



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **OPERATION ZEUS: ACLEI investigation report released**

*R v Craig EAKIN (Supreme Court of New South Wales)*

**Tuesday, 15 December 2020 (immediate release)**

Integrity Commissioner and head of the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity (ACLEI), Jaala Hinchcliffe, has today published her report into Operation Zeus. The report details ACLEI's role in a multi-agency investigation into links between a criminal syndicate and a former employee of the Australian Border Force (ABF).

Ms Hinchcliffe said, "Over recent years, ACLEI has uncovered examples of the deliberate grooming of employees of law enforcement agencies by criminal entities. Operation Zeus shows how an individual staff member's personal and professional relationships may evolve in ways that compromise the integrity of a workplace and facilitate inappropriate and illegal behaviour."

The report released today details the investigation into allegations that an ABF Officer assisted a criminal syndicate by facilitating the importation of undeclared tobacco into Australia. The investigation identified Craig Eakin as the former ABF Officer and uncovered evidence that he had received a bribe and aided and abetted in the illegal importation of tobacco products by a criminal syndicate.

A joint investigation by ACLEI, the Australian Federal Police (AFP) and Department of Home Affairs, Operation Zeus is an example of the benefits of a strong joint investigation. ACLEI focused on the corruption element of the allegations while the AFP investigated the broader activities of the syndicate.

The Integrity Commissioner made one finding of corrupt conduct against the former ABF Officer, finding that Mr Eakin had abused his office by conducting unauthorised searches of ABF systems in order to provide information to the criminal syndicate to facilitate the importations.

Mr Eakin was convicted of offences of receiving a bribe by a Commonwealth public official and aiding and abetting the importation of tobacco products knowing of an intent to defraud revenue. Following an appeal, on 11 November 2020 the Supreme Court of New South Wales sentenced Mr Eakin to an aggregate term of imprisonment of 3 years and 6 months with a non-parole period of 2 years.

In related proceedings under the *Proceeds of Crime Act 2002* (Cth), the Supreme Court ordered that approximately \$1.8 million of Mr Eakin's assets be forfeited to the

Commonwealth. This included several properties, cash and account funds and farm machinery.

The Integrity Commissioner's report on Operation Zeus is available now on ACLEI's website: [www.aclei.gov.au/investigation-reports](http://www.aclei.gov.au/investigation-reports)

**About the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity (ACLEI)**

ACLEI is committed to preventing and investigating corruption issues relating to Commonwealth law enforcement agencies. ACLEI supports the Integrity Commissioner to provide independent assurance to government about the integrity of prescribed law enforcement agencies and their staff members. The office of the [Integrity Commissioner](#) and ACLEI are established by the [Law Enforcement Integrity Commissioner Act 2006](#) (the LEIC Act).

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