

# Five arrested as part of significant money laundering investigation

**Thursday 14 October 2021 6:55pm**

Detectives from the Criminal Proceeds Squad yesterday arrested five people as part of a significant joint agency investigation into an organised crime syndicate linked to one of Australia's largest ever money laundering operations.

Warrants were executed yesterday afternoon at nine residential and commercial properties in Burwood, Box Hill, Blackburn, Caulfield North, Oakleigh and Endeavour Hills.

Five people were arrested including:

- A 32-year-old Burwood man;
- A 38-year-old Box Hill man;
- A 32-year-old Blackburn man;
- A 36-year-old Endeavour Hills man; and
- A 31-year-old Caulfield North woman.

The Burwood, Box Hill and Blackburn men were all charged with Commonwealth money laundering and structuring charges as well as state proceeds of crime charges.

All three were remanded in custody to face Melbourne Magistrates' Court this morning.

The Endeavour Hills man and Caulfield North woman were both released and expected to be charged on summons.

Police also seized a significant quantity of cash, believed to be several million dollars, along with boxes of illicit tobacco, a cash counter, electrical equipment, jewellery, high-end clothing and sporting memorabilia.

Luxury vehicles were also seized including a Porsche, BMW X5, Toyota Landcruiser and Mercedes Coupe C200.

This operational activity is as a result of a significant 12-month investigation involving a number of Victoria Police units including the Criminal Proceeds Squad, Purana Taskforce and the Financial Crime Squad, as well as AUSTRAC and the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission.

In October 2020, Victoria Police received information from AUSTRAC related to suspicious third-party deposits, collaborated with the ACIC, and subsequently commenced an investigation.

Third party deposits involve a person depositing funds into another person's account.

Police will allege that some of these accounts have been sold by their holders to the crime syndicate for use in money laundering.

A wide variety of different ATMs have been used right across Melbourne to facilitate this process.

It's believed the syndicate has controlled over 250 bank accounts, which have been used to transfer more than \$62M over the past 12 months.

This makes it the largest ever money laundering operation using this methodology in Australia.

The investigation remains ongoing.

Anyone with information about this matter is urged to contact Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000 or submit a confidential crime report at [www.crimestoppersvic.com.au](http://www.crimestoppersvic.com.au)  [<http://www.crimestoppersvic.com.au>](http://www.crimestoppersvic.com.au)

Quotes attributable to Assistant Commissioner Bob Hill, Victoria Police Crime Command:

"This is a significant national result and one that highlights the contemporary nature of serious and organised crime.

"This syndicate has conducted a highly mobile and agile operation, moving away from those traditional venues and outlets associated with money laundering.

"Of the five people arrested, four of them were not known to police and had no history of any type of criminal offending.

"These were people living a quiet and unremarkable life in the Melbourne suburbs, all the while operating a sophisticated criminal enterprise.

“Money laundering is not a victimless crime – these funds are used to operate criminal networks involved in a variety of crime types including the trafficking of drugs and illicit firearms.

“Yesterday’s results demonstrate how criminal behaviour continues to evolve, while law enforcement and investigation methodology adapts accordingly.

“Victoria Police and its partners will do everything they can to hold offenders to account while ensuring those involved in serious and organised crime do not retain any advantage, financial or otherwise, from their nefarious criminal ways.”

Quotes attributable to Jon Brewer, AUSTRAC National Manager:

“Expert financial intelligence provided by AUSTRAC and our major bank partners was instrumental in identifying and targeting the syndicate.

“Yesterday’s outcome has demonstrated the importance of collaboration between AUSTRAC, financial industry partners and law enforcement to disrupt and prevent organised criminals from exploiting the financial system and harming the community.”

Note: The Financial Crime Squad is formerly known as the Fraud and Extortion Squad. The Purana Taskforce ceased operation in July 2021.

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