



MEDIA STATEMENT

OPERATION VOSS: Sentencing of Chin Leng (Allan) Neo and Zhi Kai (Kenneth) Neo

R v A Neo and K Neo (County Court of Victoria)

18 September 2020 (immediate release)

The Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity (ACLEI) welcomes the Victorian County Court's decision yesterday to sentence two commercial importers for corruption-related offences. The decision follows the earlier sentencing of a former employee of the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (DAWR, now the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment – DAWE), Mr Erroll Ibrahim, for receiving a bribe and inappropriate disclosure of information.

The prosecutions arose from a joint investigation between ACLEI, DAWE and the Australian Federal Police, *Operation Voss*. Operation Voss investigated an allegation that the operators of a Melbourne-based company, 'The Orchid Man', Allan and Kenneth Neo, were illegally importing plants into Australia with the assistance of corrupt DAWR staff members.

ACLEI's investigations showed that the father and son provided Mr Ibrahim payments in cash, gifts and international travel in return for less-thorough quarantine scrutiny of the company's plant importations and for supplying them with confidential information about competitors.

Yesterday, Mr Allan Neo was convicted of providing corrupting benefits a Commonwealth public official. He was sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment and a fine of \$20,000, to be released on a recognizance of \$2,000 to be of good behaviour for 2 years. Mr Kenneth Neo was convicted of aiding and abetting and was sentenced to 7 months' imprisonment to be released on a recognizance of \$1,000 to be of good behaviour for 1 year.

Mr Ibrahim had previously been sentenced to 3 years' imprisonment and a \$10,000 fine for receiving a bribe and inappropriately disclosing information. Mr Ibrahim was released on a recognizance to be of good behaviour for 3 years.

These decisions reinforce ACLEI's important oversight role in relation to the integrity of Australian Government law enforcement agencies including DAWE. Corruption is not a victimless crime. Bypassing quarantine measures creates a serious biosecurity risk to Australia's Borders and the use of corrupt relationships with law enforcement officials to circumvent laws or gain competitive and financial advantage will not be tolerated.

To report corruption, go to www.aclei.gov.au.

All enquiries regarding this media release should be sent to strategy@aclei.gov.au.