



Date Tuesday, 13 September 2022

Former Agriculture employee sentenced for corruption offences, accepting bribes to facilitate the importation of illicit tobacco

An ACLEI-led investigation, Operation Overbeek, has resulted in the sentencing of a former employee of the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (now the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry) for corruption offences.

At the Melbourne County Court today (13 September), James Colella was sentenced for accepting bribes totalling \$10,000 on three occasions in exchange for accessing and disclosing sensitive information to facilitate the importation of illicit tobacco.

He was sentenced to two and a half years imprisonment to be released on recognisance after three months.

Colella was found guilty of three counts of receiving a bribe as a Commonwealth official, two counts of abuse of office, and two counts of unauthorised disclosure of restricted information.

Operation Overbeek was investigated jointly with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Victoria Police Trident Taskforce, the Department of Home Affairs and the Australian Federal Police.

The Integrity Commissioner and head of ACLEI, Ms Jaala Hinchcliffe, welcomed to court's decision.

Ms Hinchcliffe said, 'This is a timely reminder to all Commonwealth employees of the importance of acting with integrity, particularly when it comes to the privileged access to sensitive information.'

'Information obtained by Commonwealth employees in the course of their duties may be extremely valuable to criminal entities.'

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](#). For more information, visit ACLEI's website: aclei.gov.au

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