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INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION

THE HONOURABLE PETER M. HALL QC  
CHIEF COMMISSIONER

PUBLIC HEARING

OPERATION PARAGON

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TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

AT SYDNEY

ON WEDNESDAY 8 DECEMBER, 2021

AT 2.00PM

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This transcript has been prepared in accordance with conventions used in the Supreme Court.

THE COMMISSIONER: Yes, Ms Spruce.

MS SPRUCE: Commissioner, I seem to have the same difficulty as earlier in that I can't see you on the screen.

THE COMMISSIONER: Oh, I see. Same problem, is it?

10

MS SPRUCE: Yes.

THE COMMISSIONER: Was that a problem identified arising at your end or our end, do you know?

MS SPRUCE: I'm sure - - -

THE COMMISSIONER: Is there nothing you can do to try and experiment with - - -

20

MS SPRUCE: It's just been rectified. You've appeared.

THE COMMISSIONER: I have?

MS SPRUCE: Yes, I can see you.

THE COMMISSIONER: Oh, good, good.

30

MS SPRUCE: Mr Soliman, if I could take you, please, to volume 15.1, page 318. Mr Soliman, if you have a look at the second email that appears on that page you'll see that it's from you to Mr Dubois and Mr Hayes, your supervisor, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September, 2017. And do you see it says, "Alex, I have reviewed the RFT document and approved the work flow. Good work on this. Now onto Paul for approval." And then you say, "Paul, you should receive an email requesting your approval for the eTender RFT lodgement. I have briefed you and Roger on this previously. We're setting up a new panel to service the HV programs, civil electrical, WIMs, break tester, scales maintenance. This tightens up contract management and enables us to increase competition as we're going to open tender, hence lower costs to RMS."---Yes.

40

Do you recall sending that email to Mr Hayes?---I don't but I can see it here.

All right. Well, it's the case, isn't it, that it was necessary for you to involve Mr Hayes in the process at this point because you required his approval in order for the eTender to go live, is that correct?---That's what the email says, correct, yep.

And you see that it says, "I have briefed you and Roger on this previously." I want you to accept from me that this is the only written document that exists in which you provide your superiors with any explanation or justification for the creation of the Maintenance Panel. So when you refer there to briefing Mr Hayes and Mr Weeks previously, was that a conversation that you think you might have had with them?---I don't recall. It must have been either verbal or email or something, obviously because it's, it's there.

10

Well, you mentioned earlier that you thought there had been conversations between Mr Hayes and Mr Dubois about the creation of the panel, do you recall that?---Yes.

And do you recall whether you had conversations with Mr Hayes about the creation of the panel?---I don't recall.

All right. And you see when you've referred to in this email in the last sentence, you've given the reasons for the panel "this tightens our contract management" et cetera. I take it from the evidence you've given earlier that that is just based on what Mr Dubois and Mr Steyn had told you?---That's what I recall, yeah.

20

And I want to suggest to you that if this is indeed the only written document to your superiors that exists justifying the creation of the panel, that it's completely deficient. What do you say to that?---I don't understand your question. What, what should have been added?

30

Well, this email doesn't contain any proper justification for the creation of a panel that is going to do \$6 million worth of RMS work, does it? One line in an email is not a proper justification, is it?---In this email, yes. Correct.

I'm sorry. Are you agreeing with me that what appears in this email is not a proper justification for the creation of the Maintenance Panel?---I'm agreeing on what, on what you're showing me alone. This single email, this single line. It, it, it's not enough. But, clearly, other discussions and briefings have occurred, as per the email.

40

All right. Now, if I could take you, please, to volume 15.1, page 319. This is the eTender document in relation to the Maintenance Panel, which was published on 20 September, 2017, and closed on 6 October, 2017. And then if we could go to page 320, please? Do you see towards the bottom of the page, it says "RFT type"?---Yes.

And it says "open tenders"?---Yes.

This is said to be, "An invitation to tender by public advertisement with no restriction placed on who may tender"?---Yes.

If we could go to the next page, please? Page 321. Do you see there under the heading Conditions for Participation, it refers to the two categories, category A and category B, and then it says that “Eligibility requirements to tender for category A work require you to demonstrate that you’ve carried out similar work for HVEP for Roads and Maritime in the last 12 months.”  
---Yes.

10 And then you see in respect of category B work, there’s a requirement “to have carried out similar work for Heavy Vehicle Enforcement Programs for Roads and Maritime in the last 24 months” - - -?---Yes.

- - - “or to demonstrate similar work for another state agency.” Now, in respect of category A work, it’s limited, isn’t it, to people who have carried out similar work for HVEP for RMS in the last 12 months. Do you see that?---That’s correct. I see that, yeah.

20 Now, were you aware that that was an eligibility requirement that was being included in the tender?---Don’t recall seeing that before.

You don’t recall seeing that before?---Correct.

Well, Mr Soliman, were you aware that a requirement of that kind is prohibited under RMS policy?---No, I’m not.

Were you aware that a requirement of that kind is prohibited under NSW Government policy?---No, I’m not.

30 Well, it rather contradicts the idea that it’s an open tender with no restriction placed on who can apply, doesn’t it?---Yes, I guess logically it does.

Well, logically it restricts the applicants to those who have previously been doing the work in the last 12 months.---Okay. What was, what’s the logic behind that requirement, though?

40 Mr Soliman, you say that you haven’t seen that requirement before, but if you had seen it, would it have caused you some concern that the real purpose of this panel was for Mr Dubois and Mr Steyn to ensure that their preferred contractors were the ones who got onto the panel?---Did I have any concerns? I’m sure if I had a concern, I would have brought it up with them and asked them what this is about. Yeah.

But you don’t have any recollection of doing that?---No.

All right. And then if we could please go to volume 15.5, page 2. You can see that this is a memo that you received from the Tender Evaluation Committee on 12 October, 2017. So that is at the conclusion of the tender period. This is a copy of the Tender Evaluation Committee’s report, which

is sent to you. Do you recall receiving a copy of the report?---I think they gave me the signed sheet, yes.

You think they gave you the signed sheet?---Correct. And I'm pretty sure I've signed it, yes.

Well, Mr Soliman, what I'm showing you at the moment is a copy of the full report, which is addressed to you. Are you suggesting that you didn't receive this report?---I recall getting the signed sheet after they had  
10 completed the tender assessment.

THE COMMISSIONER: Could I just ask you, who were the members of the Tender Evaluation Committee referred to in this memo of 12 October, 2017?---I think there were several. From memory it was Mr Dubois, Mr Steyn, Jai Singh, I think there were a couple more people.

MS SPRUCE: It was Mr Chehoud also, wasn't it, Mr Soliman?---I'm not sure. But that would make sense of course, yeah.

20 I'm going to take you now, please, to volume 15.5, page 16. This is a copy of the same memo I showed you a moment ago, but this one is addressed to Paul Hayes, also dated 12 October, 2017. You see that?---Yes.

And then if we could scroll down through that report to page 19.---Yep, I remember that.

That's what you're referring to as the signed sheet, is it?---Yes, correct.

And so that's where there's a recommendation. It's recommended by the  
30 Tender Evaluation Committee that approval be given in accordance with the delegation manual to include all 13 tenderers on the panel. And then Mr Dubois's signature, Mr Steyn's, Mr Singh's and Mr Chehoud's. That's the members of the Tender Evaluation Committee.---Yep.

And also a signature from you and Mr Hayes.---Yep.

Now, you're not really suggesting, are you, Mr Soliman, that you would have signed that document without reading the report?---It only makes sense that I would have read it. I remember I got a hard copy to sign. I don't  
40 remember if I read the entire thing but I do remember that Jai gave me a summary of the outcome of it, and me and Mr Hayes signed it at the same time.

Mr Soliman, it's not a long document. One, two, three, there's three pages of text prior to the page that you were asked to sign and then there's appendix A, B, C and D. Are you really suggesting that you didn't read the full report from beginning to end?---No. I'm just saying I don't have a, a recollection of reading the report but, I mean, chances are I did.

But you don't doubt, do you, seeing your signature there, that you wouldn't have signed it unless you had read the report?---Well, I do doubt because I don't have a recollection of it but, look, whatever the recommendations were, that's what the recommendations were from the committee.

But, Mr Soliman, was it your practice to sign important documents like this without reading them?---Well, I mean, if I had the advice from a trusted person, yeah.

10

Well, who is the trusted person that you think you might have received advice from on this occasion?---As I, as I said, Jai came and, and basically summarised the outcome of the committee, and I remember myself and Mr Hayes signed at the same time. I have a strong recollection of that.

Well, can you recall what was mentioned in the summary that you say Mr Singh gave you?---Yeah. It basically said this is the vendors that were in and that's it, yeah.

20

Well, do you recall who the vendors were who had submitted tenders?---I don't know who submitted tenders. Only I think the committee would know that but the vendors that – there was, there was, oh, from memory 10-ish vendors and, yeah, they were the companies that were essentially doing the maintenance for the Safe-T-Cam and sites like that anyway. So I wasn't surprised, the, the names weren't, weren't a surprise or anything, if that's what you're asking.

30

All right. Well, if we could just go back, please, to page 16, which is the first page of the report. Do you see there there's the reference to the category A and the category B works?---(No Audible Reply)

See that, Mr Soliman?---Yes, I do.

So you knew, didn't you, when you signed this document that there was two categories of works?---Yes, I did.

40

And then you see that the contract's for an initial period of three years with an option to extend for an additional two. Did you know that that was the time period of the panel?---No. That's, I think that's the first time but, yeah, that makes sense also. Three plus two.

And then you see it's estimated, or anticipated rather, that the panel will serve approximately \$6 million worth of work. Were you aware of that? ---Not that I can recall, no. I'm not sure how they could estimate that exactly.

Well, that's a significant thing to know, isn't it, before you put your name to

a document, to know? It gives you a good indication of how important this document is, doesn't it?---That's correct, yeah.

All right. And if you go to the next page, please. Do you see there, I've taken you to this previously, there's the tender assessment criteria?---Yes, I can see it.

10 Yeah. Do you recall being aware of what the criteria was that the tenderers were being assessed on?---No. That's, I'm pretty sure this is the first time I would have seen the weightings exactly. I can't recall exactly.

All right. And then if we go to the next page, please. Do you see there under Performance Against Assessment Criteria it concludes that "All 13 tenderers have the capacity to complete the works within the contract period based on similar work successfully completed for the RMS."---Yes.

But that's a very significant part of the report, isn't it, concluding that all 13 tenders effectively should be accepted?---Yes.

20 All right, and then you see at point 11 there's a reference to conflict of interest.---Yes.

And you see that every person who's signing this document is being asked to individually declare that there's no actual or potential conflict or incompatibility between personal or corporate interests - - -?---Yes.

30 - - - and duties in carrying out the tender assessment. Now, were you aware of that clause when you signed the document?---I don't think I saw that part in it but it makes sense, of course.

Well, if you had seen that part in it, would it have had any effect on your decision to sign the document?---I don't know.

Well, at the time you signed the document, were you aware of having any conflict of interest in signing it?---As we already know, there was a conflict with Novation Engineering, but that's - - -

40 And, Mr Soliman, are you saying that you were aware of that conflict at the time you signed this document?---I don't know if I was aware of it. Again, this is completely different scope to this inquiry.

I understand that, Mr Soliman, but I'm trying to understand - - -?---And, frankly, I - anyway.

Mr Soliman - - -?---(not transcribable)

- - - I'm trying to understand the circumstances in which you think you might have signed a document which contains a number of important

matters without reading them from beginning to end as Manager of the Heavy Vehicles Unit. You agree, don't you, that a competent manager would have read the document before they signed it?---I wasn't so competent.

You weren't so competent?---Correct.

10 Are you saying that you regarded yourself as being a not competent manager of the Heavy Vehicles Unit?---I thought I was doing the best I could with what I knew. Definitely didn't know how to handle those two, two guys.

Mr Soliman, if you could please now look at page 20 of the tender report. You'll see that this is the list of companies who submitted tenders.---Yep.

And you gave evidence a moment ago to the effect that those who submitted tenders were effectively the companies who Mr Dubois and Mr Steyn had already been using to do the work, is that correct?---Correct.

20 And so which of those companies listed are the ones you recognise as being contractors that were routinely used by Mr Dubois or Mr Steyn?---All of them. I think, yeah. I, I'm sure that that was their, basically, the team that they've been working with and that managed the Safe-T-Cam and sites forever, yeah.

30 All right. And then if we could go to page 22, please. I'm not sure if there's a way for that to be displayed correct way up for Mr Soliman. Thank you. So, Mr Soliman, this is one of the annexures to the tender report where the category A tender scores are recorded against the assessment criteria. Now, do you recall whether you looked at this document before signing the tender report?---Sorry, it's off, off screen.

Sorry. If we could just get that document back, please?---No, I don't, I don't particularly remember this. I think this is just for the committee.

Well, when you say you think it was just for the committee, you were asked to sign the report as the manager of the unit. Correct?---Yes.

40 So why would you assume that the part of the report which actually records the scores that the tender has received would be just for the committee and not intended for you?---Seems confidential, doesn't it?

Mr Soliman, can you see there that Lancomm received a score of zero?  
---Yes.

How could it be that you approved a recommendation to appoint Lancomm to the Maintenance Panel in circumstances where it had scored zero in every

category against the assessment criteria?---I object to that question. I didn't appoint anyone, as you know.

Mr Soliman, you approved the Maintenance Panel tender report. Correct?  
---That's correct.

Right. And my question is how could you approve a report which recommended the appointment of Lancomm to the panel in circumstances where that report made plain that Lancomm had received a score of zero?  
10 ---For whatever reason, they scored, whatever they did, the recommendation from independent parties in the committee, that was the recommendations. I had nothing to do with the committee or the recommendations.

Mr Soliman, you approved the recommendation. Correct?---Yes.

And it is a nonsense, isn't it, for someone who has scored zero to be appointed to a panel?---Yes, it is. Why were they appointed by the committee?

20 And so is it the case that you simply accepted the committee's recommendation and didn't turn your mind to whether or not their recommendation was appropriate? Is that your evidence?---No, that's not my evidence.

All right. Well, you tell me what the position is then?---They were trusted people in the committee. If, even if you take out Mr Dubois and Steyn, I trusted Mr Singh and there was no reason for me not to trust Mr Chehoud. So unless they're all corrupt, I don't understand why I wouldn't be accepting the recommendation of independent committee.  
30

Right. Looking at this document now, you accept, don't you, that the recommendation shouldn't have been accepted in circumstances - - -?  
---Yes.

- - - where Lancomm had received zero?---Yes.

Sorry?---Definitely.

40 And then if you look at CIC Engineering and S A Masters, the last two in category A - - -?---Yes.

- - - do you see that one has scored 30.375 out of 100 and another has scored 29.25 out of 100?---Yes.

Do you agree that a recommendation to appoint those two companies to the panel shouldn't have been approved by you, looking at it on those scores?  
---Well, this is hypothetical. Again, I object to the question. This is

hypothetical situations. I did not appoint them. I did not make the recommendations. I don't know who these members are, I mean - - -

THE COMMISSIONER: But you did endorse them, didn't you?---Yes, so did Mr, Mr Hayes, also.

Yeah. We're just talking about you at the moment.---Yeah.

You endorsed them?---Yes.

10

Can you tell me the other committee member who was the consultant engineer, I think? Do you know who I'm referring to?---Mr Chehoud?

Mr?---Chehoud. Nathan.

How do we spell his name?

MR DOWNING: C-h-e-h-o-u-d.

20

MS SPRUCE: C-h-e-h-o-u-d.

THE COMMISSIONER: There was someone else on the committee and his surname begins with N as I recall it, whose name I recognise from an earlier document. Perhaps if we could just get the committee members up again.

MS SPRUCE: If you go to the first page of the tender report. Oh no, they're not on there.

MR DOWNING: On page 19, Commissioner.

30

MS SPRUCE: The signing page.

THE COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MS SPRUCE: Yeah, go to page 19 of volume 15.5.

THE COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Yes, Mr Nathan Chehoud. See his name there as consultant?---Yes.

40

How did Mr Chehoud come into the picture for this committee? Who introduced him?---I saw Mr Chehoud, Mr Dubois and Mr Steyn walking in a hallway one day and I didn't recognise - - -

I'm sorry to interrupt you. I just couldn't catch what you said. Could you just say it a bit louder?---I saw Mr Dubois, Mr Steyn and Mr Chehoud walking in a hallway one day and I didn't recognise Mr Chehoud. It seemed like they were going into a meeting, so I remember afterwards I asked Mr Dubois and Mr Steyn who that was, what they were doing, and that's when

they explained to me they're working on a panel contract and Mr Chehoud is from WSP.

And so do I understand that, so far as you know, Mr Chehoud in some way was known to Mr Dubois and Mr Steyn?---They engaged him. I don't exactly know how, or whether they - - -

I'm sorry, they had engaged him for what?---To manage the panel contract essentially, I think.

10

Right. Do you understand that he was an associate or had a relationship with Dubois and Steyn?---Not that I knew of.

You don't know. Is the position you don't know whether he had a relationship with them or not?---Yes, correct.

20

But, however, they introduced him and it was through that introduction that he ends up on the panel committee, is that right?---No. I'm not sure of the introduction. I'm guessing they had already selected him for the panel in some way. I don't know how they were introduced.

Well, did you propose Mr Chehoud to be on the panel committee?---No, not that I can recall.

So far as you know, who did?---Well, it must have been Mr Dubois or Steyn.

Ah hmm.---But I'd never met, met him before that.

30

Yeah, that's perhaps not surprising. Thank you.

MS SPRUCE: All right. And then if we could just go, please, to page 23 of volume 15.5. See that this is the criteria assessment for category B, Mr Soliman?---Yes.

And you'll notice that as with a similar assessment for category A, there's nothing on that document that says it's confidential, is there?---No.

40

All right. And if you have a look at that you see that again there's three companies who have scored less than 50 out of 100.---Yes.

And notwithstanding that they've been recommended for acceptance onto the panel and you've approved that recommendation.---Were they all accepted? I can't really tell.

Well, I took you to that section of the report earlier (not transcribable). ---Sure, yeah, that's fine. I (not transcribable)

I can take you there if you like.---I'll take, take your word for it, it's fine.

And is it the case that you say you didn't look at this document either before signing the report?---I don't recall seeing that at the time.

All right. Now, Mr Soliman, do you recall on the last occasion you gave evidence I asked you about whether you were aware that it was important to declare any conflict of interest?---Yes.

10 All right. And this is at transcript 2532.11. I asked you whether you knew it would be a conflict of interest to award a contract to a company in respect of which the person behind the company was a family member or friend and -- -?---Yes.

-- - you said that you became aware of that halfway through 2017.---Sorry, became aware of what exactly?

That it would be a conflict of interest to award a contract to a company in respect of which the person behind the company was a family or friend.  
20 ---Okay.

Do you recall that your evidence was that you became aware of it at some point around mid-2017?---I don't recall the evidence but you're telling me so it's fine, yeah. Okay. I accept that.

Now, Mr Soliman, I'm going to ask you some questions about some WhatsApp communications that you had with Stephen Thammiah.---Yep.

30 Now, for the purposes of contextualising those conversations I'm going to ask you some preliminary questions. First of all it's the case, isn't it, that you're presently the subject of an inquiry by this Commission into whether you acted improperly or impartially in the exercise of your official functions as an RMS employee?---Yep.

Now, Mr Soliman, I can assure you I am not going to revisit those allegations in this inquiry but I'm just, as I've said, going to ask you some factual questions which are necessary to contextualise the conversations between you and Mr Thammiah.---Sure.

40 Now, first of all it's correct, isn't it, that you and Stephen Thammiah were old friends from school?---Yep.

And it's correct that between 2005 and 2017 you awarded a number of RMS contracts to Novation Engineering on behalf of the RMS.---Not 2005.

I withdraw that, sorry. 2015 and 2017.---Approximately those dates, yeah, sure.

All right. And it's correct, isn't it, that Stephen Thammiah was the principal of Novation Engineering?---Yep.

And it's also the case that in October 2017 Novation Engineering applied for and was appointed to the Maintenance Panel?---Yep.

And it's also the case that after Novation Engineering's appointment to the Maintenance Panel you awarded two further contracts to Novation Engineering.---Yeah, I think they wanted open tenders, right, yeah.

10

Right. And I take it from the evidence I reminded you of a moment ago about your awareness of what would constitute a conflict of interest that you knew by say midway through 2017 that you had a conflict in relation to Novation Engineering?---Look, frankly I don't have a lawyer here and I object to that question. We're revisiting items that have been visited for three years now. That is outside the scope of this inquiry.

THE COMMISSIONER: Mr Soliman, you were asked a question and I want you to answer it. You - - -?---Sometimes - - -

20

We had an earlier discussion in which you indicated that you understand the concept of a conflict of interest. And you do, don't you?---Yes, I do now.

Yeah. You understand what a conflict of interest is.---Yes.

Yes. This question is directed to the question of a conflict of interest involving a particular entity Novation. If you just listen to the question, it'll be put again and you directly answer it.

30 MS SPRUCE: Mr Soliman, I'm just asking you, and it follows from the evidence you've given in this inquiry that you were aware from around mid-2017 that you had a conflict of interest insofar as you were awarding contracts to Novation Engineering.---Okay.

THE COMMISSIONER: No, not okay. Is the answer yes or is it no?---I was aware that I had a conflict sometime in 2017-18.

That being the conflict involving Novation Engineering, is that right?  
---Correct, yes. Yes, Commissioner.

40

MS SPRUCE: And, Mr Soliman, it's the case, isn't it, that you and Mr Thammiah in 2017 and '18 communicated with each other from time to time by using WhatsApp?---I'm sure we did, yeah.

All right. And if I could take you, please, to volume 24.2, page 2. These are WhatsApp messages which were retrieved from Mr Thammiah's mobile phone.---Yep,

Now, if you have a look at the first message, “What’s happening bro, how are ya?” Do you recognise the mobile phone number that appears there as your number?---Yeah.

All right. Then if we could turn to the next page, please. You’ll see there that the green speech bubbles are from Steve and that was how Mr Thammiah referred to himself, was it?---Yep.

10 And do you see that the blue speech bubbles are from your number?---Okay, yep.

All right. And then if you have a look at the first blue speech bubble on this page, you see that it’s sent on 9 October, 2017.---Okay.

And you recall that Maintenance Panel tenders closed on 6 October, 2017? ---Okay.

20 And so you see there you’re saying to Mr Thammiah, “The guys are reviewing your tender now by the way.”---Yeah.

And then Steve says, “I know. He just can’t get them to do it either.” And then you say, “Only 12 responses total.” Steve says, “Red tape galore.” And then over the page, please. Then you say, “Yeah, exactly. Ray can’t do shit. He doesn’t hold the budgets.” Can you tell us who Ray is?---I don’t recall.

30 All right. And then Steve says, “12 dumbarses.” And you say, “Ha-ha.” And then you say, “Well, six of them are Alex and Craig’s guys.”---Yep. I see that.

And Steve says, “Yeah, all right.” And then you say, “Accuweigh, WeighPack and Novation.”---Yep.

And then over the page again.

THE COMMISSIONER: I’m finding it hard to read these. Can we enlarge them? Yes, that’s a bit better. Thank you.

40 MS SPRUCE: Mr Soliman, you say, “And some other random.”---Yep.

Mr Thammiah says, “Well, the sole vendor thing.” And then you say, “We’re a shoo-in.”

THE COMMISSIONER: What did that mean when you use those words, “We’re a shoo-in”? What was that directed to?---(No Audible Reply)

I’m talking to you, Mr Soliman. Answer the question.---(not transcribable)  
I’m just trying, trying to, sorry, I’m trying to think, Commissioner, of - - -

Yeah, well just answer my question. Just give me a truthful direct answer.  
---Sounds like there was - - -

Just tell me what did you mean?---Looks like Novation was a shoo-in for the tender, I think, by the sounds of it.

When you said, “We’re a shoo-in,” you’re talking about Novation?---I’m assuming so.

10

Yeah. And when you say, “We’re a shoo-in,” you’re meaning you and the principal, Mr Steve Thammiah. Is that right?---I think I’m only referring to Steve. He was the owner of Novation.

Yeah. When you say “we’re” you were working in conjunction with Steve at this point, weren’t you? That is he, you, together are a shoo-in. That is, Novation’s a shoo-in with the support of Steve and your support?---I don’t think – that’s taking it a bit far but, yeah, I do agree that Novation was likely, looks like they were going to get put on this panel.

20

Well, put it this way. You had been and remain supportive of Novation Engineering getting on the panel. Is that right?---I knew he was applying for the panel, yes, and I definitely wouldn’t have stopped him applying or anything like that. And so I was happy for him, obviously.

I’ll just put my question again, and I don’t want to keep repeating it. You were supportive of Novation Engineering getting on the Maintenance Panel. That’s correct, isn’t it?---I would agree with that, yes.

30 Okay. Yes. You continue, Ms Spruce.

MS SPRUCE: And then you see after that that Steve says, “Is the golden ticket.” I assume that’s supposed to be it’s the golden ticket. And then you see in the next message you say, “Exactly.”

THE COMMISSIONER: What did you understand him to mean, “Is the golden ticket”? What’s the sensible interpretation of what he’s saying?---I don’t know, Commissioner.

40 Something to do with the panel, isn’t it, obviously?---Yes, I guess so.

And the reference to “golden ticket” means the benefits once you’re on the panel, it in effect becomes a golden ticket. Is that right?---Don’t know what he meant.

Oh, come on, come on. You’ve been talking here in these emails about the panel for maintenance work, and in that context, after you said, “We’re a shoo-in,” he says, “Is the golden ticket.” He’s saying that will produce a

good result for Novation Engineering, in effect. Correct?---That makes sense, yes.

That's the way it's to be understood, isn't it? It's the way you understood it? Answer my question.---What, the way, the way you explained that makes sense, yes.

Yes, Ms Spruce.

10 MS SPRUCE: And so, Mr Soliman, when you say, "Exactly," you're agreeing, aren't you, that Novation getting onto the Maintenance Panel is going to be lucrative for you and Novation?---There's too many assumptions here for me to know what was going on at that time. I don't know.

THE COMMISSIONER: Just answer the question, would you? Look, Mr Soliman, I'm not going to keep saying this. We're repeating questions over and over again while you think of an answer. The question's going to be put again and you answer it directly and immediately.

20

MS SPRUCE: Mr Soliman, when you say, "Exactly," what you mean is that you agree it's going to be lucrative for you and Mr Thammiah for Novation to be appointed to the Maintenance Panel?---I don't recall what that means exactly at this time.

THE COMMISSIONER: You weren't asked exactly what it means. What's the general meaning associated with what you're conveying when you say, "Exactly," about the golden ticket?---Whatever he was talking about, I must have agreed with him.

30

Yeah. You're agreeing that it will be for you and for Novation a considerable benefit to be on the panel. Correct? Answer my question. --- (not transcribable) I don't know. I don't know, Commissioner.

That's a lie, isn't it? You do know. Tell me, what does it mean when you agreed with him exactly to the notion of the golden ticket?---Whatever the messages mean exactly, exactly must mean that at the time whatever he was talking about, I agreed with him. I'm just sitting here now saying whatever the context was exactly, I can't be sure. So I can't agree to something I'm not 100 per cent sure of.

40

Yes, Ms Spruce.

MS SPRUCE: Mr Soliman, I'm going to put to you that the reason that you supported Mr Dubois and Mr Steyn's efforts to create a Maintenance Panel was because you thought you stood to benefit from it.---That's not accurate at all.

THE COMMISSIONER: Mr Soliman, remember I warned you, and I was doing it to alert you before you put your foot into a dangerous situation of the consequences if you tell lies to this Commission on your affirmation. You remember me speaking on that subject?---Yes, Commissioner.

It's an extremely serious matter to wilfully mislead this Commission in the public inquiry on any aspect of the evidence. I want you to carefully consider your position. Would you put the question again.

10 MS SPRUCE: Mr Soliman, I put to you that the reason you supported Mr Dubois and Mr Steyn's efforts to create a Maintenance Panel was because you thought that you stood to benefit from it.---That's not, again, I don't agree with that notion. Yes, obviously Novation got put on the committee, by the committee, but that wasn't my initial idea to support, I didn't even know anything, I didn't even know that these scales were going to be put on there at the beginning. The statement is not accurate.

20 THE COMMISSIONER: You knew that once Novation Engineering got on the panel it stood to benefit significantly from being on the panel. You knew that much, didn't you?---If they won open, open tenders, yes, of course.

And as part of that, potentially, there was some benefit to you if Novation Engineering got on the panel and started to receive maintenance work. Potentially there was a benefit to you which you appreciated. Is that not so?---Potentially, yeah, but there was no agreements about anything that you're talking about.

30 Potentially.---Yep.

You agree potentially, and when you agree that potentially there could be benefits coming your way, what sort of benefits?---Are you talking about financial benefits or - - -

40 No, I'm asking you to specify. You've said potentially you've agreed there was a benefit that could come your way. I'm asking you how did you see the potential benefit to you?---I don't know. I think by this point, well, first of all, there was agreement or anything that if they get on the panel someone's going to pay me or anything, that never, never happened. So I didn't perceive any specific benefit from the committee placing him on the panel.

You saw benefits though to Novation Engineering if it got on the panel and if it had been awarded maintenance contract, yes?---Yes, sure. I mean - - -

Yeah. And if that occurred, that is to say two things, if Novation Engineering got a slot on the panel, got chosen for the panel, and it was awarded maintenance contract work, then in those circumstances there

could be benefits flowing your way. You appreciated that, didn't you?---I guess there was a possibility. Again, there was no agreements about these things.

No, you've already said there was no agreement but I'm just simply saying what you envisaged as a possibility. I think you've agreed that there was the possibility of a benefit flowing your way, have you not?---Again, I don't recall what I was thinking - - -

- 10 Just answer my question. You said a moment ago you acknowledged, did you not, that if two things occurred, one Novation Engineering got selected for the panel, and two, was awarded maintenance contracts, there was potentially a benefit coming your way. You agree with that, don't you? ---Look, potentially, if something happens. But again (not transcribable)

We're talking about potentially, not actually. Potentially you saw benefits could come your way, is that correct?---Sorry, I really don't know how to answer this. This is a hypothetical situation.

- 20 You envisaged at the time Novation Engineering were applying to get on the panel that if it did succeed in getting on the panel, that potentially there could be benefits flowing your way. Is that not the case?---I don't recall thinking about that at the time, but, again, it's a hypothetical situation. I don't recall thinking about that exactly at the time. It wasn't at the front of my mind.

It was not at the front of your mind?---Correct.

- 30 Was it in your mind as a possibility at all?---Don't recall.

Pardon?---I don't recall.

You don't recall. Is that a truthful answer?---Half a decade ago.

Is that a truthful answer?---If I recall or not? Yes.

Yes, Ms Spruce.

- 40 MS SPRUCE: Mr Soliman, if we could just go back to page 4 of that chat, please, where you recall you say, "Well, six of them are Alex and Craig's guys." What did you mean by that?---They, they had a team of basically, of the vendors that they always, always done the management for all their programs. I'm guessing there's six of them, six vendors.

THE COMMISSIONER: Now, Ms Spruce, I'm having difficulty reading that. What's it say? "Well, six of them are" - - -

MS SPRUCE: "Six of them are Alex and Craig's guys."

THE COMMISSIONER: Oh, I see.

MS SPRUCE: Six of the tender applicants, that is.

THE COMMISSIONER: I see. Thank you. That's as you understand it, Mr Soliman, that, what's that message, "Six of them are Alex's and," it should read "and", "Craig's guys." Means six of the, six of the  
10 appointments to the panel would be guys who could be described as Alex and Craig's guys, is that right?---No. What I, what I mean is exactly what I've said. They worked with a group, a handful, six obviously I'm saying here, of the vendors that always managed their programs. Yes.

So is it the position that six of those selected on the panel were what you describe as Alex and Craig's guys?---Yes, the vendors that they worked with (not transcribable)

No, sorry, just answer my question. Yes or no? Is what you're saying six of those that ended up on the panel, or would end up on the panel, were Alex's  
20 and Craig's guys?---Okay, yes. I'm, I've agreed that they're the vendors that I worked with, yes.

Okay. So six of the contractors were people associated with Dubois and Steyn, is that right?---Well, hang on. Okay.

Is that right?---What do you mean by associated? Are you saying there's - -  
-

Friends.---Six. Sorry, are we suggesting there's (not transcribable)  
30

No, I'm putting that you're saying six of the contractors, well, the principals of the six of the contractors, are friends of Alex and Craig. That is, Dubois and Steyn.---That's not, no, that's not what I meant at all (not transcribable)

What does it mean?---That six of the vendors are the vendors that they worked with, and who have always managed the programs for Safe-T-Cam and point-to-point and what, whatnot, that's what I meant.

Yes, Ms Spruce.  
40

MS SPRUCE: Mr Soliman, you knew, didn't you, that Alex and Craig had preferred contractors that they liked to use?---No, I didn't know they preferred anyone. As I've already said, I've, I did have a feeling when I dig deeper, but I couldn't find any connection between any single vendor. But now I get the feeling you're telling me there's more than one vendor involved.

Mr Soliman, I'm just going to put this proposition to you and you can agree or disagree. I'm going to suggest to you that you knew that Mr Dubois and Mr Steyn had a close relationship with their preferred contractors, being the six that you've referred to in that message.---Mmm, that's, that's not correct. I had a, I had a feeling and, as I said, that wasn't based on anything. No one told me anything. I just had a feeling based on just, I don't know what it was based on. But I couldn't really build a suspicion based on any one vendor because it seemed like they were all, all the vendors they were working with were getting work basically equally and, yeah, I couldn't  
10 really figure out which vendor they were working with. But now makes a bit more sense, from what you've told me - - -

THE COMMISSIONER: What do you mean it makes more sense?---Well, I think, again, I'm sorry if I'm misinterpreting what you're saying. It sounds like you're saying there are multiple vendors that they were working with and if that's the case, kind of makes sense why there was no specific pattern. They were handing out to all of them if that's what you're telling me. I don't know if I'm allowed to ask a question but what vendors are suspected or what, what - - -  
20

MS SPRUCE: Mr Soliman, you've referred in that message to six tender applications, being Alex and Craig guys. Correct?---Correct.

And I'm just going to put to you that you either knew or suspected that Mr Dubois and Mr Steyn had certain contractors that they wanted on the Maintenance Panel for their own purposes.---No. I had no idea, first of all, there could have been more than one vendors. I was looking for one, naïvely now, obviously, I was looking for one vendor that could have been getting more or less, whatever. But, to answer your question, I had no idea  
30 if they knew these people. I had never met these people. They were working with Mr Steyn and Mr Dubois since before my time there. There's no way I could have known.

All right, Mr Soliman. I'm going to take you now to another chat, which is at volume 24.2, page 7, again between you and Mr Thammiah. And see the second message from the top in blue, which is from you is sent on 7 June, 2018. So this is some eight months after the Maintenance Panel has been formed and after the chat we just looked at?---Yes.

40 And you say, "Dreading this day with my asshole boss. Restructuring beginning." Now, is it correct that the reference to your asshole boss would have been a reference to Arnold Jansen, having regard to the date?  
---Yes.

And I take it you didn't like Mr Jansen. Is that correct?---Something felt off about him and something another woman said to me made me feel something was off about him.

THE COMMISSIONER: Now, would you answer the question.

MS SPRUCE: The question was I take it you didn't like Mr Jansen?---No, I thought he was a bit odd.

THE COMMISSIONER: You mean yes, you didn't like him. Is that right? ---No, it's not that I didn't like him. I thought he was odd.

10 MS SPRUCE: Well, Mr Soliman, you've described him as an asshole. It's evident, isn't it, that you didn't like him?---I guess so if you want to use that phrase. Okay. I didn't, I didn't like him if that's what you want. I (not transcribable)

THE COMMISSIONER: Why didn't you admit when I asked you or put to you that you didn't like him?---'Cause I (not transcribable)

20 You see, Mr Soliman, you are playing with the truth. You are getting yourself into real trouble when you start playing with the truth and deny something that you now admit that you didn't like him. That's just an example of the danger you're in of giving wilfully false evidence to this Commission. This Commission is not to be deflected, is not to be obstructed by a witness giving false evidence. Do you understand what I am now saying?---Yes, Commissioner.

Now, Mr Soliman, we will closely follow the answers you give to the further questions from this point. Yes, Ms Spruce.

30 MS SPRUCE: Now, you'll see there's a reference to a restructure beginning. Do you recall, Mr Soliman, that there was a restructure in around June 2018?---Yes.

And can you give us some more information about what the nature of that restructure was?---Mr Jansen was looking to move staff members around, yeah. That's all, there was no specific reasoning that he, he gave me.

40 All right. And so you mentioned the restructures beginning and then Steve says, "Really?" And then Steve says, "Maybe Alex's head is on the block." That's plainly a reference to Mr Dubois. Do you agree?---Yes. Either him or the other Alex, yep.

Well, who is the other Alex that it might be referring to?---There was, I forgot his surname. There was another Alex that was in the Heavy Vehicle Team at the time.

Well, Mr Soliman, where would Mr – sorry, I withdraw that. If you look at the next message from you, you say, "All of ours are".---Yep.

So you're suggesting that all of your heads, including yours, I take it, are on the block.---Yeah.

And then you see in the last message you say, "They sneaky, they corrupt too. They want in where the money are."---Yep.

Now, it's the case, isn't it, that when you say, "They sneaky, they corrupt too," you're referring to Mr Dubois and Mr Steyn?---Yes.

10 And it's obvious from that message that by June 2018 you had formed a positive view that Mr Dubois and Mr Steyn were corrupt. Do you agree?  
---No. As I said, I, I had a feeling. I'd been (not transcribable)

THE COMMISSIONER: Mr Soliman. Just answer the question and don't avoid the point of the question. It's going to be put to you a second time. You answer it. Put the question.

MS SPRUCE: Mr Soliman, it's clear from that message that by June 2018  
20 you had formed a view that Mr Dubois and Mr Steyn were corrupt?---I had a feeling, not a view.

THE COMMISSIONER: You knew. It's not a feeling. You're being asked what your brain was telling you. Put the question a third time. And, Mr Soliman, I'm warning you, I've given you fair warning about the jeopardy, the trouble you will be in if you do not give frank, truthful evidence. Listen to the question. Yes, Ms Spruce.

MS SPRUCE: Mr Soliman, it is clear from the message where you say,  
30 "They corrupt too" that by 7 June, 2018, you held a view that Mr Dubois and Steyn were corrupt.

THE COMMISSIONER: Your answer?---As I've said, I'm not, I know you're going to get angry at me again and I'm sorry, Commissioner. I genuinely did not know for sure if they were corrupt. I, I had a feeling. I did not see anything, and sorry for making you angry.

Mr Soliman, look at your words. "They" which you acknowledge refers to Dubois and refers to Steyn. Of all the people in the world, "they" means  
40 Dubois and Steyn, as you have said.---Yes, yes.

And then you've said, "They corrupt too." That is they, as well as somebody else, are corrupt. That's what the words you used convey, correct?---Yes.

So they, you can substitute their names, Dubois and Steyn corrupt too. That is, as well as others, correct?---Yes.

So you are expressing a view you held at that time, firstly, that you considered Dubois was corrupt, correct?---That was based on a feeling, yes.

Correct?---That was my view based on a feeling.

Is that correct? Is that correct? You held the view at the time you wrote those words that, firstly, Dubois was a corrupt person, correct?---That was based on my feeling, yes. I couldn't be sure.

10 Let's leave feelings out of it. I'm talking about what you wrote in your own hand.---That's all I had, yes, as I said.

Yes. You wrote it and you chose the words "they corrupt". You were saying this to somebody else in a written communication as to what you believed, what your views were. Is that right? You acknowledge that? These were your words, were they not?---As I've said, I agree (not transcribable)

20 No, these were your words, were they not?---Yes, they were my words.

Nobody told you to use these words. You chose these words all by yourself. "They corrupt too." Correct?---Yes.

And that was based on what you knew about Dubois and Steyn, correct? ---What did I know? I didn't, no one told me anything, nobody, I didn't see anything, I never saw any money being handed over.

30 You were saying what you considered was the case. You were saying they – that is, Dubois and Steyn – were corrupt.---I expressed my feelings, yes. (not transcribable)

You didn't use the word, you did not use the words "I feel they might be corrupt," did you?---Okay.

You did not choose the words "I feel they might be corrupt." You did not use those words, did you?---No, I didn't.

40 No. What you did was made an assertion, an assertion of fact that they were corrupt, when writing to the recipient of this communication by you, correct? You were making an assertion of fact, were you not? It's obvious.---I was making an assertion of the feeling I had at the time.

But you don't mention feelings in this communication, do you, at all?---I don't think you need to when you're talking with friends and when you're basically venting to (not transcribable)

Yes, talking to your friend, you make the actual statement of fact “they are corrupt” in effect, when you say, “They corrupt too,” correct? Bear in mind this evidence is all being taken down - - -?---I know.

- - - and you will be, your evidence will be examined to determine whether you’re telling the truth or whether you’re trying to mislead and obfuscate this Commission. You held the view - - -?---(not transcribable)

10 - - - at the time you wrote those words that those two, Dubois and Steyn, were indeed, in your view, corrupt. Correct?---I’m sorry, I can’t lie to you. I can’t, I can’t sit here and tell you I know, and then you’re going to say that I, that I lied. I had no factual proof.

I’m not talking about proof, I’m talking about your belief. The assertion you made in your own words. Nobody else’s words, your words. You were saying to your friend these two were, in your view, corrupt. That’s what you’re saying, isn’t it?---Well, I know what I - - -

20 You are saying that, are you not, in those words in that WhatsApp?---I can’t sit here and give you the answer that you think is true, because it’s not true, and then you’re going to say I’m lying, Commissioner. I know, I know what I did and I didn’t know, Commissioner. I know that it was a feeling based on nothing, and after I dug deeper, I couldn’t find anything about any specific, any vendor.

30 So you now seek to explain away these words, that it was nothing but a feeling based on nothing. Is that what you’re honestly saying?---I’ve said that from the beginning, before I even saw these messages. Yes. That’s what I’m saying.

All right, Mr (not transcribable) Mr Soliman. We will see what, ah hmm, the future holds in that regard. Yes, Ms Spruce.

40 MS SPRUCE: Mr Soliman, at the very least it’s clear from those words, isn’t it, that you held a strong suspicion that Mr Dubois and Mr Steyn were corrupt? You agree with that?---A feeling, yes. Again, I’m going to give you what I had. You might get angry at me. I can’t lie. I had a feeling. A suspicion to me is when you have some sort of evidence, when you saw something. For example, if someone hands over, if I see someone handing money to someone, I have a suspicion they’re corrupt. That’s the way I see (not transcribable)

THE COMMISSIONER: Yes, next question. Stop making statements. Stop making statements. Yes, next question.---Okay.

MS SPRUCE: Mr Soliman, and it’s clear, isn’t it, when you say, “They want in where the money are,” that you held, at the very least, a strong

suspicion that whatever it was that they were doing, they were doing it for financial gain, do you agree?---No. That's not what I meant.

Well, what did you mean by those words?---What I meant, as I said in June in this hearing, I noticed, and this is what triggered my feeling about them, that they wouldn't do boring BAU work, but they would be actually passionate about doing work that involved contracts and large contracts and, and if they were corrupt, yeah, then they probably were taking money.

10 That's right. So when you say "They want in" what you're suggesting there is that you have a strong suspicion that they are deriving a financial benefit from some kind of corrupt conduct, which you say you have no proof of and you can't particularise but you've got a strong feeling that there is something sneaky and corrupt about these people and that they want to derive a financial benefit from their sneaky, corrupt conduct, correct?  
---That's not what I mean. I said they, they, they want in where the dollars are, that's what the message reads and as I've said from the beginning, before seeing these messages, they wanted in where the large projects were.

20 All right. Mr Soliman, I'm going to put to you that what you mean by "They want in" is that they want a share.---What? No. No. That message completely doesn't read that way.

All right. Now, Mr Soliman, it's the case, isn't it, that by June 2018 that you held a sufficiently strong suspicion that Mr Dubois and Mr Steyn were engaged in some kind of corrupt conduct that you ought to have reported to a superior?---No. I think if I reported it at that point it would have been a vexatious claim. I saw nothing, I had no proof. What was I going to say? That, oh, I've got a feeling because he's, what, Lebanese? No. That's,  
30 that's, who would do that?

THE COMMISSIONER: Mr Soliman, if it was put to you that the initiative of Dubois and Steyn to establish the HPV Unit plan for maintenance contract work and the appointments to be made to the panels were all a fix designed to assist and promote a corrupt scheme or schemes by them, involving fraudulent activity on the RMS, if that proposition was put to you, how would you respond?---I would, knowing what you've showed me now, 100 per cent I've, I've connected the dots in my mind and I can see what they've done.

40 And if it was put to you that you assisted Dubois and Steyn in promoting a corrupt scheme or schemes through the HVP Unit Maintenance Plan and appointments to the panels, if that was put to you, how would you respond?  
---I did not help them and at all.

All right. Yes, Ms Spruce.

MS SPRUCE: And Mr Soliman, I'm going to put another proposition to you, which is that you deliberately didn't investigate or report any suspicions that you held about Mr Dubois or Mr Steyn because you didn't want to draw attention to your own conduct.---I don't agree with that. As I said, I did actually look, look into if there's any connection, if they're awarding contracts more to any one vendor than others. I couldn't find any proof. I couldn't find any connection with any one vendor they could have been connected to. There was no way I could have known.

10 Mr Soliman, when you see the reference in those messages to the possibility of Alex's head being on the block, do you recall what that might relate to?  
---I don't know.

Do you recall on the last occasion you were before the Commission you gave some evidence that when Mr Jansen was planning, there was a point when Mr Jansen was planning on moving Mr Dubois and Mr Steyn into Mr Sarkar's team?---Yes.

20 But Mr Sarkar said that he didn't want them in the team. You recall that?  
---Yes, vaguely, yes.

And that you then spoke to Alex and Craig and said, "Why does this guy have an issue with you?"---Yes.

Do you think that that could be the incident that's being referred to when there's a question raised about whether Alex's head might be on the block? Could that be the same structure?---(not transcribable) I don't think so.

30 All right, so you don't have any recollection about any superior above you suggesting that Alex's job might be in jeopardy?---Not that I can recall, no.

All right. I'm going to take you now to another WhatsApp chat, which is at page 9 of volume 24.2. You see that towards the end of that screenshot there's the date 10 August, 2018?---Yes.

And if you read the conversation that commences after that date, you'll see that the green text bubbles are from Mr Thammiah and the white are from you?---Yes.

40 And it continues onto the next page.

THE COMMISSIONER: Sorry, just to be clear about it, the communications between Mr Soliman and - - -

MS SPRUCE: Mr Thammiah.

THE COMMISSIONER: Mr - - -

MS SPRUCE: Steve Thammiah, the same person that the previous two conversations have been with.

THE COMMISSIONER: Right.

MS SPRUCE: And if we could go to the next page, please. Let me know, Mr Soliman, when you've read to the end of that page.---Yep, I've got the gist.

10 But, Mr Soliman, just to make it clearer, there's references in that message to Paul, and those are references to Paul Walker, do you agree?---That looks like the case, yes.

And there's references in the message to Guido, which are references to Guido Zatschler, is that correct?---Yes. Yes.

And Guido Zatschler was someone that you managed, correct?---Yes, for a short time at the end.

20 And then Paul Walker was someone that was managed by Guido, correct? ---Yes.

And it would appear that in this chat you're discussing an email that you'd received from Paul Walker that has been copied to Guido Zatschler, where Paul Walker has raised some sort of a question with you, which you're going to bring up with him casually over lunch.---Okay.

30 And then you see towards the end there that Mr Thammiah warns you to "keep your cards close amongst the drama of Alex and Craig".---Okay.

Can you tell us what the drama was that going on with Mr Dubois – or, sorry, first of all the reference to Alex and Craig is plainly a reference to Mr Dubois and Mr Steyn, correct?---Yes, that is correct. Yep.

Can you recall what was the drama that was going on with Alex and Craig in December 2018?---December '18? I wasn't working there at that time. That can't be the date.

40 Sorry, I withdraw that. It's August 2018, I'm sorry.---I just remember I was always having more and more issues with them. Little, the more we go through time, the more issues I was having with them just in general, and getting their normal work done and them not wanting to do, I guess, the BAU work, as I've said. That's all I can remember. Nothing specific.

Right. So, from what I understand, you're saying there was a degree of drama with Alex and Craig in respect of your relationship with them. Is that correct?---Well (not transcribable)

(not transcribable) difficult to manage?---Yes.

But are you aware of there being any drama with Alex and Craig involving those superior to you?---No.

Right.

10 THE COMMISSIONER: Can we just go back to the earlier chat messages there? Mr Soliman, the first entry. Whose communication is that, “Just making sure you’re still on track.”---That’s I think mine, isn’t it? Yeah.

It’s you, is it?---Yeah, I think so.

Addressed to whom? Who’s the recipient of this?---(not transcribable) Thammiah.

Perhaps I - - -

20 MR DOWNING: Yeah.

THE COMMISSIONER: Mr Downing?

MR DOWNING: If there are any communications relating to perhaps money between Mr Thammiah and Mr Soliman, it might be a matter that’s best left to the inquiry.

THE COMMISSIONER: I see. It’s - - -

30 MR DOWNING: Mr Soliman’s already referred to it.

THE COMMISSIONER: I see. That’s - - -

MR DOWNING: It’s part of Operation Ember and I think it might be better to leave it at that.

THE COMMISSIONER: Okay. I understand. Thank you.

MR DOWNING: Thank you, Commissioner.

40 THE COMMISSIONER: All right. Yes. I’m sorry, Ms Spruce. You go ahead.

MS SPRUCE: Commissioner, I don’t have any further questions for Mr Soliman.

THE COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MR DOWNING: Just before Mr Soliman is excused, can I just have a moment - - -

THE COMMISSIONER: Yes.

MR DOWNING: - - - just to speak to Ms - - -

THE COMMISSIONER: Well, perhaps I might adjourn if you'd like for a short time?

10

MR DOWNING: Thank you. If that would be convenient. I apologise for holding it up.

THE COMMISSIONER: No. That's all right. Just let me know when you're ready.

MR DOWNING: Thank you.

THE COMMISSIONER: I'll adjourn for a short time.

20

**SHORT ADJOURNMENT**

**[3.37pm]**

THE COMMISSIONER: Yes, Ms Spruce.

MS SPRUCE: Yes, Commissioner, I don't have any further questions for Mr Soliman.

30 THE COMMISSIONER: Very good. Thank you. Mr Downing, have you got any matters you want to - - -

MR DOWNING: Just to tender volume 24.2, which is described as Soliman Assorted Documents and which Ms Spruce was just taking Mr Soliman to.

THE COMMISSIONER: Yes, 24.2. That will make it Exhibit 211 as I understand it.

MR DOWNING: Thank you, Commissioner.

40

THE COMMISSIONER: Volume 24.2 will be admitted and will be marked as Exhibit 211.

**#EXH-211 – VOLUME 24.2 SOLIMAN ASSORTED DOCUMENTS**

THE COMMISSIONER: No reason why Mr Soliman shouldn't be excused from his summons? Very well. Mr Soliman, that completes the evidence today. You're excused from further attendance.

**THE WITNESS EXCUSED**

**[3.42pm]**

THE COMMISSIONER: Nothing else? Then I'll adjourn.

10

MR DOWNING: Thank you, Commissioner.

**AT 3.42PM THE MATTER WAS ADJOURNED ACCORDINGLY**

**[3.42pm]**