



Operation Protego holds Perth offender to account

A Perth man has been sentenced to 2 years in jail for dealing with the proceeds of crime through GST fraud.

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A Perth man has been sentenced to 2 years in jail, to be released after having served 6 months for dealing with the proceeds of crime through GST fraud, contrary to subsection 400.4(3) of the Criminal Code (Cth).

Mr Lee Sheridan provided his personal details to another person, wilfully blind that the person would use his details to make fraudulent GST claims with the ATO. That person subsequently lodged 7 original and 24 revised business activity statements (BAS), fraudulently claiming GST refunds.

Due to the false information provided in each BAS, \$377,820 in GST refunds was paid to a bank account in Mr Sheridan's name. Mr Sheridan received and spent the fraudulently obtained GST refunds, which were the proceeds of crime. Some of that money was paid to the person who had lodged the fraudulent BAS which caused him to receive the payments.

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

Deputy Commissioner John Ford is reminding the community that GST fraud is not a victimless crime.

'If you choose to engage in GST fraud, you are actively taking away funds that could be used on services that benefit the community such as healthcare, infrastructure and education.'

'We have already warned Australians against becoming involved in GST fraud. This outcome demonstrates that those who engage in GST fraud will be prosecuted with the full force of the law,' said Mr Ford.

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 31 August 2024:

- 104 people have been arrested.
- 53 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 anonymously report suspected tax evasion or crime to us by making a tip-off online or call **1800 060 062**.

For more information about Operation Protego visit ato.gov.au/GSTrefundfraud.

QC 103011

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