



FORMER CEO OF PALM ISLAND CORPORATION FINED FOR MISUSING POSITION

On 14 September 2018, former chief executive officer (CEO) of Coolgaree Aboriginal Corporation (Coolgaree), Mr Robert Bruce Beattie, was fined \$3000 and issued a reparation order of \$3000 to the Commonwealth for dishonestly using his position to gain a financial advantage for himself.

Mr Beattie pleaded guilty in the Perth Magistrates Court to the charge under section 265-25(3)(a) of the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006*.

On 6 November 2014, Mr Beattie attended a charity event run on Magnetic Island in Queensland where he bid for and won tickets to the Clipsal 500 motorsport event being held in Adelaide in 2015. Mr Beattie used the corporation's credit card to buy the tickets, though the charity event and purchases were not linked to the corporation's business and did not further its objectives.

Coolgaree incorporated in 1997 and operated on Palm Island, Queensland. It provided an employment and training program for local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It also operated a general store and bakery. In March 2015 the corporation placed itself under voluntary administration to deal with financial distress. Shortly after, in April 2015, the corporation moved to appoint a liquidator and finally deregistered in September 2017.

The charge against Mr Beattie was originally filed in the Townsville Magistrates Court. After Mr Beattie moved from Queensland to Western Australia, proceedings were filed in Perth.

The Court noted that Mr Beattie was well remunerated in his position as CEO, with a salary of around \$110,000 per annum, and trusted with a credit card that had a reasonably high credit limit. Also noted was that there had been no voluntary repayment by Mr Beattie of the cost of the tickets for the Clipsal 500 event.

The Acting Registrar, Mr Mike Fordham, stated that 'Mr Beattie purchased these tickets with full knowledge that the corporation was in financial difficulty. The message here is that moving thousands of kilometres across the country will not deter us from holding offenders accountable.'

The matter was prosecuted by the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions.

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