

History of success

AFP Identity Crime investigations have provided a consistent series of success.

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False identities can be used for any criminal or nefarious activity where a person seeks to disguise their true identity in the hope of deceiving others, including law enforcement.

Examples can be as diverse as an underage person having a false driver licence with an altered date of birth, through to serious and organised criminal syndicates using false identity documents for the importation of narcotics and subsequent remittance of those millions of dollars of proceeds of crime overseas.

Following are an overview of some major successes by the AFP in partnership with state law enforcement agencies to investigate identity crime.

Operation Avarice (2009)

This investigation was undertaken in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane resulting in seven arrests and the dismantling of a hierarchical ID manufacturing syndicate.

Compromised credit card details were obtained overseas and a subsequent Spanish investigation resulted in the arrest of 13 persons conducting similar activities in Spain. The syndicate head in Australia was sentenced to 8 years 10 months imprisonment with a non-parole period of 7 years 2 months.

Operation Pulse (2011 – 2012)

This investigation resulted in eight arrests with charges relating to identity crime, money laundering, deemed supply of narcotics, fraud and credit card offences.

Two separate false ID manufacturing syndicates were dismantled, which included the charging of

the syndicate heads, manufacturers, supervisors/distributors of false IDs, shoppers, money launderers and those dealing with the proceeds of these crimes. ISST executed search warrants and seized equipment used in the manufacture of false IDs, stock (blank cards and holograms), cash, jewellery, high-end goods and alcohol.

In excess of \$1.5 million was remitted overseas using false NSW driver licences manufactured by one of these syndicates. Shoppers utilised false credit cards with supporting false driver licences to purchase gift cards, alcohol and high-end goods, some of these were specifically purchased to order.

ISST engaged the Criminal Assets Confiscation Taskforce (CACT) and the NSW Crime Commission throughout this investigation resulting in cash, goods and assets totalling in excess of \$1.35 million being restrained. Jewellery, high-end goods and \$20,000 cash have already been forfeited to the Crown.

The following sentences were imposed on members of these syndicates:

- Syndicate head sentenced to imprisonment for 7 years 6 months with non-parole period of 4 years 7 months
- Syndicate head (manufacture of false ID and money laundering) sentenced to imprisonment for 7 years 6 months with non-parole period of 4 years 9 months
- Shoppers (x2) sentenced to imprisonment for 2 years with non-parole period of 6 months and imprisonment for 10 months with non-parole period of 6 months.



Goods and equipment seized during an investigation.

Operation Arkanis (2013)

This investigation commenced in early 2013 and was resolved on 10 September 2013, with the execution of search warrants and the arrest the two principals. The syndicate was actively engaged in the exchange of personal identification information, manufacture and distribution of false ID documents – specifically NSW RMS driver licences, Victorian driver licences, credit cards and Medicare cards.

The manufacture location had no other obvious purpose other than what could be described as being purely a false ID manufacturing factory.

ISST and CACT seized in excess of \$70,000 in cash, jewellery, high-end goods and other assets with an estimated value of \$2 million.

ISST investigations have identified that false IDs manufactured by this syndicate have been linked to crimes and investigations, such as:

- Credit card frauds, with one false credit card being used in Sydney over a 48 hour period to purchase goods and electronic items in excess of \$40,000.
- Vehicle fraud with several vehicles being purchased with a counterfeit bank cheque with the buyer assuming the seller's ID and then using a false NSW driver licence to on-sell the vehicles

for cash, with this only being detected when the original owner is notified that the bank cheque was counterfeit.

- Narcotic importations and money laundering offences investigated by the AFP.

Investigators are also seeing these false IDs being used by unlawful non-citizens in order for them to blend into normal day-to-day activities in Australia without raising any obvious suspicions.

The ISST is aware that false Australian IDs are being manufactured overseas, usually in high volume Australian tourist destinations, such as Thailand. However, Australian Customs and Border Protection Service (ACBPS) has recently seized a significant number of parcels containing false IDs, including NSW driver licences and Medicare cards of a reasonable quality from a non-traditional overseas location.

These false IDs were sent to various states and territories in Australia and enquiries have identified that on some occasions the person actually exists. However, the date of birth had been changed so the juvenile appears to be over 18 years of age and other false IDs have been linked to minor parcel post seizures that were also intercepted/detected by ACBPS.

ACT Policing advised the ISST of a recent incident where a false NSW driver licence was seized from a juvenile and she advised police that it had been sourced via Silkroad.