

Cristy Morrison: Ex-Peel Districts Little Athletics Centre president avoids jail for stealing \$37k from club



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A former president of Mandurah's main little athletics club who used some of the more than \$37,000 in club funds she stole over a year to fund a meth and gambling habit has avoided immediate prison time.

Cristy Maree Morrison, 44, appeared in Mandurah Magistrates Court on Monday for sentencing on 128 charges of stealing as a servant after pleading guilty to the charges on February 16.

The court was told Morrison stole \$37,291.70 while volunteering at Peel Districts Little Athletics Centre between September 2022 and August last year.

Police prosecutor Sen. Const. Pat Prest said Morrison had no prior criminal record and had transferred sums of money – ranging in amounts from just \$5 to one figure of \$1240 – from the club's bank accounts to her personal account without permission.

Morrison's stealing began on September 22, 2022, and lasted until August 28, 2023.

She voluntarily attended Mandurah police station on November 26 and admitted to transferring the money.

She was charged on December 6 and in explanation told police: "I thought I had paid it all back".

Defence lawyer Lisa Riley gave written submissions to Magistrate Leanne Atkins but told the court Morrison was the club's president from August 2021 until March 2023, when she "informally stood down" from the position but continued in the role until a general meeting was held in August 2023.

Ms Riley said a section of a psychological report given to the court included that there was a "verbal agreement" between Morrison and the club's treasurer that she would be "able to transfer the money" but said other volunteers in the club were not aware of the arrangement.

At her first hearing on February 16, Ms Riley told the court Morrison had recently been diagnosed with major depression and anxiety and indicated that those conditions may have contributed to her offending.

Ms Atkins said she had received a victim offender mediation report and an apology letter written by Morrison, as well as psychological and pre-sentencing reports.

Ms Atkins said Morrison volunteered with Peel Districts Little Athletics Centre while her daughter was involved in the club and stole the money because she "didn't have the finances to support (herself)" after her marriage ended and she lost her rental housing.

Ms Atkins said Morrison's personal situation, mental health and whether or not she had an "informal arrangement with the treasurer" did not "excuse" her offending.

Morrison had paid back \$29,000 and made a further payment of \$3500 in April, but Ms Atkins said her repayments did not “excuse the fact that this is dishonesty”.

“It is a persistent act on your behalf, not all to support yourself and your children but to support your drug habit and your gambling,” she said.

She sentenced Morrison to a seven month conditionally suspended prison term for the two charges in which she stole amounts over \$1000, and was sentenced to 100 hours community service work and community-based orders for the remaining 126 charges.

Morrison was also ordered to repay the remaining amount of \$4781.70 to the Peel Districts Little Athletics Centre.