

Case study: Public officer caught providing confidential information to an alleged drug dealer

September 2017



The CCC recently received an allegation that a public officer acted corruptly by abusing their position to unlawfully access information from a work database.

After assessing the allegation, the Corruption and Crime Commission (CCC) commenced a cooperative investigation with the WA Police Force and the Department of Transport that enabled all three agencies to share information and resources in a timely manner.

The investigation identified that the Department of Transport had robust policies in place regarding unlawful computer access and disclosure of confidential information. However, there were deficiencies in the accompanying procedures that staff were following - which allowed the officer's unethical behaviour to occur without detection.

The CCC discovered serious misconduct risks in the Department of Transport procedures and systems, including:

- guidelines that allowed officers to access details and process transactions of family and friends (not including regional areas);
- databases that allowed staff to manipulate the way they accessed confidential information; and
- database systems that prevent adequate computer audits of a user's usage.

Based on the evidence examined, the investigation confirmed that the public officer had accessed and provided confidential information from a work database to a person suspected of dealing drugs.

Unauthorised access of computer systems and disclosure of confidential information is one of the fastest growing types of allegations the CCC receives against public officers, and it presents a large issue for the Western Australian public sector.

Information contained in State Government databases is strictly confidential and all Western Australians should expect their private information to be protected by public officers.

This case study serves a warning that every instance where a public officer accesses and discloses confidential information is potentially serious misconduct. It is a reminder for all public authorities to review the access, user and security settings of their databases. It is also important that public authorities regularly communicate with staff about what unlawful

computer access is, and what their disclosure responsibilities are in the workplace to build their awareness and understanding on the matter.

If you suspect that confidential information about you has been inappropriately released by a Western Australian public officer, you can anonymously notify the Corruption and Crime Commission by calling 1800 809 000 or by completing a [confidential online form](#).

Contact the Corruption and Crime Commission

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