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Former ATO employee jailed for accepting bribes

A former Australian Taxation Office (ATO) employee has been sentenced to 5 years' imprisonment for corrupt conduct, including accepting bribes from a taxpayer they were auditing, in exchange for reducing millions of dollars in personal and business tax debts over a span of 6 years, which ceased only after the former employee's arrest.

Following a guilty plea in July 2023, the Parramatta District Court, on 12 March 2024, convicted the offender of several contraventions of the Commonwealth *Criminal Code*, including accepting a bribe as a Commonwealth official, abuse of public office, and unauthorised access and disclosure of restricted data.

The Court sentenced the offender to 5 years in prison, with a non-parole period of 2 years and 6 months.

The case stems from Operation Barker, a joint investigation led by the former Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity (ACLEI) and the ATO. ACLEI was subsumed into the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) on 1 July 2023, and the NACC took on responsibility for Operation Barker and other investigations.

Operation Barker was supported by the ATO, Australian Federal Police (AFP), New South Wales Police (NSWPF), the Department of Home Affairs, the Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC), the Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre (AUSTRAC) and the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions (CDPP).