

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF
THE REPUBLIC OF VANUATU
(Criminal Jurisdiction)

Criminal
Case No. 25/3912 SC/CRML

PUBLIC PROSECUTOR

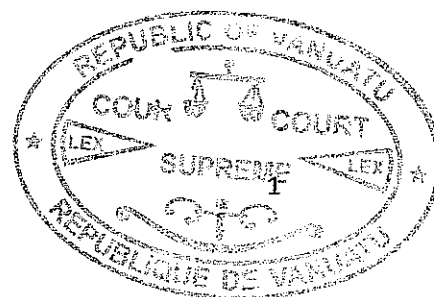
v

JOSEPH TARUAN

Date: 27 March 2026
Before: Justice V.M. Trief
Counsel: Public Prosecutor – Ms S. Langon
Defendant – Mrs K. Karu

SENTENCE

1. Mr Joseph Taruan, you appear for sentence today having pleaded guilty and accepted the summary of facts in relation to one charge of unlawful cultivation of cannabis (Count 1) and one charge of unlawful possession of cannabis (Count 2) contrary to subs. 2(62) and s. 17 of the *Dangerous Drugs Act* [CAP. 12]. You are convicted on your own pleas and the admitted facts.
2. On 21 October 2025 at Teouma area on Efate Island, on a tip-off, the Police attended at your house. The Police searched your house and garden and found cannabis plants cultivated inside the middle of your garden. The Police seized a cannabis plant which Police testing confirmed was cannabis, weighing 400 grams (0.4 kilograms) (Count 1).
3. You and your *de facto* partner were at a funeral at Teouma Area. The Police came to the place of the funeral and invited you to the Police truck. They searched you

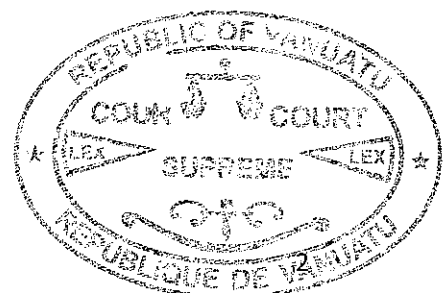


and found two rolls of cannabis substance on you plus two rolls of tobacco. The Police seized the materials. Police testing confirmed that the materials were cannabis, weighing 0.44 grams (Count 2).

4. The maximum penalty for the offences of unlawful cultivation of cannabis and unlawful possession of cannabis is 20 years imprisonment, a fine of up to VT100 million or both.
5. There are no aggravating or mitigating factors to this offending.
6. I adopt a global sentence start point of 18 months imprisonment.
7. One third (6 months) is deducted from the sentence start point for your early guilty pleas.
8. You are 37 years old. You are a Year 8 leaver. You are in a *de facto* relationship and have 4 children. You also live with your widowed mother. You have skills as a fisherman, you sell green kava and also work as a security guard. You have prior convictions, but not for drugs offending. You cooperated with the Police. A further 2 months is deducted from the sentence start point for your personal factors.

End Sentence

9. Taking all matters into account, the end sentences imposed concurrently are:
 - a. Cultivation of cannabis (Count 1) 10 months imprisonment; and
 - b. Possession of cannabis (Count 2) 6 months imprisonment.
10. You have been in custody since 22 October 2025 which is a period of 5 months, hence an effective term of imprisonment of 10 months. Accordingly, you have served the time required for your sentences of imprisonment therefore must be released from custody today.
11. You are also to complete 70 hours of community work within 12 months.
12. You have 14 days to appeal this sentence.



13. The drugs are to be destroyed.

**DATED at Port Vila this 27th day of March, 2026
BY THE COURT**



Justice Viran Molisa Trief

