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Operation Unicorn: Investigation Report Released

A former Visa Processing Officer engaged in corruption by 'data mining' and self-allocating visa applications in a way that was intentionally dishonest

The Integrity Commissioner and head of the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity (ACLEI) Jaala Hinchcliffe has published her report on Operation Unicorn. The joint investigation by ACLEI and Home Affairs has found a former Home Affairs employee, Person A, engaged in corruption.

Investigators identified a number of student visa applications processed by the former NSW based Visa Processing Officer, twelve of which were of specific concern.

Operation Unicorn uncovered evidence that Person A searched visa applications by nationality and processed particular applications. Person A picked a high number of applications from Macedonian nationals, approximately 36% of all Macedonian applications received during the relevant period.

The investigation confirmed that Person A did not adhere to the standard departmental operating procedures and practices, which created an unfairness in how the visa applications were processed.

Skype records confirmed that Person A inappropriately self-selected applications, and had given instructions to another team member on how to avoid detection when self-allocating applications (which Person A described as "cherry picking").

Ms Hinchcliffe said, "This demonstrates that Person A knew that processing applications in this way was against policy and therefore needed to avoid detection when engaging in this conduct. This shows Person A was being intentionally dishonest when engaging in this conduct."

Person A's lack of due care and diligence in processing visas is further demonstrated in Skype conversations with a colleague. When talking about trends in visa applications they stated, 'im gong[sic] to grant everything'.

"The former employee's behaviour was contrary to section 13 of the *Public Service Act 1999* and contrary to their role and duties as a Visa Processing Officer and public servant."

The staff member was suspended by Home Affairs at the commencement of an investigation into their conduct, and resigned a few months later.

For further information, the Operation Unicorn Investigation Report is available on the [ACLEI website](#).

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