



MEDIA RELEASE

OPERATION WALPOLE: ACLEI investigation report released

An Australian Border Force officer has been cleared of corruption after disposing of white powder located during a search warrant by flushing it down the toilet, outside of standard procedures

Friday, 3 September 2021 (immediate release)

Integrity Commissioner Jaala Hinchcliffe, has today published her report on Operation Walpole – an investigation into a potential corruption issue involving the conduct of an Australian Border Force staff member, Officer FX, during the execution of a search warrant.

Operation Walpole was a joint investigation between the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity (ACLEI) and the Department of Home Affairs.

During the execution of a search warrant, Officer FX allegedly disposed of white powder contained in two suspected ‘deal bags’ located on the warrant premises by flushing the contents down the toilet.

Given the highly unusual behaviour by Officer FX, the investigation sought to uncover whether this conduct was undertaken for a corrupt purpose or for some other reason.

Ms Hinchcliffe said, “The allegation raised the possibility that Officer FX may have engaged in corrupt conduct by disposing of material suspected to be drugs at the execution of a search warrant. Operation Walpole considered whether Officer FX abused their office as a staff member of the ABF for a benefit or to assist another person.”

Operation Walpole uncovered evidence that Officer FX flushed the substance found in the zip lock bags down the toilet and then rinsed out the bags. In doing so, Officer FX acted outside of ABF procedures and their actions did not accord with normal standards for law enforcement officers in executing search warrants.

However, the investigation did not find that Officer FX engaged in this conduct for a corrupt purpose. By their own admissions, Officer FX cannot explain their behaviour. It was not done for personal benefit or for benefit of anyone else, and they were not pressured or directed to destroy the substance.

“While this behaviour raises significant questions about Officer FX’s judgment, noting that Officer FX refers to it as a lapse in judgment, it does not amount to corruption.”

Another ABF officer, who also attended the search warrant, witnessed Officer FX shaking out the contents of bags into the toilet and rinsing out both bags in the bathroom sink before putting the bags back.

The investigation arose after that officer reported Officer FX’s actions to a Senior Investigator.

“Operation Walpole highlights the importance of looking out for your colleagues and following established standards and procedures. This investigation has provided assurance that corruption was not the motivation for Office FX’s actions. However, over the years, ACLEI has seen many cases where staff acting outside of normal procedures and practices has been one of the first signs of corrupt activity.”

“If you witness any strange behaviour that is outside of normal standards and procedures, take action and report it to your manager or ACLEI.”

The Investigation Report for Operation Walpole is available on the [ACLEI website](#).

To report a potential corruption issue, complete ACLEI’s [online form](#) or email contact@aclei.gov.au.

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). For more information, visit ACLEI’s website: www.aclei.gov.au

Please direct all enquiries regarding this media release to: media@aclei.gov.au