



Government fraudster sentenced to jail

A woman has been sentenced to jail for tax fraud, identity and counterfeiting fraud, and social security fraud.

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A woman has been sentenced this week in the Melbourne County Court for 3 categories of offending against Government at both federal and state levels, namely: tax fraud, identity and counterfeiting fraud, and social security fraud. She has been sentenced to 18 months of imprisonment for that offending. She is presently serving jail time previously imposed for similar federal offences in November 2024.

The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) worked collaboratively with other partner agencies across Government to hold the offender to account.

Between October and November 2021, Paolo Esmaguel dishonestly obtained \$51,464 and attempted to claim a further \$12,093 by lodging 10 fraudulent business activity statements (BAS) using the identities of 3 victims. She supplied false information to the Tax Practitioners Board (TPB) to register as a tax agent, gaining access to ATO systems and linking unsuspecting taxpayers to her profile without their consent.

The ATO executed a search warrant with the assistance of Australian Federal Police (AFP), which revealed Ms Esmaguel possessed multiple documents in other individuals' names including bank cards, drivers licenses and birth certificates. She was also found to have a mobile phone that contained email accounts and other identity documents that weren't in her name.

Acting Deputy Commissioner and Serious Financial Crime Taskforce (SFCT) Chief Kath Anderson welcomed the outcome under Operation Falchion which spotlights the reality of identity fraud, and how serious the ATO is about putting a stop to it.

‘This case shows how far criminals will go to commit identity fraud and exploit the tax and super system, and broader commonwealth and state programs. With a rise in scammers and cyber criminals out in the community, it’s more important than ever to protect your personal identifying information’, Ms Anderson said.

Scammers and cyber criminals can use your personal information to access your details and commit fraud in your name.

‘We have strengthened our systems against fraud and financial crime through prevention, early detection, containment and consequences, such as the jail time Ms Esmaguel received’, Ms Anderson said.

The ATO also worked with the TPB, leading to the cancellation of the tax agent registration obtained by Ms Esmaguel in a victim’s name.

‘Operation Falchion, an investigation undertaken by the ATO-led SFCT, demonstrates the taskforce’s ability to respond to criminal behaviour, holding offenders accountable and protecting the integrity of the system, including when that offending is across various levels of Government.’

‘The ATO’s systems are secure and resilient. The safety of taxpayers’ information is of the utmost importance to us, and we remain vigilant for new and emerging fraud’, Ms Anderson said.

The ATO encourages individuals to use myID when interacting with the ATO’s online services and to set up to the highest identity strength where possible to make it harder for fraudsters to exploit their identities.


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

Notes to journalists

- Rapidly evolving technology provides a platform for cybercriminals to gain online access to information and sensitive data, facilitating opportunities for criminals to commit crimes, including tax crime and identity theft.
- It’s important to be aware of what information you share. Scammers only need a few pieces of personal information to commit serious fraud.
- The ATO urges everyone to stop, check and protect:

- Stop – Never share your myGov sign in details with anyone. Only share personal information such as your tax file number (TFN) or bank account details if you trust the person and they genuinely require your details.
- Check – Ask yourself if the message, email or call could be fake.
- Protect – Act quickly if something feels wrong. Call the ATO on **1800 008 540** if you think your personal information has been compromised.
- For more information on protecting your personal identifying information visit the **ATO website**.

Images

- A high-resolution [headshot](#)  of acting Deputy Commissioner and Serious Financial Crime Taskforce Chief Kath Anderson is available for download from our media centre.
- **ATO stock footage and images** are available for use in news bulletins from our media centre.

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