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Operation Starburst: Former Department of Home Affairs employee sentenced for abuse of office

A former Department of Home Affairs employee has been sentenced for abuse of office and accessing information without authorisation.

Harbir Singh was sentenced to 18 months imprisonment to be released upon entering into an 18 month good behaviour bond and into a \$25,000 surety bond.

This matter was the result of a joint investigation by the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity (ACLEI) and the Department of Home Affairs.

Mr Singh was charged with two counts of Abuse of Public Office contrary to s 142.2(1) and ten counts of Unauthorised Access to Commonwealth data contrary to s 478.1(1) of the *Criminal Code* (Cth). Mr Singh pled guilty to these charges.

It was alleged Mr Singh provided unlawful immigration assistance to a relative (Mr A) and Mr A's business sponsor between 5 December 2014 and 18 May 2017 in respect of sponsorship, nomination and visa applications which resulted in the relative and his family being allowed to enter Australia.

The investigation also found that Mr Singh unlawfully accessed records in relation to Mr A and his family on over 50 separate occasions. The timing of accessing these records was consistent with the timing of the lodgement of various applications by Mr A.

The joint investigation found Mr Singh had no legitimate business need to access these records.

The potential corrupt activity was initially detected by the Department following reports of Mr Singh's suspicious behaviour.

The Integrity Commissioner and head of ACLEI, Jaala Hinchcliffe, welcomed the court's decision, saying, "Mr Singh's conduct is incompatible with the responsibilities of an immigration officer involved in visa processing."

"This case is an example of a conflict of interest undermining the impartial exercise of a public servant's duties."

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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