



## Victorian woman sentenced over GST fraud

A Victorian woman has been sentenced to 4 years imprisonment for obtaining almost \$600,000 in fraudulent GST refunds.

**Published** 16 October 2024

A Victorian woman has been sentenced to 4 years imprisonment, with a non-parole period of 2 years and 4 months, after she claimed nearly \$600,000 in GST refunds from 27 fraudulent business activity statements lodged, contrary to section 134.2(1) of the Criminal Code (Cth).

Tahra Wyntjes was sentenced for obtaining \$599,349 in fraudulent GST refunds she was not entitled to and for attempting to obtain a further \$259,976, which was stopped by ATO officers. A reparation order to the value of the amount obtained was granted. This debt to the Commonwealth will be actively pursued in addition to the jail time Ms Wyntjes will serve.

Ms Wyntjes registered for both an Australian Business Number and for GST in November 2021 for a residential cleaning business. Between November 2021 and March 2022, she lodged the fraudulent business activity statements (BAS), which ATO officers quickly noticed and began investigating.

After failing to respond to ATO officers following a review on her BAS lodgments and reviewing available evidence, it was concluded that Ms Wyntjes was not carrying on a genuine business and had submitted multiple false claims for GST.

Acting Deputy Commissioner Jade Hawkins welcomed the court's decision which serves as a warning to those who deliberately try to defraud the government for their own personal gain.

‘Not only did this individual lodge fraudulent activity statements, but she also invented a fake business in order to claim GST refunds she was not entitled to.’

‘Our message remains clear. If you don’t run a business, you don’t need an ABN and you can’t claim GST refunds. This is fraud,’ Ms Hawkins said.

For those who may be tempted to take part in these criminal activities, the ATO has sophisticated risk models and technologies to detect and prevent fraud.

This is the latest result of extensive efforts under the Australian Taxation Office (ATO)–led investigation, Operation Protego, which was initiated in response to calculated GST fraud.

‘GST fraud is not a victimless crime – those who steal funds from the community that would otherwise be used for essential services will face severe consequences including jail sentences for serious offenders,’ Ms Hawkins said.

This matter was prosecuted by the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (Cth) (CDPP) following a referral from the ATO.

As part of Operation Protego, the ATO has taken action against more than 57,000 alleged offenders, and those involved in this fraud have already been handed in the order of \$300 million in penalties and interest.

As of 30 September 2024:

- 104 people have been arrested.
- 59 people have been convicted with a range of sentencing outcomes, including jail terms of up to 7 years and 6 months and with orders made to restrain real property.
- The ATO has finalised 60 investigations and referred 51 briefs of evidence to Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions.

The ATO also supports Operation Protego investigations which are led by local law enforcement agencies rather than the SFCT.

You can confidentially report suspected tax crime or fraud to us by making a tip-off online or calling **1800 060 062**.

For more information about Operation Protego  
[ato.gov.au/GSTrefundfraud](https://ato.gov.au/GSTrefundfraud).

## **Our commitment to you**

We are committed to providing you with accurate, consistent and clear information to help you understand your rights and entitlements and meet your obligations.

If you follow our information and it turns out to be incorrect, or it is misleading and you make a mistake as a result, we will take that into account when determining what action, if any, we should take.

Some of the information on this website applies to a specific financial year. This is clearly marked. Make sure you have the information for the right year before making decisions based on that information.

If you feel that our information does not fully cover your circumstances, or you are unsure how it applies to you, contact us or seek professional advice.

## **Copyright notice**

© Australian Taxation Office for the Commonwealth of Australia

You are free to copy, adapt, modify, transmit and distribute this material as you wish (but not in any way that suggests the ATO or the Commonwealth endorses you or any of your services or products).