

# Corrupt Federal Police Officer Sent to Prison

By Zeb Holmes and Ugur Nedim

A former Australian Federal Police (AFP) officer has been [sentenced to twenty-two months in prison](#) after selling confidential information contained on an AFP database.

Forty-six year old Benjamin Hampton pleaded guilty to dishonestly receiving \$7000 after leaking secret intelligence to a friend, who is suspected of having links to known drug suppliers.

Judge Williams of [Sydney District Court](#), Downing Centre ordered that Hampton serve a minimum of eleven months in prison.

## Joint investigation

[A joint investigation](#) was commenced in 2013 by the AFP, the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity (ACLEI), the NSW Police Force and the NSW Crime Commission into alleged leaks of sensitive information.

Part of the investigation was into Nathan Rodgers, an associate of the Bra Boys and suspected member of a drug dealing syndicate.

On Christmas Eve that year, false entries were made into the AFP's computer intelligence system 'PROMIS', regarding a fictitious crime figure, Tiago Vasquez, who was said to be importing border-controlled drugs from South America.

A police informant then approached Mr Rodgers for information about this fictitious Mr Vasquez and his drug supposed supply operations.

Mr Hampton was later contacted by boxing trainer and wharfie, Jayson Laing, for that information.

The officer accessed the confidential database, retrieved the entries relating to Vasquez and met Laing for a training session at a gym. During that session, Laing placed \$7,000 into Hampton's gym bag.

"There is something in your bag for ya from Nathan", Laing told the officer.

Mr Hampton did not disclose the receipt of the funds.

### **Arrested, suspended and charged**

Hampton was arrested six weeks later and suspended from his employment.

He was charged in July 2014 with corruptly receiving a benefit as a Commonwealth public official [under section 142.1 of the Criminal Code Act 1995](#).

That section makes it an offence to dishonestly:

- provide a benefit to another person; or
- cause a benefit to be provided to another person; or
- offer to provide, or promise to provide, a benefit to another person; or
- cause an offer of the provision of a benefit, or a promise of the provision of a benefit, to be made to another person;

in circumstances where:

- the receipt, or expectation of the receipt, of the benefit would tend to influence a Commonwealth public official in the exercise of his or her duties as a public official.

The maximum penalty for the offence is 5 years' imprisonment.

Mr Hampton was re-arrested two months later when it was found he was planning to fly to Slovenia – a country that does not have an [extradition treaty](#) with Australia.

### **Submissions on sentencing**

In an attempt to keep his client out of prison, Mr Hampton's criminal defence barrister submitted there was never any expectation of payment for the information.

He said his client had "citations as long as your arm", and was "heroic", having previously protected former Prime Minister Julia Gillard and the Pope.

The Crown prosecutor countered by making submissions that the officer had grossly abused his position of trust and that his action represented an "undermining the integrity of AFP, striking at the heart of the administration of justice".

He tendered a statement from the AFP which read in part, "Our members are trusted to hold sensitive information, and the public expects and deserves that police information is never leaked to outside sources."

The Crown submitted that the only appropriate sentence was full time imprisonment.

### **The sentence**

The judge agreed with the prosecution's submissions, finding that, "The seriousness of corruption in the course of police work cannot be over-emphasised".

"Reputation and trust in the police force is far easier to lose, than to rebuild."

His Honour agreed with the defence that the offender had shown remorse and was unlikely to reoffend, and that "His fall from grace has been considerable", but nevertheless found that nothing other than a full time prison sentence was appropriate

in the circumstances.