	0.7	
	County	113	86.9	
	Supreme	5	3.8	
	Supreme Court of Appeals	11	8.5	
Guilty Plea	Entered	116	89.2	
	Found by jury	13	10	
	Found by judge	1	0.7	

# Offence Types

- How are cases involving autistic defendants distributed across offence categories in this dataset?

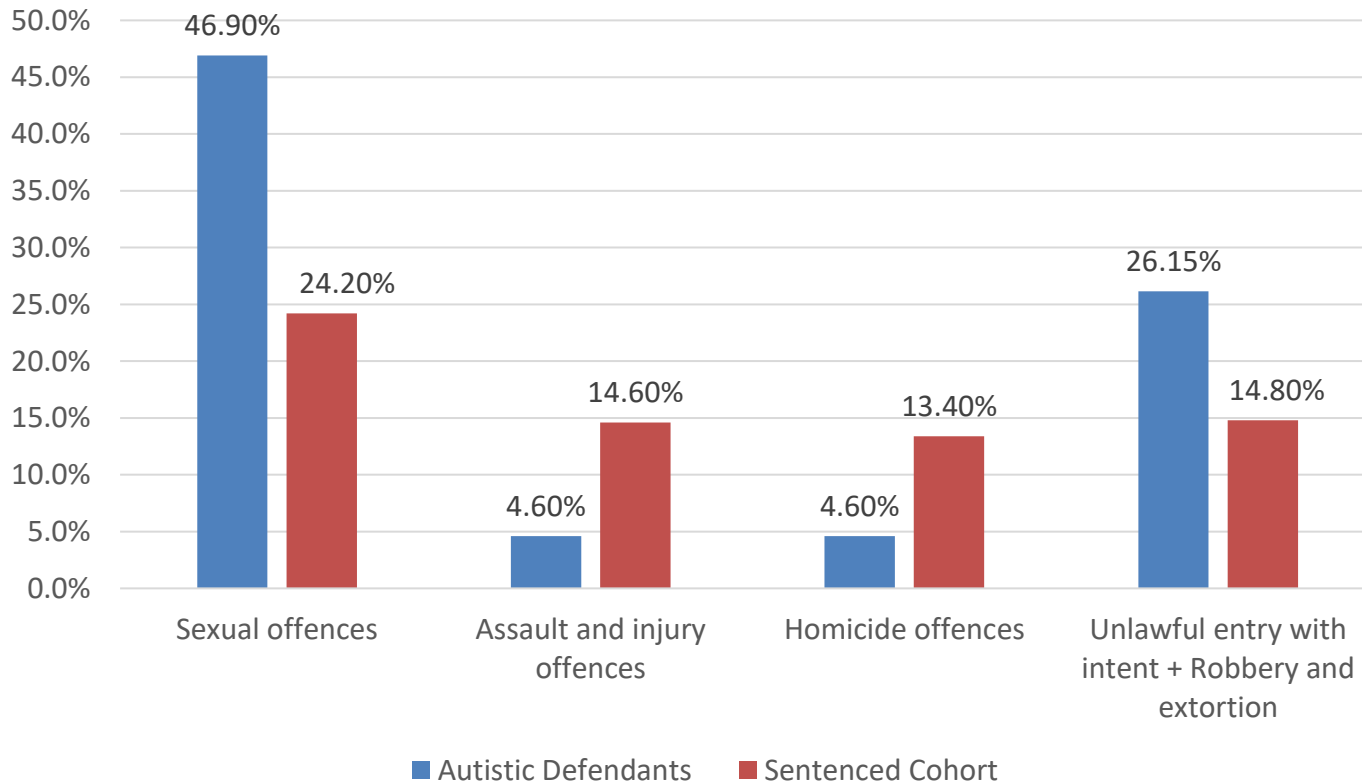
Offence Types	N	%
Violent Offences	46	35.4%
Sexual Offences	61	46.9%
General Offences	23	17.7%

# Offence Types

Offence Types	N = 130	%
<b>Violent offences</b>	N = 46 (35.3%)	
Murder/ Manslaughter	6	13.0
Aggravated Burglary/ Carjacking/ Robbery	34	73.9
Assault	6	13.0
<b>Sexual Offences</b>	N = 61 (46.9%)	
Rape/ Sexual Assault	17	27.9
Child Sexual Offences	22	36.0
Incest	7	11.5
Child Abuse Material	15	24.6
<b>General Offences</b>	N= 23 (17.7%)	
Stalking	2	8.7
Arson	3	13.0
Driving-related offences	6	26.1
Drug-related offences	3	13.0
Other (e.g. property, perjury, blackmail, slavery)	9	39.1

# Offence Types

## Offence Profile Comparison: Autistic Defendants vs Sentenced Cohort



# Co-occurring Conditions

- What is the prevalence of co-occurring mental health and neurodevelopmental conditions in these autism-related sentencing cases?

Co-occurring Conditions	N	%
ADHD	53	40.8
ID	22	16.9
Psychotic D/O	21	16.2
SUD/ Substance-related	29	22.3
Personality D/O	35	26.9

# Timing of Autism Diagnosis

- At what point was autism identified in relation to the court proceedings?

Instrument	N	%
Pre-existing diagnosis or traits	41	31.5
Diagnosis or traits first identified during court assessments	66	50.8
Both pre-existing and re-assessed during proceedings	18	13.9
Timing unclear	5	3.8

# Autism Diagnostic Instruments Used

- To what extent are formal diagnostic instruments used in establishing autism in sentencing contexts?

Instrument	N	%
No autism-specific tests mentioned	110	84.6%
ADOS	2	1.5%
AQ	3	2.3%
RAADS-R	1	0.7
Unclear or unspecified psychometric testing	14	10.8



**Research Domain 2:  
How are the Verdins principles being applied?**

# Verdins Principles Enlivened

- Does Verdins enlivenment correspond to reduced sentence severity?

Verdins Status	N (custodial)	Mean sentence months (custodial)
Verdins Enlivened	116	46.55
Verdins Not Enlivened	14	59.30

# Sentencing Outcomes

- Does Verdins enlivenment correspond to reduced sentence severity?

Sentencing Outcome Type	Verdins Enlivened			Verdins Not Enlivened				
	N	%	Mean Sentence (months)	N	%	Mean Sentence (months)		
Imprisonment only	88	67.7	<b>57.8</b>	9	6.9	<b>82.8</b>		
Imprisonment + CCO	9	6.9	<b>11.8</b>	24	2	1.5	<b>13</b>	21
Imprisonment + RRO	2	1.5	10.5	16.5	0	0	N/A	
CCO only	13	10	31.4		3	2.3	23	
RRO (Good behaviour)	4	3.1	30		0	0	N/A	

All values represent the mean number of months for that specific sentencing outcome. e.g. For custodial outcomes (imprisonment + CCO/RRO), the figure refers to the mandatory prison term in months

# Verdins Limbs Enlivened and Sentence Length

- Which Verdins principles were most frequently enlivened in sentencing cases involving autism?

Verdins Limb	N	%	Mean Sentence (custodial only)
1. Moral Culpability	72	<b>55.4</b>	42.3
2. Choice of Sanction	17	13.1	<b>17.9</b>
3. General Deterrence	51	39.2	46.1
4. Specific Deterrence	41	31.5	50.2
5. Disproportionate Burden	87	<b>66.9</b>	47.1
6. Custodial Hardship	51	39.2	42.0

\*Mean months = mean custodial sentence length **for all cases where that limb was enlivened**, regardless of other limbs also being enlivened.

# Diagnostic Basis for Verdins

- When Verdins is enlivened in sentencing cases involving autism, is the diagnostic basis typically autism alone or autism with co-occurring conditions?

Diagnosis Basis for Verdins	N	%
Autism only	23	17.7
Combination	<b>85</b>	65.4
Autism traits mentioned but Verdins primarily based on other diagnosis	6	4.6
Unclear basis	2	1.5
Verdins not enlivened	14	10.8

# Verdins Principles and Offence Types

- Are there certain offence types more likely to invoke Verdins considerations in autism-related cases?

Offence Types	Verdins Enlivened (%)	Verdins Limbs Enlivened (% of cases)					
		1	2	3	4	5	6
Violent Offences	89.1	<b>63.0</b>	19.6	<b>50</b>	<b>43.5</b>	63.0	36.9
Sexual Offences	90.2	<b>47.5</b>	8.2	24.4	26.2	<b>72.1</b>	40.9
General Offences	86.9	60.8	13.0	30.4	21.7	60.9	39.1



## **Research Domain 3:**

What autism-related functional factors were discussed in relation to offending and sentencing?

# Verdins Principles and Autistic traits

- Which autism-related characteristics are most often linked to specific Verdins principles?

Autistic Characteristics	N	%
1. Executive dysfunction (e.g. impulsivity, decision-making, consequential thinking)	49	<b>37.7</b>
2. Poor coping	28	21.5
3. Social naivete/social misunderstanding/ connection issues	56	<b>43.1</b>
4. Emotion dysregulation and threat reactivity	39	<b>30</b>
5. Cognitive rigidity and perseveration	13	10
6. Special interest-driven or obsessional behaviour	9	6.9
7. Empathy issues	23	17.7
8. Reduced legal or situational comprehension	12	9.2

# Court Views of Autism

- "Although I accept and concur with the argument that this condition is not causative in the Verdins sense - that is, not causally linked to the offending - nevertheless, I conclude that it is inherently linked in considering what your true moral culpability is in relation to this conduct and in this sense, *I am persuaded that your moral culpability is reduced by a disorder which renders you less able to understand and appreciate fully the nature of the crime committed and its impact.* It acts as a **blind spot in your understanding and appreciation.** People on the **autism spectrum need education as to sexual rules which are often unspoken and riddled with nuance** and to some extent, your moral culpability, even over this long period of offending, is in my view, conditioned and qualified by your disorder. It is not to be either ignored or relegated to a quirk of character. Your mental capacity has contributed to the commission of these offences, without assigning to it an exaggerated role but acknowledging its presence in shaping your behaviour. **People on the autism spectrum are notoriously law-abiding rule followers and if they do not know a rule, they do not follow it.** *In my view, you knew of the illicit nature of your communications, but you had a limited understanding of the fullness of its inappropriateness.* This matter also goes to the type and length of sentence to be imposed because incarceration, indeed, registration, which flow from it may have a long-term impact beyond the aim of proportionate punishment and response to your criminality, as it may tend to further stigmatise and isolate you, further limiting your future access to rehabilitative efforts and hopes. I am very conscious of this aspect in imposing a sentence upon you. "



## **Research Domain 4:**

How are the courts using expert evidence?

# Professional Disciplines

- Which cases involved an expert report (psychologist and/or psychiatrist) and whether the courts consider these reports in their sentencing decisions?

Professions	Reports Available	Preferred/Cited by Court
Psychiatrist(s)	36 (27.7%)	25 (19.2%)
Psychologist(s)	<b>92</b> (86.9%)	<b>97</b> (74.6%)
Both types of assessors	21 (16.2%)	7 (5.4%)
No expert reports available	1 (0.8%)	N/A

# What Courts Find Helpful

- "X noted you have already experienced conflict in the prison, being targeted by other prisoners and engaging in fights. This has resulted in moving you to a more restrictive setting in the prison... ***Whether the provisional diagnosis is correct or not, X believes your difficulties in social communication contributed to you incorrectly perceiving hostile intent in the victim and to you being excessively focussed and preoccupied with this detail. Moreover, your difficulties appreciating context and regulating your impulses affected your ability to evaluate the consequences of your actions in your state of emotional arousal or anger.....Whether you suffer from autism spectrum disorder or not, X describes symptoms of your impaired mental functioning such that those principles are raised.*** Principle one deals with moral culpability, while principle five with your experience of imprisonment.... On the basis of X's opinion, I am satisfied both principles apply to you. *Your moral culpability is reduced to a degree. Imprisonment will weigh more heavily on you than on someone in normal health. Both factors mitigate the sentence I would otherwise have imposed.*"

# What Courts Find Helpful

- "My analysis... was informed by the rigorously compiled psychological reports... All experts concluded you are neurodiverse, on the autism spectrum... Most importantly... it is a factor directly relevant, indeed *causative*, of you committing these crimes. A brief quote from X's report... ***gives insight into how you think and how this led to the offending... your responses revealed great difficulty in every social domain... taking things too literally, misunderstanding meaning, trouble understanding chains of causation, inflexible behaviours, getting 'stuck', obsessive interests, and difficulties with social awareness, motivation and anxiety.*** What is clear... is your motivation for engaging in child abuse material is very different to the usual case. *Your autism... and your anxiety combined so that you acted in a way completely out of character... you did not appreciate, as others do, the wrongfulness of your actions, by reason of your impairment to consequential reasoning.* The very nature of this... plainly establishes that your impaired mental functioning or your autism was the *driving causative feature* of your offending... a rare case justifying a *reduction in moral culpability*... general deterrence should be *moderated*, especially because your differences were causative of the offending behaviour."

# What Courts Find Unhelpful

- "I have read through the voluminous material of some 20 exhibits tendered on your behalf, including many pages of psychological and psychiatric reports. In my view, **none of the psychological or psychiatric reports are of great assistance** to the court in determining this question of causation. Apart from anything else, **none of the authors have taken from you any history as to how you were feeling and functioning** on DDMMYYYY, either in the immediate lead up to the X or earlier in the day. ...In my view, ***Mx X has stepped out of his area of expertise and into the Court's role by expressing his view that your culpability is substantially reduced, particularly in circumstances where he has absolutely no history from you about what you were experiencing on the day of and at the time of X.***"
- "I have no reason to doubt any of the diagnoses, but, as I have said previously, I am not satisfied on the balance of probabilities that there is any causative link to the offending, **not that a causative link is required to enliven Verdins. I am, however, not even satisfied of there being any realistic connection or contribution between any of the conditions and the offending...** that the report was problematic in terms of the impact of disinhibition brought about by alcohol and drug use....As I have said, I do not doubt that you have the conditions spoken of. There must be an evidentiary basis to moderate general deterrence. **It is not sufficient to do so just because the court finds that an offender happens to suffer from a mental impairment or a relevant condition. "**

# What Courts Find Unhelpful

- X considers that your Autism Spectrum Disorder contributed to your high alcohol use, but then considers it would be difficult to say if you misread social cues, failed to heed social cues or mistook the complainant for your partner. Ultimately, I conclude that X considers your offending took place in circumstances of high alcohol intoxication, which was exacerbated by your drug use. It seems your **Autism Spectrum Disorder may vaguely have provoked your drug and alcohol use, but it cannot be definitively and directly linked to causing your offending behaviour.** I can only conclude that your moral culpability for your offending is high.
- X found that “In my opinion there was most probably a realistic nexus between [you] suffering from an Autism Spectrum Disorder and [your] addiction to CAM, as a very common symptom of an Autism Spectrum Disorder and a symptom reported by [you] was that of becoming focused and stuck on particular activities.” ***I find this troubling. Autism Spectrum Disorder may explain your fixation on a single topic, being the child pornography, but it in no way explains your initial attraction to it or your ongoing sexual arousal from looking at it. ’***

# Clinical Implications

**We recommend that assessors screen for autism. Don't rely on a "look" or assume someone else has done it.**

- Many justice-involved autistic individuals are **late-identified** or diagnosed at the time of their pre-sentence assessment.
- Autism does not have a “look” — don't rely on stereotypical presentation as a significant number of them may be engaging in masking or social camouflaging or their autistic features obscured by other co-occurring mental health conditions (diagnostic overshadowing).
- Use screening tools and developmental probes if neurodivergence is suspected.
- Consider a provisional diagnosis or the consideration of autistic traits if the assessor strongly suspect or consider autism even if it requires further testing as this would still be considered by the judge for sentencing.
- Basic screening (psychometrics, developmental questions) should be routine.
- Courts can only consider factors that are **identified and articulated**.

# Clinical Implications

## Consider the link of autism traits functionally to the offence and to Verdins.

- This is the most common gap in expert reports.
- Go beyond diagnosis or "mental impairment" to explain *how* autism shaped the offence pathway and sentencing considerations.
- Consider autism-specific functional explanations:
  - monotropism/ tunnel focus / perseveration/ cognitive rigidity
  - patterns of meltdowns and shutdowns (sometimes linked to sensory or cognitive overload)
  - executive dysfunction (planning, consequences, shift of attention)
  - communication differences (literal interpretation, reduced prediction of non-explicit harm)
  - social cognition differences (misreading intentions, difficulty with implicit social rules/ consent)
  - social vulnerability and naivety (impressionable, gullible)
  - atypical differences and difficulties with remorse expression (appearing disengaged or stoic)
  - special interest / intense preoccupations
- Enlivening some Verdins limbs, particularly Moral Culpability (Limb 1), require well-articulated **offence-specific functional links**.

# Clinical Implications

## Remember to articulate custodial hardship and custodial fit

- Give due attention to the following with concrete behavioural examples:
  - difficulty interpreting social cues and prison hierarchies
  - misperceiving hostile intent, leading to conflict or victimisation
  - vulnerability to manipulation or exploitation
  - rigidity, anxiety, or shutdown in response to custodial routines
  - distress in noisy, unpredictable, socially complex environments
  - past incidents of conflict, bullying, disciplinary issues or needing protective placement
- Explain how autism-related communication, cognitive style, and vulnerability make imprisonment may weigh more heavily on the person (Verdins Limb 5)
- These observations also assist the court with deterrence considerations, by clarifying:
  - whether the autistic person can meaningfully learn from custodial environments
  - whether custody is an appropriate or effective sanction
  - whether vulnerability, confusion, or overwhelm may limit the deterrent effect

# Clinical Implications

## Provide a clear, integrated formulation when autism co-occurs with other conditions

- Courts found Verdins arguments most persuasive when reports:
  - **Separated autism traits from other conditions** (ADHD, trauma, mood disorder, substance use) instead of listing diagnoses without interaction.
  - **Explained overlapping symptoms** (e.g., ADHD impulsivity vs autistic rigidity; trauma hyperarousal vs autistic shutdown).
  - **Linked each condition to a functional part of the offence pathway**  
e.g. autism → misreading intent, trauma → hyperarousal, ADHD → impulsivity, SUD → disinhibition
  - **Addressed intoxication clearly**, explaining if then how autism still shaped perception or reasoning alongside drug/alcohol effects.
  - **Used behavioural examples** to show how factors interacted in real time (e.g., literal interpretation + intoxication + emotional overwhelm).
  - **Offered a simple causal pathway** showing how the combination impaired reasoning, perception, control, or adaptive coping.
  - **Mapped the formulation to sentencing anchors** (culpability, sanction choice, deterrence, custodial issues).

# Conclusions

- The study shows a clear trend toward **greater judicial engagement with expert evidence** and **more explicit consideration of autism** when enlivening the Verdins principles in serious offending matters (2021–2025).
- Autism (whether formally diagnosed or identified through traits) was often **linked to Verdins limbs**, especially Moral Culpability and Disproportionate Burden.
- Cases where autism was explicitly tied to functional impairments (rigidity, sensory vulnerability, social naivety, dysregulation) appeared **more likely to receive reduced sentence length or modified orders**.
- Co-occurring mental health and neurodevelopmental conditions were common, and in many cases **Verdins principles were enlivened on the basis of autism plus other diagnoses**, rather than autism alone.



# Future Directions

- Conduct **further analyses** to examine additional sentencing issues for autistic defendants, including how courts address risk, rehabilitation, remorse, and diagnostic complexity etc.
- **Expand the dataset nationally** by including autism-related sentencing decisions from other Australian jurisdictions (NSW, QLD, WA, SA, TAS) to allow for a cross-jurisdictional analysis of autism and Verdins principles.
- Where accessible, draw on **fuller expert report material** (beyond summaries in sentencing remarks, such as extended excerpts in appeal decisions) to clarify which psychological explanations judges found most useful.
- Explore how **autism-related functional explanations** (e.g., monotropism, communication differences, social value systems, information-processing styles) can be better incorporated into **offence formulations** to support autism-informed sentencing decisions.
- Analyse judicial reasoning to identify what features of psychological reports judges find helpful or unhelpful, and use these insights to inform **autism-specific forensic practice guidelines for report writers**

# TLDR

**1. Autistic people are in our justice system.**

They are being missed until they hit crisis and interface with the justice system.

So: screen, identify, name the traits.

**2. Verdins is powerful but only when the expert explains it.**

Your opinion materially changes sentence length.

So: enliven the relevant limb clearly and confidently.

**3. Autism traits matter for remorse, culpability, deterrence, and hardship.**

Judges need help interpreting behaviour.

So: functionally link autism features to the offence and the sentencing task.

**TLDR: Screen. Enliven. Link.** Not just “autism is present”. Explain why it matters.

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# Questions?

- [Joseph.Sakdalan@forensicare.vic.gov.au](mailto:Joseph.Sakdalan@forensicare.vic.gov.au)
- [Vivien.Leung@forensicare.vic.gov.au](mailto:Vivien.Leung@forensicare.vic.gov.au)
  
- **Thank you!**



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