



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **OPERATION SWAN: ACLEI investigation report released**

*An investigation into allegations of corrupt conduct by a biosecurity officer*

**Friday, 26 February 2021 (immediate release)**

Integrity Commissioner and head of the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity (ACLEI), Jaala Hinchcliffe, today published her report on the Operation Swan investigation.

Operation Swan involved investigating whether a staff member of the then Department of Agriculture<sup>1</sup> (Agriculture) was performing their biosecurity duties corruptly by clearing imports in exchange for payment. While no evidence was obtained to support the allegation, the investigation did uncover that the staff member was involved in illegal drug supply activities in association with criminal entities and systematic theft involving substantial amounts of disinfectant wipes, hand sanitiser and batteries.

Ms Hinchcliffe said, “The investigation obtained evidence of workplace misconduct constituting corrupt conduct and criminality away from the workplace. This raises integrity concerns, given the responsibilities of a biosecurity officer to enforce the law and the public trust placed in them to carry out their duties lawfully.”

Operation Swan was a joint investigation between ACLEI, Agriculture, Victorian Police (VicPol), Australian Federal Police (AFP) and Australian Border Force (ABF). It arose from information referred to ACLEI from VicPol in June 2014.

As a result of criminal prosecutions by VicPol for dealing with proceeds of crime, trafficking a drug of dependence (methylamphetamine) and other offences, the former staff member received a Community Correction Order for 24 months that included a requirement to complete 350 hours of unpaid community work and an aggregate fine of \$10,000.

On 26 May 2020, the Court ordered the forfeiture of cash and property that was unlawfully acquired, including \$50,000, a savings account (\$142,743.25), \$15,950 in cash, a yellow metal Cartier ring and a Rolex watch valued at \$12,700.

The investigation also uncovered evidence that the former staff member had been regularly and deliberately stealing office supplies for their own private purposes.

Evidence indicated that the former staff member had obtained a material benefit and caused a detriment to the Commonwealth through systematic theft.

In the search of the former staff member’s residence, the following goods were seized and found to be taken from the workplace:

- 70 packets of ‘Pine O Clean’ brand disinfectant wipes;

---

<sup>1</sup> The department was known as the Department of Agriculture from 18 September 2013 to 20 September 2015. For the duration of Operation Swan thereafter, the department is known as the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment. The department will be referred to as ‘Agriculture’ throughout.

- 17 boxes of 'Kleenex' tissues;
- 56 bottles of 'Dettol' brand hand sanitiser; and
- A quantity of batteries of various sizes and brands.

The former staff member acted against the Australian Public Service (APS) Code of Conduct, which requires APS employees to 'behave honestly and with integrity in connection with APS employment' and use Commonwealth resources in a proper manner and for a proper purpose.

"The investigation highlights the issues of undeclared associations with criminal entities and personal involvement in illicit activities," said Ms Hinchcliffe.

"ACLEI has observed the potential for departmental systems, practices, and people to be compromised by criminal interests in a number of corruption investigations. Casual associations can later be exploited by criminal entities and involvement in illicit activities demonstrates a lack of integrity."

The Operation Swan 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](#) (the LEIC Act). For more information, visit ACLEI's website: [www.aclei.gov.au](http://www.aclei.gov.au)

---

Please direct all enquiries regarding this media release to: [media@aclei.gov.au](mailto:media@aclei.gov.au)