

PARAGONPUB02753
21/03/2022

PARAGON
pp 02753-02810

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INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION

THE HONOURABLE PETER M. HALL QC
CHIEF COMMISSIONER

PUBLIC HEARING

OPERATION PARAGON

Reference: Operation E18/0736

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

AT SYDNEY

ON MONDAY 21 MARCH, 2022

AT 10.00AM

Any person who publishes any part of this transcript in any way and to any person contrary to a Commission direction against publication commits an offence against section 112(2) of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988.

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

THE COMMISSIONER: Yes, good morning. Mr Downing, are we ready to proceed?

MR DOWNING: We are, thank you, Commissioner.

THE COMMISSIONER: Very well. Now, I understand Mr Jones of Counsel is appearing for Mr Alameddine and I assume there's been an application made for Mr Jones to appear. In any event, I grant leave to Mr Jones to represent Mr Hassan Alameddine for the purposes of the public inquiry. I understand also present is counsel for Mr Steyn and his instructing solicitor. I have given leave previously for them to appear so there's no need for me to make any further order. They are entitled to be present during this public inquiry, of course, representing Mr Steyn's interests. Mr Alameddine, Mr Hassan Alameddine is going to give evidence by, as I understand it, MS Teams. He is located at premises outside the Commission and that's by reason as I understand it for COVID-related reasons. Accordingly I will administer, if he chooses to take an oath I will administer the oath or if it's not an oath, an affirmation and we'll deal with that shortly. Very well. Now, Mr Downing you call Mr Alameddine?

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MR DOWNING: I do, Commissioner.

THE COMMISSIONER: Is there any other formalities that need to be dealt with?

MR DOWNING: There's just two very brief tenders. I can attend to that first. You should have a schedule in front of you, Commissioner.

THE COMMISSIONER: Yes, I do have. Just pardon me a moment. Yes.

30

MR DOWNING: I'm sorry, there is more than two, I'm sorry. There are four tenders.

THE COMMISSIONER: Very good.

MR DOWNING: So the first is an NDS application letter authored by Mitchell Howarth of 19 September, 2020 in respect of Hassan Alameddine and if I'm correct - - -

40 THE COMMISSIONER: Sorry, where is that on the schedule?

MR DOWNING: It should be on the last page of it, Commissioner.

THE COMMISSIONER: Oh, yes.

MR DOWNING: And if I think if my recollection of numbering is correct it should be Exhibit 233.

THE COMMISSIONER: Yes, I have that document on the schedule. Yes.

10 MR DOWNING: So if we could tender that and also because of the subject matter that it contains, can I seek a section 112 order in respect of that.

THE COMMISSIONER: Right. Well, I'll deal with that separately.

MR DOWNING: Thank you.

THE COMMISSIONER: The NDIS application letter in respect of Mr Hassan Alameddine will be admitted and will become, I think it's Exhibit 233.

20

#EXH-233 – NDIS APPLICATION LETTER OF HASSAN ALAMEDDINE DATED 19 SEPTEMBER 2020

MR DOWNING: Thank you.

30 THE COMMISSIONER: I make an order pursuant to section 112 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act whereby publication of that exhibit is prohibited. I'll make formal order in respect of that and a number of other matters shortly under section 112. Yes.

MR DOWNING: Thank you, Commissioner. The next are some medical records and psychological records for Mr Dubois, so that should be Exhibit 234.

THE COMMISSIONER: Yes. Those documents will be admitted as one exhibit, Exhibit 234.

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**#EXH-234 – PSYCHOLOGICAL AND MEDICAL MATERIALS OF
ALEXANDRE DUBOIS DATED 14 JANUARY 2021**

THE COMMISSIONER: And I'll make an order under section 112 in respect of that. The order I make is that it is necessary and desirable in the public interest for the documents 233 and 234 to be prohibited from publication. Accordingly I make an order under that section to that effect.

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SUPPRESSION ORDER: IT IS NECESSARY AND DESIRABLE IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST FOR THE DOCUMENTS 233 AND 234 TO BE PROHIBITED FROM PUBLICATION. ACCORDINGLY I MAKE AN ORDER UNDER THAT SECTION TO THAT EFFECT. THE ONLY EXCEPTIONS ARE IN RESPECT OF COMMISSION OFFICERS FOR STATUTORY PURPOSES AND BETWEEN THE INDIVIDUAL WITNESSES WHO HAVE BEEN NAMED IN THE DIRECTION, THAT IS TO SAY BETWEEN THEM AND THEIR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVES. AND THE ORDER MADE UNDER SECTION 112 OR THE DIRECTION UNDER 112 IS SUBJECT TO ANY FURTHER ORDER THAT MAY BE MADE BY THE COMMISSION.

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MR DOWNING: Thank you, Commissioner. The next item is corruption prevention binder 8. So it's a binder of materials and that should be Exhibit 235.

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THE COMMISSIONER: Yes. The CP binder 8 additional documents will be admitted and marked as Exhibit 235.

#EXH-235 – CP BINDER 8

THE COMMISSIONER: Yes.

MR DOWNING: And then finally there are some ASIC records for Seina Corporation, S-e-i-n-a, and that should be Exhibit 236.

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THE COMMISSIONER: Thank you. The Seina ASIC documents as so identified will become Exhibit 236.

#EXH-236 – SEINA ASIC RECORDS

10 THE COMMISSIONER: I should make it clear that the making of the direction, as I have, under section 112, the only exceptions are in respect of Commission officers for statutory purposes and between the individual witnesses who have been named in the direction, that is to say between them and their legal representatives. And the order made under section 112 or the direction under 112 is subject to any further order that may be made by the Commission. Now, Mr Downing, where do we go from there?

MR DOWNING: Then we call Mr Alameddine. Thank you, Commissioner.

20 THE COMMISSIONER: Very good.

MR DOWNING: And I might just ask that before he is even sworn, that he just try and adjust the camera slightly - - -

THE COMMISSIONER: Yes.

MR DOWNING: - - - 'cause we're losing part of his head. I wonder if the camera could be slightly tilted down, if that's possible? Well, that does seem to be better if he even sits in that position.

30 THE COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr Alameddine. Mr Alameddine, we're about to take evidence. Counsel Assisting, Mr Downing of Senior Counsel will be asking you questions. For the purposes of giving evidence in this public inquiry, you need to give evidence either on an oath or affirmation which, in effect, has the effect of your declaring that the evidence you give will be true and correct. So, or I should say it'll be the truth. Now, do you wish to take an oath or an affirmation to give evidence?

MR ALAMEDDINE: Either, Commissioner.

40 THE COMMISSIONER: All right. Very well. Well, then, I take it by your answer, you're happy to swear an oath. Is that right?

MR ALAMEDDINE: Yes.

THE COMMISSIONER: Very well. Do you have a Bible handy there?

MR ALAMEDDINE: Yes, I do. I have the English text - - -

THE COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

THE COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Yes.

MR DOWNING: I suspect there are some applications to be made in respect of Mr Alameddine's evidence or have all orders been made? I thought those appearing for Mr Alameddine might want to make an application in respect of the answers that he gives?

10

THE COMMISSIONER: All right. I was about to check. Mr Jones, as I understand it, is appearing for Mr Alameddine. Is that so, Mr Downing? That's your understanding?

MR DOWNING: Yes. Yes.

THE COMMISSIONER: And I'm not aware as to whether Mr Jones, because I can't see him on-screen, I can only apparently see one person at a time, whether or not we have made connection with Mr Jones. And I don't know whether he can hear me speaking at the moment - - -

20

MR JONES: I can, Commissioner. Can you hear me?

THE COMMISSIONER: Yes, I can.

MR JONES: Yes.

THE COMMISSIONER: Mr Jones, just to confirm, then, you are located in a remote position from the Commission and you are happy to proceed by way of the electronic process known as MS Teams, so that though you're not physically present here in the hearing room, you are nonetheless participating as counsel on behalf of Mr - - -

30

MR JONES: Yes.

THE COMMISSIONER: - - - Hassan Alameddine? That's correct, is it?

MR JONES: It is correct, Commissioner. Thank you.

THE COMMISSIONER: Then before we proceed with the evidence of Mr Alameddine, is there any application of any kind that you wish to make, Mr Jones, at this stage?

MR JONES: Yes. Mr Alameddine seeks to rely on the or invite the privilege against self-incrimination, Commissioner.

THE COMMISSIONER: Yes. Very well. And, Mr Alameddine, has an understanding based on what advice you've given him, I take it, Mr Jones,
10 as to the - - -

MR JONES: That's so, your Honour.

THE COMMISSIONER: - - - effect of an order made by the Commission under section 38 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act?

MR JONES: Yes, Commissioner.

THE COMMISSIONER: Yes. Thank you. Mr Alameddine, as you've just
20 heard, your counsel has sought an order or direction of the Commission, the effect of which is that you are permitted to object and if you do object to answering question or producing documents or other items that may arise. The effect of the objection is that whilst you must still, of course, answer the question or produce a document or thing that you may be required to produce, the effect of the objection is that your answer or the document or item you produce cannot then be used in the future against you in any civil proceedings or, subject to an exception I'll mention in a moment, any criminal proceedings. You understand that?---Yes, Commissioner.

30 The exception, however, to that is that the direction does not prevent the evidence from being used against you in any prosecution, if there were one, of an offence under the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act, under which this Commission operates. That would include, for example, an offence of giving false or misleading evidence intentionally, and the penalty for such an offence would be a term of imprisonment for up to five years. So in other words, that's the exception. But otherwise the evidence can't be used against you other than for an offence committed under the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act. Do you understand?
40 ---Yes, Commissioner.

Very well. I'll proceed to make a direction which has the effect of declaring that all answers given by you are covered by your objection. Pursuant to section 38 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act, I declare that all answers given by the witness, Mr Hassan Alameddine, and any documents or things that may be produced by him during the course of his evidence at this public inquiry are to be regarded as having been given or produced on objection. That being the case, there is no need for Mr Alameddine to make objection in respect of any particular answer given or document or thing produced.

10

DIRECTION AS TO OBJECTIONS BY WITNESS: PURSUANT TO SECTION 38 OF THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION ACT, I DECLARE THAT ALL ANSWERS GIVEN BY THE WITNESS, MR HASSAN ALAMEDDINE, AND ANY DOCUMENTS OR THINGS THAT MAY BE PRODUCED BY HIM DURING THE COURSE OF HIS EVIDENCE AT THIS PUBLIC INQUIRY ARE TO BE REGARDED AS HAVING BEEN GIVEN OR PRODUCED ON OBJECTION. THAT BEING THE CASE, THERE IS NO NEED FOR MR ALAMEDDINE TO MAKE OBJECTION IN RESPECT OF ANY PARTICULAR ANSWER GIVEN OR DOCUMENT OR THING PRODUCED.

20

THE COMMISSIONER: Yes, thank you, Mr Downing.

MR DOWNING: Thank you, Commissioner. Mr Alameddine, I just want to make sure first of all that you can see and hear me? Can you please confirm?---I can.

30

All right.---I can.

If there are any difficulties with the audio, because you are giving evidence by audiovisual evidence, or with the video as well, can you please let me know?---Yes.

And at various points documents will be shown to you, again via the screen. If there's any difficulty in either size or with the document not coming up, can you please let me know?---Yes.

40

And finally if at any stage for health reasons you need a break, can I ask that you let me know?---Thank you.

Right. Could I ask that you state your full name?---Hassan Alameddine.

And your date of birth as you understand it?---[REDACTED].

What year?---'82.

10 1982?---Yep.

All right, thank you. And are you aware of the nature of the investigation that this Commission has been conducting in this matter?---Yes.

And are you aware that in May and June of last year, this Commission began conducting public hearings into certain allegations in respect of Mr Alexandre Dubois and Mr Craig Steyn?---Yeah, maybe not the timing, but yes.

20 All right. Well, just so that we're clear, are you aware that the allegations in the broad are that Mr Alameddine and Mr – I withdraw that. Mr Dubois and Mr Steyn, both RMS or former RMS employees, partially and/or dishonestly exercised their official functions by awarding RMS contracts to companies with which they were associated between about 2009 and June 2019?---Okay.

You are – when you say “okay”, it's not clear to me whether you're agreeing or disagreeing. Are you aware that that is the nature of the allegations that this Commission has been investigating?---Yes.

30

All right. And just on that front, it's correct, isn't it, that you've had access to the brief of documents in the matter since about June of last year? I withdraw – yeah, sorry, June of last year.---Not sure about the timing.

But you've had access to them for some time, would you agree with that?---Yeah.

40 And do you recall that the public hearing began in about May last year and there are a number of witnesses who came and gave evidence in this Commission?---Yep.

Did you watch any of that evidence?---Briefly.

For instance, did you watch some of the evidence of Mr Dubois?---Yeah, but as you know I, it gives me anxiety so I didn't really watch too much of it.

Is it the case that you began watching some of Mr Dubois' evidence but you found it difficult to continue to watch it?---Yeah, that's correct.

10 All right. Could you estimate how much evidence you watched, that is, via a livestream of Mr Dubois giving evidence?---I'm not sure.

Was it over multiple days? Was it just one day?---Maybe snippets here and there.

You're aware also, aren't you, that evidence was given by a number of persons who controlled companies that were doing work for the RMS at the time that Mr Dubois was working there?---I'm sorry, can you repeat the question.

20

Sure.---You lost me.

Sure. So I've asked you so far about you watching any evidence that Mr Dubois gave to this Commission and you've agreed with me that you were also aware that the nature of the allegations being investigated here are that Mr Dubois and also Mr Steyn but partially and/or dishonestly exercised their official functions by awarding RMS contracts for certain companies with which they were associated. You're aware of that. You've agreed with me that you're aware that that was the nature of the allegation being
30 investigated.---I'm sorry, your question is too long and I lose concentration. If you can just make it a bit short and that way I can answer yes or no.

I'll try and make it simpler. You controlled certain companies that were doing RMS contract work for Mr Dubois between 2009 - - -?---Correct.

- - - and 2019. Correct?---Yes.

And you're aware that there were other people that you've met at various times also controlling companies and also doing work for Mr Dubois.
40 ---Yep.

And you're aware, aren't you, that some of those persons have given evidence to this Commission?---Yes.

For instance, you knew personally from the work you did Mr Barrak Hadid. Correct?---Yep.

And Mr Chahid Chahine?---Yep.

10 And you're aware, aren't you, that they came to this Commission and gave evidence?---Yep.

Also you're aware that another person that you personally knew, Mr Towfik Taha, controlled a company that did some RMS work for Mr Dubois.---Yep.

And you're aware that he came to this Commission and gave evidence. ---Yep.

20 And you're also aware, aren't you, that – I withdraw that. You know Towfik Taha's brother, Hussein Taha?---Yep.

You know him by the nickname Humphrey. Correct?---Yep.

You're aware, aren't you, that he has also at certain times gone by the name John Goldberg?---Okay.

Again when you say "okay" I don't know what you're saying. Are you agreeing or disagreeing or saying you don't know?---I, I, yeah, yeah, yeah, I, I know him as Hussein or Humphrey.

30 Okay. You don't know him as John Goldberg?---Look, I may have heard of – how long has he been John Goldberg for?

Well, some years now but in any event have you heard at some point that he has used that name?---Maybe, maybe vaguely but I haven't seen or had any dealings with Hussein for a very long time.

Okay.---So I don't really remember, yeah.

40 Just to go back a step. Were you aware that Hussein Taha also controlled a company that was doing some RMS work?---I think he did, yeah. I think so

but I vaguely, I, Mr Downing, I'm going to try and answer you as honestly as I possibly can but my memory doesn't serve me the best.

All right.---But I think so, yes, but I'm not really sure.

And, Mr Alameddine, where you're not sure of something or you don't remember something, please don't hesitate to tell me that. I don't want you to speculate.---Okay. So I'm going to answer to the best of my recollection.

10 Okay.---But, yeah.

All right. Were you aware then that Mr Hussein Taha has also given evidence to this Commission?---Okay. Yes.

All right. Now, thinking just of those contractors that I've asked you about then – so Barrak Hadid, Chahid Chahine, Towfik Taha, Hussein Taha – did you watch any of their evidence?---Maybe snippets but like I said to you, I, I have an underlying medical condition and it just, it brings me stress so I try and avoid things that bring me stress.

20

All right. And when you say an underlying medical condition, do you mean an anxiety condition?---Yeah.

And is that a condition in respect of which you've received some treatment in recent years?---Yeah.

And do you recall the name of the person that you have sought some treatment from?---I think his name's Mitch.

30 Mitchell Howarth?---Yeah.

And Mr Howarth is a psychologist based in North Sydney?---Yeah.

And is it correct that you have consulted him on a number of occasions?---Yeah.

And when you consulted him, was that face-to-face or via some form of audiovisual link, like we're using now?---Yeah.

40 Sorry? Which of the two?---The, the latter.

Okay. And was that while you were overseas?---Yeah.

Okay. And you're aware, aren't you, that you have produced a report from Mr Howarth in respect of you to this Commission?---I gave the Commission the report, yeah.

Thank you. Now, having asked you about what you can recall watching, that is the evidence given to this Commission by Mr Dubois and various contractors, have you also tried to read some of the documents that are
10 contained in the brief?---I've got access but I, I may have dabbled on it but, like I said to you, it just brings me, brings me stress and so I didn't really get into it much.

Okay. Well, thinking about the time, I'm suggesting to you it was during last year that you got access to the brief. Between then and now, how much time would you estimate you spent looking at the documents? Accepting what you say about it giving you stress but how much time have you spent trying to read them?---I, I'm not sure. I, I really can't answer that. It
20 wouldn't have been a long period of time, just, just, like, dabbling here and there, then that was it.

Okay. But the documents you've looked at, are they documents concerning your companies or documents concerning Mr Dubois or other contractors? ---Yes, it's things that were about me, just anything related to me and that was about it.

Okay. And I'll come to the details later but as far as you're concerned, over the time that you were doing RMS work through Mr Dubois, it was through three companies. Correct?---Well, to my recollection, it was two companies.
30

All right. Well, let's go through them. Do you remember the first one in time that was set up and did RMS work?---No, you're right, three companies. You're right. Three. It was three companies. That's correct. I'm sorry.

All right. Well, can you assist me with the first one, the name of the first one?---I think it was Areva.

That's Areva Corporation?---Yeah.
40

And do you have a recollection now of the time period during which it was doing work for the RMS through Mr Dubois?---I think that was the initial company that was utilised.

Right. But can you now assist in terms of the time frame or not? Do you not recall?---No. It, it was early on, early days but I don't really have a grasp on the amount of time or whatever, but I know it was the first company used.

10 Okay. I'll take you to documents later but I'm going to suggest to you now that it was from about November 2011 to May 2013 that Areva did RMS work. So we're talking about roughly a decade ago now.---A decade?

Roughly. So from November 2011 - - -?---November 2011 to what, sorry?

November 2011 to May 2013, I'm going to suggest Areva did the work. ---Yeah, that sounds about right.

20 Right. Now, the second company in time that you controlled that did RMS work. Do you remember what that was?---I would assume that would have Seina.

Right. So that's Seina Group Pty Ltd?---Yeah.

And Seina is spelt S-e-i-n-a?---Yeah.

Again, can you assist us to the time period during which it did the work or not?---I don't know. I think until, I, it would, it would have been from when we stopped using Areva to, maybe, 2019.

30

Right. Well, I'm going to suggest and we'll take you to documents later, that in terms of when it was paid, first paid by the RMS in September 2013 and that the work continued until 27 May, 2019, so right up until then. ---Okay. Yeah.

THE COMMISSIONER: Could I just ask you. You'll be asked questions about this later, I expect, but do you remember the reason why Seina Group Pty Ltd came into the picture - - -?---Yes, Commissioner.

40 - - - or why it was brought into the picture?---Yeah. I think because, I think because we transferred money to a company that everyone else transferred

money to, and then Alex wanted to get rid of that link, so that's why Seina was brought in.

THE COMMISSIONER: All right. Thank you.

MR DOWNING: Thank you, Commissioner. Can I just ask you, Mr Alameddine, at times when you're answering questions you do seem to be looking down. Do you have any notes or documents in front of you or are you just looking down at the table?---No. No, no. No, I'm just looking
10 down at the table.

All right. Thank you. All right.---But I am, I am writing down some stuff but I didn't bring anything with me.

Right. So you're just writing onto a notepad?---Yeah. Yeah.

Right. Okay. All right, so I suggested to you then that Seina Group did work from or was paid for work from about September 2013 until 27 May, 2019.---Yep.
20

And just as a reference point, you're aware, aren't you, that on 18 June, 2019, search warrants were executed seeking documents and devices that you held at the time?---Yep, yes.

So I'm suggesting that Seina was doing work really right up until, or was paid right up until the month before the search warrant was executed.---That would sound correct, yeah.

Okay. Now, there was a third company, I think you've confirmed that.
30 ---Yeah, what was that called again?

Do you recall now? I can assist you but I want to see if you can recall the name now.---It's on the tip of my tongue. Mmm, Efficient, Efficient, EPMD.

Thank you. So Efficient Project Management & Deliveries Pty Ltd?
---Yeah. That was it.

And I'm going to use the acronym EPMD to refer to that, so if you, when I
40 use that term, that's what I'm referring to, if you can just understand it that way when I ask you questions.---Okay.

And it was the last in time, wasn't it?---I'm sorry, what does that mean?

Well, there were the three companies. It started with Areva. It did work for the RMS for Mr Dubois first in time, then the second in time was Seina Group, and the third in time was EPMD.---Yes. Yes.

And I'll come to the details later in terms of particular jobs, et cetera, but it was the third company set up still to do RMS work for Mr Dubois.---Yes.

10

And I'm going to suggest that in terms of the work it was paid for, that it first was paid by the RMS in May 2015, and it continued receiving payments through until 15 April, 2019. So again, right through until within a month or two of when the search warrant was executed on you.---Okay.

Does that sound correct, that Seina continued to do work and then EPMD was doing work as well?---That's right.

20 And I'll come as to why it was that EPMD was set up later, but can I just ask you this detail? It's correct, isn't it, that whereas Areva and Seina Group were set up with you as the director, it was different with EPMD, correct?---That's correct.

And who was the person that it was set up as, at least on paper, the director at the time EPMD was established?---A relative of mine.

And is that relative Simon Raha?---Correct.

30 And is his name in Arabic, is it Samir Rifai?---That's correct.

Whilst he was on paper as the person that controlled EPMD, is it correct that, in fact, it was you?---That's correct. He had nothing to do with that company.

Right. You had other business interests with Mr Raha, correct?---Yeah, that's correct.

40 And I'll come to the detail later, but the interests that you had with him involved exporting meat from Australia to the Middle East.---Yep.

And you'd set up a business that he was involved in and you were involved in to do that.---That's correct.

That he was actually involved in that meat business.---That's correct.

And as far as the RMS work that EPMD was doing, it's correct, isn't it, that it was just his name you were using, he had no role in the company?
---That's correct.

- 10 Now, thinking about those three companies, then, and the RMS work that was done, it's correct, isn't it, that it was ultimately about a decade of work that those three companies controlled by you did for the RMS?---From what you're telling me here, yes.

And do you have any recollection now as to how much money was paid to those three companies over that period of time?---I'm not sure. We were probably doing a, a million dollars of work a year, roughly, maybe, something around those lines.

- 20 So that that would mean over a decade or so, from 2009 to mid-2019, perhaps around the \$10 million mark, 10 years at a million a year?---I, I, yeah, that would sound close to a figure I would assume.

All right. I'll take you to the records for each of the companies later, but I'm going to suggest that over that period that the total in terms of what was billed to the RMS by your companies was \$11,017,116.---Okay.

But that's fairly close to the estimate you've given. Does it sound roughly right? So about \$11 million?---Yes, correct, correct. Correct.

- 30 Now, can I just check one matter with you. Mr Raha, who I've asked you some questions about already, are you aware of his location at the moment?
---He's in Lebanon.

And do you know where in Lebanon he is?---He had a, a matter that he was dragged into, from what I understand, with a relative of his, and he's currently incarcerated.

- 40 In Lebanon?---That's correct.

THE COMMISSIONER: What city? What city in Lebanon?---I'm not sure where he, he is, to be honest with you. He could be in Beirut.

MR DOWNING: And to the best of your knowledge, for how long has he been incarcerated?---A couple of years.

THE COMMISSIONER: When would you have last seen or spoken to him?---Maybe, I would estimate two years.

10 And what were the circumstances in which you communicated or saw him two years ago?---Actually, no, the, the last time I physically saw him was two years ago but I have spoken to him on, by phone after that, but I don't remember when it was. It would be – I don't, to be honest with you, Commissioner, I don't really remember. It could have been six months ago, it could have been seven months or eight months. But physically two years, by phone maybe six or seven months.

Right. Without troubling you about the exact date of when you last spoke to him, what were the circumstances of the last time you spoke to him by
20 phone?---I don't understand your question, Commissioner.

Okay. I think you said you last spoke to him not face-to-face, within possibly six months ago or some time more than that.---That's correct. That's correct. I, I, yeah (not transcribable)

How did you come to be talking to him?---I think via the gaol phone or something like that. Yeah.

What was the conversation about, as you best recall?---Just health, just
30 health, "How's your health? How are you? How's everything going? Are you okay?" that type of thing.

Did you ring him or did he ring you?---No, I think he rang me. But I'm not, I'm not sure. I think he rang me.

Right. Where did you understand he - - -?---And I, I, I speak, I spoke to his lawyer sometime, so just, yeah.

Where did you understand he was located when you first spoke to him by
40 phone?---I think he was incarcerated in Beirut.

Right. So did you initiate that call or did he initiate it?---I don't remember.

Righto. Yes, Mr Downing.

MR DOWNING: Thank you, Commissioner. Just going back, then, to the allegations that this Commission has been investigating and the evidence that's been given, are you aware that evidence has been given to this Commission to the effect that companies that you controlled were involved in paying kickbacks to Mr Dubois in return for him allocating RMS work?
10 ---Yes.

And I'll come to detail later, but in terms of the broad allegation, it's correct, isn't it, that companies you were controlling did pay kickbacks to Mr Dubois in return for work.---Yes.

And by kickbacks - - -?---They weren't called, they weren't called kickbacks, they were initially called, no, I think the term used was "management fees" because, yeah. But, yes, to answer your question, yes.

20 All right. So when you say the term used was "management fees", is that a term that Mr Dubois used or that you used?---No, I didn't make up that term.

Well, then who did?---I, I think it was Mr Dubois.

All right. And again, I'll come to the detail on how it was that he sought or you offered kickbacks in due course, but just for now, while he referred to them, you say, as management fees, you understood, though, didn't you that they were in fact a form of kickback?---Mr Downing, I never went out and got work. There was work available and Mr Dubois got the work and they, that work was given to me to do and it was a fee for him. Like, it's like when a company has got a sales rep, that rep will go out and source work and that rep is paid a commission on that work that's sourced and, and then I haven't got that, that, that knowledge of running the, the office side of things. I don't, I don't have that experience, and so for him to manage that with, in terms of documentation I'm not, I wasn't documentation savvy. And so it was a fee based on getting work and just managing like the documentation, the safety documentation and the quality assurance aspect of the works that we conducted.

40 All right. Have you finished that answer?---Yes.

All right. But can I go back to what the question actually asked, which was while he described it as a management fee, you understood that in truth what he was asking for was a form of kickback. Do you agree that that's what you understood at the time?---At the time I, look I don't really recall what the state of my state of mind was to be honest with you, Mr Downing, but - - -

10 THE COMMISSIONER: Mr Alameddine, you understand what the term "kickback" refers to, do you?---Yes, I do, Commissioner.

Well, what's your understanding as to what that phrase refers to?---Paying somebody to receive some form of favourable treatment.

Right. Okay. Thank you. Yes.

MR DOWNING: Thank you.

20 THE COMMISSIONER: Just before you go down this path, as to Mr Alameddine's background and so on, his education and the like, are you going to deal with that later?

MR DOWNING: I am.

THE COMMISSIONER: Yeah.

MR DOWNING: I am. I just want to start with a broad proposition then I'll go those matters, Commissioner.

30 THE COMMISSIONER: Yeah. No, that's fine. I knew you would be at some stage. I just wondered when.

MR DOWNING: Thank you. Accepting that it's some years ago now because I've suggested to you that the work that your companies did for Mr Dubois started in about 2009 – I withdraw that – 2011, but even allowing for that did you at the time Mr Dubois asked for a management fee have the view that whatever term he was using in truth what he was after was a kickback?---I know that now. I, I see that now but that's in hindsight.

40 What did you think at the time when he asked for a management fee, what was your thought process?---He actually had a very hands-on type approach

to, to the work so, you know, he would, he wanted to ensure that everything was done correctly, quality assurance - - -

Well, that may be so, Mr – I'm sorry, I spoke over the top of you.---Quality assurance, quality assurance was very important and he would be very hands-on and just to make sure that everything was done correctly so to speak.

10 All right.---But, yes, I do understand that the (not transcribable) kickback is kickback, yeah.

But what was your thought at the time? Putting aside whether he was interested in quality assurance or getting things done properly, you knew, didn't you, that he was being paid by the RMS?---Yes, he was.

Right. And when you paid him his management fees, and I'll come to the details in terms of how much and how and in what circumstances later, you knew that this was money going into his pocket?---Yes.

20 So you must have understood that this was not something he was disclosing to the RMS.---No.

You didn't know that or you did, you knew that he wasn't?---No, I don't think he was, no. I don't think he was disclosing it to anybody, no.

So you must have understood, even at the time if you were perhaps a bit naïve in business, that what it was was a form of illicit payment. That is, he's getting a benefit on top of whatever money he's being paid by the RMS.---Yes.

30

All right. Thank you. Now, can I go back then, please, to your birth. It's correct, isn't it, that you were born in Lebanon?---Yep.

Sorry, is that correct?---Yep. Yes.

And was it in [REDACTED]?---Yep.

And it was on [REDACTED], [REDACTED] you've confirmed already?---Yes.

40 And it's correct, isn't it, that your family moved to Australia when you were about six or so?---That's correct.

And is it correct that you were the oldest of four children?---Five kids.

Five kids. I apologise. Is one of your younger siblings Ahmed Alameddine?---Yeah.

And is he about nine years younger than you?---I would assume so, around, yeah, nine, ten years.

- 10 And is it correct he's the third of the children, so you're the oldest and Ahmed's the third in order?---Yeah. I'm the oldest. He's second-last. He's the fourth.

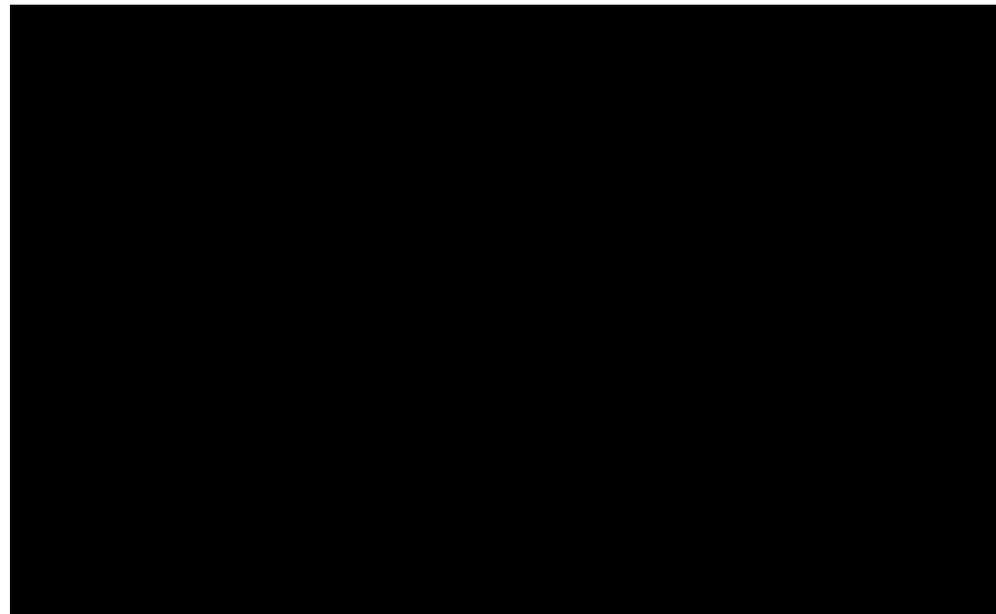
Sorry. The fourth, then. Okay. Thank you. Now, growing up, it's correct that your family lived in [REDACTED] in Sydney?---Yeah.

And in terms of the actual location, the location is [REDACTED]. Correct?---Yes.

- 20 All right. And you lived there for all of your youth until adulthood. Correct?---Yes.

As did your parents and your siblings?---Yes.

30

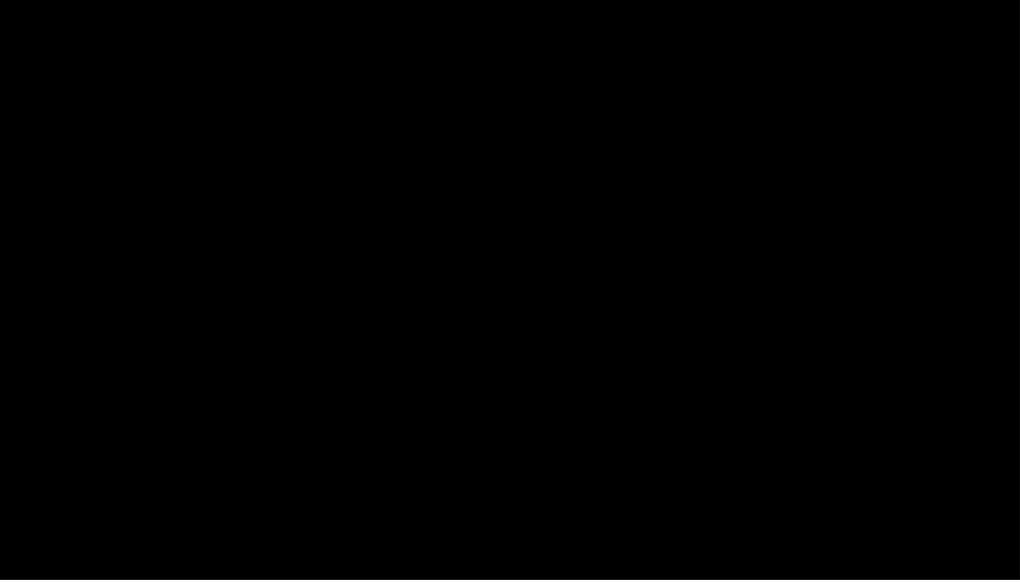


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THE COMMISSIONER: Perhaps just on that, Mr Downing, as you know, we normally take a morning tea break at 11.30. We did start late because of organisational matters. I think, notwithstanding that we started late, we'll take the morning tea adjournment for the benefit of staff and make sure the systems are operating and so on.

20

MR DOWNING: Thank you.

THE COMMISSIONER: If that's convenient. So we'll go through till 11.30. That's about, according to that clock, another five minutes.

MR DOWNING: Thank you, Commissioner.

THE COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

30 MR DOWNING: So just thinking about that address, Mr Alameddine, is it correct that you lived in one of the units at that address?---Yes.

And it was divided up, is it correct, into three units?---That's correct.

So you lived in one. Is it correct that your brother Ahmed and his wife lived in another?---Yes.

And was there a third person who wasn't related to your family who was renting in the third unit?---That's correct.

40

Was there also, as part of that address, an office that you used from time to time?---Yes.

And did you have that set up with computers where you could do paperwork, et cetera?---Yes.

All right. And - - -?---It was office, it was an office that was used by a lot of people but including myself, yes.

10 All right. And did Mr Raha use it as well?---Yeah.

All right.---My family used it, Mr Raha used it, and maybe if someone wanted to do some private study that's related to me, they would use that, yeah.

Well, did your brother Ahmed use it from time to time as well?---My brother Ahmed used to work for me.

20 Well, I'll come to the detail of that later, but he did have some involvement with certain of your businesses, didn't he?---As an employee.

And was that, did that tend to be later in the piece of the work you did, so closer to 2019, or earlier in the piece?---To be, to be honest with you, I don't recall. My brother Ahmed is a, he's a good man, he's a family man, and he just did whatever I told him to do. It's, he's, I don't recall when but I would take him with me to work when I needed workforce, and, and that type of stuff. He would service my trucks, he would get my tools ready, he would just do what I told him to do.

30 Okay. But did he, and just thinking perhaps about the paperwork side of the work you're doing for the RMS, did he sometimes use the office to do that? ---No, I did paperwork - - -

Are you sure - - -?--- - - - unless there was a rare instance in which he was forced, if I was not in the country or if I, whatever, but he, that wasn't, that wasn't his thing. His job was to manage my trucks, manage the tools and stuff like that. So he was a worker.

40 Are you sure that – but thinking about one of the aspects of the work you did, I'm going to suggest that one aspect was doing signage at various overpasses around Sydney.---Yeah. Yes. I, I did signage.

Did he - - -?---I used his, I used his name sometimes because with, Simon Raha was overseas working with me, and sometimes I would use Ahmed's name on an email because I can't be one person running two companies working for the RMS, so I would use his details as a cover. But, no, it wasn't Ahmed that actually did paperwork that I would say, "That's your job, you've got to do paperwork." It was actually, most of the time it was, from what I recall, it was me.

10 Are you sure that when it came to putting together the paperwork to do with signage that he didn't sometimes actually fulfil that job? That is, to put together the paperwork to meet various standards that had to be set, sorry, met for the signage?---Yeah, yeah, we were given, we were given standards by Mr Dubois and we learnt the standard so we can apply the signage to the correct dimensions when they were installed on footpaths, and I, Ahmed being the worker, I made sure he understood that booklet back to front.

And did he sometimes literally use the computer in the office in order to put the paperwork together for you?---That's correct, that's correct.

20

Okay. Thank you. Is that a convenient time, Commissioner?

THE COMMISSIONER: Yes, it is. Mr Alameddine, we're going to take a morning tea adjournment, it will last for about 15 minutes, and then we'll resume around about quarter to 12.00, so if you could be ready to resume at quarter to 12.00.---Thank you. Thank you.

Very well. I'll adjourn.

30

SHORT ADJOURNMENT

[11.29am]

THE COMMISSIONER: I apologise for the delay in restarting. I had some other matters to deal with in the adjournment. Thank you.

MR DOWNING: Thank you, Commissioner.

THE COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

40

MR DOWNING: Mr Alameddine, can I just check again that you can see and hear me okay?---Yes.

Thank you. Can I just take you back then to your schooling. Is it correct that you attended the Malek Fahd Islamic School in Greenacre?---Correct.

And you went through and completed your HSC there. Correct?---Correct.

And are you able to tell us now what year it was that you completed year 12?---I think it was either '99 or 2000, one of the two.

10 All right. Well, this may assist. 2000 was the year that the Sydney Olympics were held.---Mmm. Yeah, I - - -

Do you recall that around that time you were doing some security work?---Yeah.

So would that suggest that by then you'd completed your HSC and had graduated from high school?---Yes.

20 All right. Now, it's correct, isn't it, that one of your classmates, that is, in the same year as you at Malek Fahd, was Towfik Taha?---Yes.

And he was a friend at school?---Yes.

So he was someone you knew when you were friendly with, from high school?---Yes.

Now, his younger brother, Hussein Taha, I take it he's some years younger than you?---Yes.

30 But was he someone that you had some passing familiarity with when he was still at school?---Yes.

Would you sometimes visit the Taha household?---Yes.

All right. And just dealing with Towfik and Hussein, did you know them both by nicknames?---Yes.

And what was Towfik Taha's nickname?---Toffee.

40 Thank you. And I think you've already confirmed that you knew Hussein Taha by the nickname Humphrey?---Yes.

Okay. Now, did you at some point learn that Towfik Taha had become a contractor doing RMS work for Mr Dubois?---I don't remember the exact sequence of events, but okay.

Sorry, when you say "okay", what do you mean by that?---Yes.

10 All right. I'll come to the details of that later. Can I perhaps then just go back a step. It's the case, isn't it, that you – so I think you've agreed with me you completed school, it would seem in about 1999, and by 2000 you were doing some security work.---I was at uni and doing security.

All right.---Correct.

And did you start a degree at the University of Western Sydney?---Yes.

And was that a bachelor of some type of engineering?---Yes.

20 Was it computer engineering or construction?---Computer.

Right. And is that where you met Mr Dubois?---Yes.

So was he a student also enrolled doing an engineering degree of some sort at the University of Western Sydney?---Yes.

And I'm going to suggest that was in about the year 2000. Does that sound right to you?---Yes.

30 And did you strike up a friendship?---We were mates.

And is it the case that during that year he did some security work with you? ---With me?

Well, you both did some security work at similar – well, I withdraw that. At the same location.---Yes.

So was it the case that you organised that work or did Mr Dubois?---I don't remember.

40 All right. Now, during the time you were at the University of Western Sydney, you said you were mates. Did Mr Dubois seek some help – I

withdraw that. Did you seek some help from Mr Dubois in terms of assisting with your work?---He, he had come from overseas and he'd already done the subjects that we were doing. I would ask him periodically just intermittent questions here and there. And we were friends. We, we worked together. I would pick him up every day and drop him off at uni. It was out of my way because we were friends. That's what friends do.

10 The way you're describing it, is it the case that you were doing him a favour by picking him up and dropping him off, and he was doing you a favour by helping you with some of the subjects where he'd already done them?
---Like, I didn't receive that much help off him, but if I asked, he would answer.

Did you ever offer to him to pay him to actually tutor you or assist you on a more regular basis with the work?---Well, we had tutors at university. They're a class, they're called tutorial classes. But you have questions here and there that I'd ask.

20 Right. Just so that I'm clear, I'm not asking you about the university-organised tutorials. You know what I mean by that, don't you, that there are lectures and then tutorials?---Yeah.

I'm asking about something arranged privately and separately, and I'm asking whether you ever spoke to Mr Dubois and said, in effect, "I'll pay you some money in order to have you help me with some of the subjects?"
---Mr Downing, I heard the fiction that he said when he said that I actually, he was my tutor and I didn't pay him. That's a whole heap of fiction. You and I both know that.

30 Well, don't speculate about what I know. Just tell me, is it the case that you never, ever offered to pay him to tutor him?---Why would I pay him for?

Well, please, please - - -?---He's my friend and I'm, and I'm picking him up and dropping him off.

Please try not to answer with a question. Just if you disagree that that ever happened, then just tell me that it didn't happen.---No, it didn't happen.

40 All right. Do you recall - - -?---And plus you're asking me about something, I'm sorry, you're asking me about something that happened in which year?

The year 2000, when you were both at the University of Western Sydney.
---Mr Downing, it's 2022 and I really don't remember what I had for
breakfast.

All right. I'm just trying to understand the nature of your early relationship,
and if you don't recall or you're not sure, you don't remember or you
disagree, you're at liberty to tell me that. You understand that, don't you?
---Okay, okay.

10

All right. Do you recall at any point going to Mr Dubois and asking him to
assist with preparing answers for an exam paper?---Prepare, like study
notes?

That is to prepare answers for an exam paper.---No, we just, I'd ask him ad
hoc questions.

All right. Do you ever recall going to him and saying, "My friends and I
have stolen an exam paper that will be coming up for our next exams and
we want you to help us do the answers?"---It's very convenient, it's a very
convenient, it's very convenient for him to say something like that - - -

20

Well, again, try just to focus - - -?--- - - - the, the - - -

- - - on the question.---No, Mr Downing.

Did you ever go him and say - - -?---No.

- - - those things?---No.

30

So did you ever steal an exam paper?---Why would I do that?

Try just to answer the questions rather than asking me questions if you
could.---How, how do you steal an exam paper, Mr Downing?

THE COMMISSIONER: Mr Alameddine, you've been asked not to answer
questions by putting questions. Just deal with the facts, as you know them
to be and we'll get through this - - -?---Yes, Commissioner. Yes,
Commissioner.

40

- - - quicker than having to keep arguing the toss, as it were. Just try and focus if you would on the questioning and directly answer the question to the best of your knowledge.---Yes, Commissioner.

If you don't know, just say you don't know.---Yeah. Yeah.

MR DOWNING: Thank you. So is it the case that you deny ever going to him and saying "I personally" or "My friends and I have stolen an exam paper. We want you to help us solve the questions"?---Yeah, I, I didn't do that.

Right. And is it the case that you deny ever having yourself or with friends stolen an exam paper at the University of Western Sydney?---You know, I would assume that lying to the Commission is very serious, Mr Downing, so, no.

All right. So your answer is that you never stole an exam paper or was associated with friends who stole an exam paper?---No.

20 When you say "no" you're agreeing that you deny that you ever did those things?---No, no, no, no.

I just need to be clear. Are you saying - - -?---No.

- - - "No, I disagree with your question" or "No, I never did those things"?
---Never did those things.

Thank you. Now, you're aware, aren't you, that after one year at the University of Western Sydney, Mr Dubois moved to [REDACTED]
30 [REDACTED]?---He didn't want to be there, Mr Downing.

THE COMMISSIONER: It doesn't matter what his reason was. Again, to try to get through this more quickly, if you know he left, okay, just say "Yeah, he did leave."---Okay. All right. Yes, he did leave, Mr Downing.

MR DOWNING: And were you aware that he left UWS and he moved to [REDACTED]?---Yes.

40 And did you become aware that he was continuing to do a Bachelor of Computer Engineering or some form of engineering degree at [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]?---Yes.

Now, I'm going to suggest to you that he attended [REDACTED] from 2001 to 2005. I just want you to think about that period. Did you maintain any contact with him during that time?---I think so, but if you're seeing somebody in class on a regular basis, you'd have more contact.

So I take what you mean by that is - - -?---Yes, yeah, yeah, but it wasn't - - -

10 - - - you were no longer seeing him face-to-face at classes?---Wasn't as frequent. It wasn't as frequent, yeah.

All right. But by then, you had his contact details, didn't you?---You're talking to me about things that happened 22 years ago. I would assume so.

All right. Like, as best you can. He was a friend. You would have had his mobile number, wouldn't you?---His mobile number?

Yes.---Yeah, like, yeah, you'd call up, say "hello".

20

All right. So did you still from time to time see him, perhaps not frequently but in that period when he was at one uni, you were at a different uni, did you see him from time to time?---I don't remember. I think so.

All right. Do you recall during that period when he's at [REDACTED] ever giving him a SIM card to use?---When? 20 years ago?

30 In that period 2001 to 2005. Do you recall ever giving him a SIM card?---I don't remember a SIM card.

Do you recall there ever being a dispute with him where you wanted him to pay for the cost of calls on a SIM card that you'd given him?---Cost of calls on your SIM? I don't remember that. Not to my recollection.

No recollection - - -?---No, not - - -

- - - of giving him a SIM card or any dispute about use of a SIM card now?
---No. No.

40

Now, going back to your own study, you've, I think agreed that you started at UWS in 2000 when you completed your HSC, the year before and then started to study. Correct?---Yeah. Yeah.

And when did you actually graduate – I'll withdraw that. Did you graduate with your degree from the University of Western Sydney?---Yeah, I left uni maybe halfway through. I got a job and I got married to my first wife then.

10 Okay.---And then after, I worked in that job for, I don't know, maybe three or four years and then I came back and finished.

Okay, so just thinking about the year, so start in 2000. Did you, the period that you in effect took off, had you done a couple of years of your degree by then?---Yeah, I think so, yeah.

All right. And then the sort of work you did, was it work in the engineering field?---Yeah.

20 Okay. And you did that, you said, for about three or four years?---Yeah.

And it's a period while you were married to your first wife.---Yeah.

And I take it you weren't a qualified engineer, but you had some knowledge, at least, from the study you'd done of the engineering field? ---Yeah.

And you worked in that field.---Yeah.

30 All right. Then you come back and you complete your degree, correct? ---Yeah.

And once you do that, as best you can recall, what year do you graduate? ---I don't know. I don't remember. Before 2010. Maybe '08. Just roughly.

Okay. All right.---I think it was '08.

All right. And having graduated - - -?'08 or '09 maybe.

40 Okay. All right. Just thinking then about that time, and again it's now, I've asked you about from starting study in 2000 through to graduating, you say, in about '08 or '09. Were you still keeping up contact with Mr Dubois at

least from time to time during that period?---You're asking me about something 15 years ago. I don't really recall. Yes, but I would say so, but maybe ad hocly, like intermittent.

Okay. Did you have any common friends?---Yeah.

And who were they?---Towfik.

10 Right. So, for instance, if Towfik was doing something, would you sometimes attend an event and find that Mr Dubois was there?---I think so, yeah.

All right. Separate to any contact that you directly had with Mr Dubois? ---No, I think I had contact with him but I don't recall specific contact times and whatever, but I would have had contact.

20 Doing your best, and accepting it's some years ago, that you would intermittently bump into him.---Oh, I think we would have spoken on the phone or – it's not like there was no contact at all. There was contact but it wasn't on a regular.

Okay. Now, when you finish your degree in about '08 or '09, did you get a job or did you - - -?---Yep.

- - - start to do something on your own account?---I think I was doing something with, like, energy rectification and – but don't ask me about years and whatever. It was around after uni and before I started with the RTA.

30 Right.---The RMS.

Sure. And again, just putting it into a time frame, your recollection is that, so you finish your degree, and you don't go and get a job with someone as an employee, you set up something on your own account.---Yeah, I did the energy rectification stuff and that was, that went on for a little bit, and then, and I brought in some boats from the US and I was just dabbling.

40 All right. Just starting with your energy rectification works, can you just describe what that involved, what you were doing and for who?---That was actually during – there was something called green loans, and what that did was we would go in and assess homes and we would, I think that was under

Areva Corp, and we would go in there and advise home owners on what they could do to mitigate their power usage. Because, as you know, the power grid, it's, it's thinly stretched, especially in summer when all the air-conditioning systems are on. And so just teaches people it's best to maybe turn the washing machine on between specific hours, use different light globes. Sometimes you can put, if, depending on the fitting, you can put like a reflector above the light globe, and that would give you more lumens of light. And just talking about maybe the thermal mass of the building material you utilised in the dwellings and, if there were going to be any
10 rectification works, to use specific building materials. And that way you actually insulate the home better and you isolate the external elements from the internal living space.

Okay. Thank you. Just dealing with that, so you indicated as part of that description that you believe you were doing that work through Areva?
---Correct.

And I'll take you to the documents for Areva later, but accept from me that as far as RMS work is concerned, Areva starts doing RMS work in
20 November 2011, but is it your recollection that you think you were doing some work through Areva in this energy rectification field before you start doing RTA or RMS work?---That's correct.

Okay. And so you used that company structure to run your energy rectification business?---That's correct.

All right. And you did use the term "we" a few times. Did you have others that you were doing it with or was it just on your own?---No, I had some people that were working with me at the time and, like, I had a little
30 secretary and – no, it was "I".

All right. Were there some people that helped you with it? So, for instance, it wasn't just you doing all of the work. You had others that you would pay to do certain things, is that correct?---Yeah.

So a secretary you've mentioned. Was it someone else that was going out to households and doing the inspections and providing the reports?---Yeah.

All right. And was that someone that you paid a wage to or were they, did
40 they have some role in the business?---They were contractors.

All right. And is this the way it worked, so that when you were doing that work, you would be paid by them for doing some sort of consultation and writing a report for them?---Yeah, we'd do, we'd do reports and would submit reports. And we'd actually sit with the individual home owner and sit there and, you know, have a cup of coffee and just go over what they can do to save money at the end of the day, because a lot of people may be less knowledgeable in the field and just simple things may save them some money.

10 And as best you can recall, you were paid into an account, I take it, that you'd set up for Areva?---Yeah.

And given that we're talking back now to the period in about 2009 or '10, was it you were typically paid by cheque into the Areva account? Or was it EFT?---I don't remember.

All right. In any event, there would have been some income coming in and some expenses going out to an account that Areva ran in respect of that energy rectification work?---Yeah.

20

Okay. And as best you can recall, did you set up a bank account so that you could do that work for Areva?---Yeah, isn't that the way things are done?

Well, yes, but what I want to be clear is so that it wasn't - - -?---Yes, yes.

- - - you just being paid in your own name. It was a bank account set up in Areva's name.---Yes, yes. Yeah, yeah.

30 All right. Now, you mentioned some boats as well. Was that around the same time? That is, between finishing your degree and starting to do RTA/RMS work?---Yeah.

And can you just explain to us what that involved. So you said something about, was it bringing boats in from America?---Yeah.

So tell us what you did and how you did it.---I brought boats in from America and sold them in Australia.

40 So how would you find the boats, what were you doing, how were you selling them here?---I'd find them through, like, wholesalers and stuff like that.

Okay. And then selling them here, did you have, you know, did you have a showroom, were you doing it over the internet? How were you selling to people?---Just on, like, Gumtree.

Right. So on, you had an online presence selling them via Gumtree?
---Yeah.

10 All right. And was that something that you were doing in your own name or was that also through Areva?---No, my own name.

All right. So when it came to the boats, people would pay, whether it was EFT or a cheque, but it would be paid to you?---Yeah, I think so.

All right.---Just, but you're talking to me about something that was probably 15 years ago. I'm not sure.

20 I understand, but what sort of value are we talking? Are we talking about boats worth 5,000, \$100,000?---Oh, maybe between 50 and 100,000.

So you would buy them in America and then presumably try and sell them at a mark-up in Australia?---Yeah.

Okay.---Maybe, maybe some a little bit less. I don't remember figures at the moment, but, yeah.

Okay. All right. And for how long did you operate the boat business?---A couple of years.

30 All right. And just with the energy rectification business, all-up, how long did you operate that for?---Also a couple of years. Just off the top of my head, a couple of years. To, to the best of my recollection.

Okay. And then were there any other business interests you had besides the energy rectification works for Areva and the boat sales in your own name?
---I think I sold some safes, as well, during that period of time.

40 And where were you obtaining the safes from?---I bought some safes from a company that was going to close, so I bought some safes and I'd just sell them.

Within Australia or was that somewhere offshore, as well?---No, within Australia.

Right. And, again, how were you selling them? Did you have a showroom? Did you have an online presence? Were you doing it through Gumtree? How were you doing it?---Mr Downing, I put them in my driveway and I sold them on Gumtree.

10 Right. Okay. And was that done through Areva or through some other company or was it in your own name?---I, in my own name.

All right. And was that a business that was run through a bank account or was it typically cash?---I don't recall.

All right. But you don't believe you operated the safe business through Areva. Is that the case?---I'm not sure where I would have, I'm not sure. I'm going, you're going back maybe 12 years.

20 Well, you're able to tell us that you believe you operated the energy rectification business through Areva and you don't believe you operated the boat business through Areva. Can you assist us with the safe business or not?---I, I think some customers would have paid me through an account and some would have paid me cash. I can't, I couldn't - - -

But in your own name or an account for Areva?---I don't remember. I would have been paid through some way, either through, or either through Areva or in my own name but I don't really recall.

30 Okay. As best you can recall, how long did you operate the, the safe business for?---I think it stopped when we started with the RTA.

All right. Is it the case that with each of the other businesses that you've mentioned so far, the energy rectification, the boats and the safes, that they were only operating before you started doing the RTA work or did some of them overlap with it?---To the best, to the best of my recollection.

40 What?---To the best of my recollection, there, there would have been a minimal overlap, if any, but I don't really recall, like, you're asking me about something again at least 12 years ago.

Right. Can you think of any other business interest you had in that period after finishing your degree before you start doing the RTA/RMS work?---I, I think I tried a coffee cart somewhere in Mascot but that, that - - -

Was that near Mascot station?---Yeah, but that, that just really didn't work. It was just a trial.

But was it you physically working in a coffee cart?---That's correct.

10 And was that something you operated through Areva or through some other company or just in your own name?---It was just a trial, Mr Downing, so I don't know, I don't really recall.

Okay. You've said that there may have been some overlap with when you started doing the RTA/RMS work but not very much. That's your evidence?---You're asking me about stuff 12 years ago.

I know. I'm just asking as best you can recall, that they were really, with a little bit of overlap but largely separate periods. So the other businesses
20 happen first, then you start doing RTA and RMS work?---To the best of my recollection.

Okay. And just thinking about Areva, you'll recall that I suggested to you before that Areva gets paid by the RMS from November 2011 through until May 2013. Just bear that period in mind.---Okay. Yeah.

It would be the case, wouldn't it, that by the time Areva stopped doing RMS work in 2013, those other businesses were no longer operating?---I don't
30 know.

Well, you've said you don't believe there was much overlap. I'm asking now about the period not when Areva starts but when Areva finishes.---I, I honestly do not recall.

You can't assist at all?---No.

All right. Is it the case that through the various businesses you had operating, that is the energy rectification, the boats, the safes and the coffee
40 cart, that you were pretty busy in that period?---I would assume so.

Were they doing well, the businesses?---Well, I think so.

So you were making a decent living from them?---Yeah. I think to the best of my recollection, yes.

And of them, which one seemed to be doing the best?---I was, I was going to go into commercial energy rectification and I was moving into, just from, just vaguely I was moving into a field in which I could go into a factory and have a chat with their engineering guys and then I could save them on their power by - - -

10

THE COMMISSIONER: Mr Alameddine, I'll just interrupt for a moment. With respect, you're not answering the question. Just I'll have the question put to you again so that you can recall what it's seeking from you.

MR DOWNING: So I asked of the different businesses you were running, which one seemed to be doing the best for you financially? And I take it from your answer that you were suggesting it was the energy rectification business, but is that the case or not?---I think that, yeah, yeah.

20 All right. And you've told us that it was done with domestic or residential premises initially?---Yeah.

And is it the case that it was doing well enough that you had plans to expand it into commercial or office buildings?---I think so. It had my interest.

30 So to go into those – instead of going to people's households, to go to offices or factories, and to give them advice about how they could better reduce their power usage and power bills?---Yeah, so you see, Mr Downing, in like an underground car park, you'd have specific fans that would be operating 24 hours, and if you put like a carbon dioxide monitor on those fans, you'd only have them turn on when you need them on, rather than have them on 24 hours, hence saving a whole heap of electricity. So you can actually replicate the advice that you're going to be giving to, to people, and then you just touch it up and you customise it as need be.

Okay. Just pausing there, is it the case that the energy rectification business was only you through Areva? There was no other partner you had that you were running it with?---Not that I recall.

40 Well, you'd recall that, wouldn't you, whether you'd set up with someone else?---Yeah.

So it was you and then contractors and a secretary?---That's right.

All right. But it was doing well enough with the residential that you had this plan to expand it into office and commercial premises?---Yeah.

All right. Now it's the case, isn't it, that at some point around that time, you learnt that Mr Dubois had got a job at the RTA?---Yeah, I think so, yeah.

10 I'm going to suggest he starts there in about August 2009. So - - -?---Okay.

- - - just again trying to orientate yourself to events, that would be around the time that you had finished your degree and were doing these various businesses. Does that sound right?---Okay.

Well, again, I want to know what okay means. Do you mean you agree or you disagree or you don't remember?---I, I don't know but, okay, if you're saying it, then you would have looked into it.

20 But I'm asking about your recollection. Is it your recollection that you learnt about that fact, that he has now got a job, so that he's not studying anymore, he's got a job at the RTA around this time when you're dabbling in different businesses?---I don't know. I don't, I don't, I don't know when he started, Mr Downing.

But I'm asking about what you were doing when you learnt about him doing the job.---Mr Downing, I don't know.

Well, I'm going to suggest - - -?---(not transcribable) recollect.

30

I'm sorry, go on.---I don't know. That's my answer.

I'm going to suggest it was at the time when you were doing these, running these other businesses. Are you able to assist or not assist on that?---Well, that makes sense.

All right. Do you recall how you learnt about it?---No.

40 You've indicated that you were either keeping - - -?---I'd see him, I'd see him ad hoc, on an ad hoc basis, so he may have, he may have, may have

popped up and, you know what I mean? But I don't know. I don't really recall.

Right. But at some point you had a discussion with him, didn't you, where you learnt something about his role at the RTA?---Had a discussion with him about his role within the RTA?

Well, you learnt something from him about what he was doing at the RTA. That happened at some point, didn't it?---Yeah, I, I don't recollect but, yeah,
10 okay.

Well, we can work backwards in that eventually you start doing RTA and RMS work for him. You agree with that, I take it?---I started doing RTA work for him, yeah.

Right. And, obviously, that started from something. And what I'm suggesting was - - -?---Upon, upon, upon his request.

Right. Well, I'll come to the details. But at some point, either through you
20 speaking to him directly or perhaps speaking to someone like Towfik Taha, you learned that he'd got the job at the RTA. Correct?---Learned that he'd got the job at the – I was seeing him, like, on ad hoc basis.

Okay. Well, can you recall him saying something to you about the fact "I've now got a job at the RTA and I'm doing this" where he describes something?---See, you're saying to me that he started in 2009 and I started doing work for him in 2011. There's two years between August 2009 and November 2011. So he was clearly employed there, 'cause I've just written down what you've said to me. There's clearly two years between 2009
30 August and 2011 November. So he would have been working in that field for two years before I started to work upon his request.

Right. But try and focus on what I'm asking you about. Do you now recall a discussion where he actually says to you, "I've got a job at the RTA and this is what I do"?---No, I'm sorry. I don't recall that.

You learned at some point, though, didn't you, that he was responsible for managing projects at the RTA?---I, I don't recall, but, yes, okay.

Well, you know that because you ultimately got involved in those projects, don't you?---Yeah, well, he asked me to do a job, which was in, where was

it? Hornsby. What was the area called? (not transcribable) just past Hornsby?

Was it the Galston Gorge?---That's the one.

THE COMMISSIONER: And was that how you came to know about the RMS work that was undertaken by the department, that is through discussions with Mr Taha as to what he was doing for them?---Yeah, Mr Commissioner, I don't really recall that event. All I know is I started to
10 work upon his request. He would have asked me if I could do a job but, well, I don't really recall the actual events around that period of time. I just know, like, vague stuff.

I've heard your evidence that you don't recall. What I'm trying to establish is that whether it is more likely than not that the way you came into RMS work was through talking to Mr Taha at some point. Is that generally speaking, from your knowledge of how you were introduced to the work, it came about?---I saw Mr Taha and I saw Mr Dubois during that period of
20 time but how it really came about, I'm not sure.

Well, do you think it involved either one of them or both of them introducing you to - - -?---I, I would have been asked by Mr Dubois to do some work and, and, and if you come to look at the actual sequence, right, if you look at it, everyone at that period of time had one company. So just thinking back vaguely, he would have needed another company with someone else, you know, to actually theoretically at the end of the day make some money out of it. So I recall being asked to, to do a job in Galston Gorge. I had, I've got a lot of, even though I don't have civil qualifications, I've always been around the building industry, I've been around civil works,
30 I've been around the demolition game, I've, I've been, I did a lot of work on building sites, so I understood the way things function and the way things functioned (not transcribable)

And was the Galston project the first work you did involving the RMS?---I don't, yeah, I think so. That's correct.

Thank you. Yes, Mr Downing.

MR DOWNING: Thank you. Mr Alameddine, just thinking back to what
40 you can recall about the discussions with Mr Dubois at the time, you've said in answer to the Commissioner's questions that, "I would have been asked

by Mr Dubois to do some work,” and then you’ve then referred to the sequence of events. Are you answering based on what you can recall or a reconstruction based on what you believe in respect of Mr Dubois because what you know about him now?---No, well, look at that, I was asked to have multiple companies and all in my name - - -

I’m going to cut you off, Mr Alameddine, because you’re not asking my question. I just want to know whether - - -?---What is, what is, what is your question?

10

- - - you’re telling us now - - -?---What is your question?

I’m asking you about – well, I’m asking you about the first discussion leading to work being done by you and one of your companies for Mr Dubois, and you’re answering, in answer to the Commissioner’s questions, by saying what would have happened. Are you telling us what you can recall or what you’ve reconstructed and believe occurred?---Mr Downing, you’ve asked me the same question over 10 times, and I’m trying to actually dig out an answer for you, and the most rational answer is the one I’ve given you. It’s not one that I recall, it’s the one that make sense to me.

20

Okay, thank you. Now, thinking back to any discussions with Mr Dubois before you first do work with one of your companies, who approached who?---I don’t recall that, but it’s just logical that he’s approached me.

Why is it?---Because of, well, because he would have had other contractors, I assume. And he needed, he had probably a lot of work on (not transcribable)

30 THE COMMISSIONER: Why would he approach you? Of all people in Sydney, why do you believe it was that he had, probably, it was he who approached you?---Because I was his mate and I was working for myself at the time. So I was probably somebody that he could trust.

Okay. I understand.

MR DOWNING: Do you have any recollection now about what he said in terms of a suggestion that you might be able to do work for him?---No, I remember doing the job. I don’t remember the real intricacies of, around that.

40

So you can't recall any of the detail of the discussion now?---No, not really, but I know he got me to do the job in Galston Gorge.

Well, I'll come to that in a moment, but I'm really asking about the lead-up. What I want to know is, is it possible that it was in fact you that went to him and said, "I need some work, can you help me?"---I had my own path in life, Mr Downing.

10 Right. Well, you've told us about what you were doing, and across a number of different businesses, it looks like you're pretty busy at the time. Correct?---Yeah, yeah.

So that in about 2010 or 2011, is it the case that you didn't really need to be going and looking for another source of work?---Well, Mr Downing, I think he saw me as a person that was capable.

20 What leads you to that belief?---Well, because I've been doing stuff for myself for a while, and I've had building experience because I've always been around building sites, so I understood the safety aspect, and safety is priority. You know, I like to get things done properly. And quality assurance was high on his agenda.

Is that something he told you?---No, but just I know him. He's, he, whatever is done has to be done to the best of the ability.

Okay. Just pausing just for a moment and thinking about what you knew about the RTA back in 2009 or so, I take it it was an organisation you were aware of?---Yeah.

30 So I take it you're aware that it looks after things like car registration and driver's licensing?---Yeah. (not transcribable)

But also I take it you're aware, I take it you're aware that it has a responsibility for roads and road-related infrastructure around the state? ---Yeah.

40 So that I take it you've driven down the Hume Highway and seen, for instance, the heavy vehicle weigh stations that trucks have to go into, things like that?---Yeah.

And did you learn, through your early contact with Mr Dubois, that he managed a number of projects in relation to roads and road infrastructure?
---He told me to do the job in Galston, like, I did the job in Galston, I don't know the lead-up to it. Okay? And later on he sent me to other jobs - - -

Right.---Which he incorporated those, those stations that you've referred to.

Well, it wasn't just heavy vehicle weigh stations. You became aware through your dealings with him, didn't you, that he looked after projects
10 involving all sorts of road structures and infrastructure around the state.
---Yeah, okay.

And do you recall him saying anything to you about the fact that he could give you work in relation to those things, the roads and the road infrastructure?---No, I, I got, he got me to do that job in Galston and then just work started to come in.

Can I ask, how did Mr Dubois know anything about you experience or lack of experience in relation to building work when you have the first
20 discussion with him about you potentially doing some RMS work?---I always did building work or was on a building site just - - -

Just pausing there thinking about what you'd actually done as at say 2010, for the last couple of years what you'd been doing was essentially was some energy rectification consultation, correct?---Yes.

Some sales in relation to boats and safes?---Yes.

Some sales with coffee?---Yes.
30

Now your dad worked in demolition, correct?---Yes.

So when you say you've always been around building sites, I mean, that was when you were younger with your dad doing demolition work I take it?
---Yes, and yeah, I think early in uni just vaguely but everyone that's around me is in the industry and you're in the, I'm surrounded by tradesman.
Sometimes visit people on their sites.

So you'd been present on sites and you'd seen people working?---Yes.
40

But in terms of your actual practical experience, you had no experience at all as at 2010 in steel fabrication?---No.

No experience at all in respect of road signs and road signs installation?
---No, until we got the actual standards manual and we went through it and, no, but before that, no.

And as at 2010 no experience at all in respect of roadworks?---No.

10 And indeed, no experience at all at that time, 2010, in respect of civil construction?---Yeah, you can say that, that's correct.

All right. So, when you say that Mr Dubois must have thought you were capable of doing things, did it surprise you that you start doing work involving steel fabrication, road signs, roadworks which you had no prior experience in at all?---Mr Downing, or Mr Downing the way that it was, looking back at it, were the jobs were outsourced to people that did the actual work, so steel fabrication was given to a steel fabricator.

20 Yes.---So someone came in, they used their excavator to dig a hole, services were located. So in terms of putting in that structure in on the side of the road, you find out what your services are and you work around them. You dig the hole to the dimensions that you need to, you put in the actual basis of whatever it is, the structure that you're putting up - - -

But did it become evident to you fairly quickly, and I'll start with Galston Gorge, that what you were in fact being asked to do was really project manage other people doing the work?---I did a lot of work, part of that too, I wasn't just standing around, I was also doing, doing the work. I was always
30 very busy.

THE COMMISSIONER: If we just come back to the question if you would. Just put it again.

MR DOWNING: What I'm asking is that when you came to doing the different jobs for the RTA and RMS that Mr Dubois got you to do, what you were essentially doing was project managing them?---That's correct, but I was very hands-on as well, but yes, correct.

40 When you say "hands-on", you weren't an electrician for instance?---No, I wasn't, no, I wasn't an electrician, no.

So that when it came to things like installing conduits for electrical works that would be something that you would subcontract and you'd be on the site to see do, sorry, to see occur?---The electrician would come in and do his work but sometimes I would be laying conduits for them once services were located.

All right. So you did some work on the sites yourself?---Yes

- 10 Despite the fact that in terms of actual experience you'd not done that before?---Yes.

All right. You say that Mr Dubois was always very keen about quality assurance, you remember that evidence?---Yep.

It's the case, isn't it, that for the various jobs that Mr Dubois did he actually had an organisation paid by the RTA and RMS to come in and do quality checks on the work?---Yes.

- 20 That was an organisation known as M&M Inspections, correct?---Yes.

Run by a gentleman named Martin Duchesne, do you remember him?
---Yes.

So that, to the extent that any of your work required quality assurance, checks or certification, that wasn't something you were doing that was something that M&M Inspections was doing and being paid for by the RMS?---Yes.

- 30 Now, thinking back again to the initial discussions with Mr Dubois, you've told us that to the best of your recollection he approached you. Could it be the case that you in fact approached him and he initially refused your work?---No.

Could it be the case that there was a period of time when you effectively pestered him about getting work and he said to you, no, you don't have the right experience?---No.

- 40 And thinking about the order in which things occurred, do you believe that you started doing work and then learnt that Mr Taha – that is Towfik Taha – was doing work? Or did you learn that he was doing work and then you

started doing some yourself?---Why don't you look at the quality of contractors, Mr Downing, that he utilised and he kept for all these years?

THE COMMISSIONER: Mr Alameddine, please just answer the question. As I said, we'll get through this more effectively.---I'm not sure, Mr Downing. I'm not sure.

MR DOWNING: Right. Do you recall there ever being discussions between you and Mr Dubois about the quality of Towfik Taha's work?---Mr
10 Dubois ended up getting, stopped giving work to Towfik because he had quality assurance concerns. But Mr Dubois - - -

Sorry, go on.---But Mr Dubois was using Towfik. He was using Towfik to have money put into an account that was owned by Towfik, so he, he, at a period of time I think there was like a little dilemma for Mr Dubois.

Well, I'll come to that later, but just in terms of the discussions you had and what you can recall, do you recall ever, you raising with Mr Dubois or Mr Dubois raising with you a concern about the quality of Towfik's work?---I
20 don't, I don't overlook Towfik's work quality, Mr Downing.

Well, whether you do or don't, do you recall that discussion? That is, either you speaking to Mr Dubois or Mr Dubois speaking to you about the quality of Towfik's work?---No, all I recall is Mr Dubois got rid of Towfik because he had concerns about his quality.

Okay. And was that something Mr Dubois told you?---I think Mr Towfik wasn't, wasn't happy about it.

30 Well, I'll come to the details of that later. But to the best of your recollection, how did you learn about concerns Mr Dubois had about Mr Taha's work?---I'm not sure who discussed it with me but I later found out from the both of them.

Okay. Now, did you learn that Towfik was conducting his business – that is the business that was doing RTA/RMS work – in a company name?---I'm sorry, can you re, re - - -

40 Sure.---Can you just say that again?

Yeah. Did you understand that Mr Taha – that is Towfik Taha – was doing his work for Mr Dubois through a company?---Yeah, Mr Downing, that's the way things are done.

Do you remember the name of the company?---I think Towfik had a company I think that he named after himself, I think, TTS.

Does TTS Investments sound familiar?---I remember TTS.

- 10 All right. Now, thinking about work Mr Taha was doing through TTS, do you recall ever actually assisting him on jobs that he had for Mr Dubois?---I assisted Mr Towfik. I don't remember the instances where, like, if you showed me, I'm not going to, I don't remember that. I remember I did assist him, I don't know where, on the behalf of Mr Dubois.

Right. So just so that I'm clear, I'm asking not about where you're going in under Areva or Seina or EPMD, but you're going in - - -?---That's right. That's right.

- 20 - - - to assist Mr Taha doing a job he's got a contract for?---I've, I've known Towfik since I was a child, and Mr Dubois is from uni. Mr Dubois had a problem with Towfik's quality assurance measures. And I, I, I don't remember the conversation or how I got in but I think he requested that I just get him over the line just so I can make sure that his QA was up to check.

All right. And do you have any recollection of where that job was?---No. No.

- 30 I'm just going to run through some locations and you tell me if it assists at all. If it doesn't assist, please tell me.---Okay.

First of all, do you believe it was a job at Galston Gorge? So I'm not asking about a job you did through Areva, I'm asking about something Towfik did.---I don't, I, I don't recall.

All right. A place called Kankool in New South Wales?---I don't ever recall Kankool.

All right. Just so that I can - - -?---(not transcribable) like, Kankool, I've never been to Kankool. I've probably driven through Kankool but I've never worked in an area called Kankool.

Do you know where it is?---North (not transcribable)

North of Scone and south of Quirindi but you don't recall ever assisting Mr Taha at that location?---I've never worked in an area called Kankool that I, that, that I recall.

10

I'll run through some others. If you could just tell me, like, yes, no or I don't remember. So I'm asking about jobs Mr Taha did that you - - -? ---I may have, I may have, I may have assisted in Galston Gorge but I don't recall. I know I assisted him. But Galston Gorge, if you're telling me I started in 2011, that's 11 years ago. And I've got a mental health condition that doesn't assist me.

20

All right. Look, I accept that memory fades over time. I'm just wanting to see whether this assists you when I go through the names of locations where there was RMS work done. What I want you to do is when I ask you about that location, I'm asking about whether you can recall assisting Mr Taha do work there. So please say yes, no or I don't remember. Can you do that for me?---I've been to, yeah. I've been to Galston Gorge. I don't know if I assisted him there or not.

All right. So possible - - -?--- I've never been to Kankool on a job site.

30

All right. Marulan?---I've worked at Marulan. I don't know if I've assisted him there. I, I have assisted him on a few jobs. I just don't recall the jobs. But I have personally worked at Marulan.

Okay. All right. Merriwa?---No, I don't, I don't remember, Mr Downing. You're asking me questions that I don't remember.

All right. If you don't remember, you're perfectly at liberty to tell me that. What about Tamworth?---I don't recall.

40

Moree?---I don't recall. I have worked in Moree, I have worked in Moree 'cause, and the name sounds familiar, like, if I, maybe if I was given documentation to go through, I could probably, can re-jog my memory but, yeah.

All right. Boggabilla?---It's, it does sound familiar. I don't know if I was working in conjunction and helping Towfik on any of his jobs.

All right. Picton?---What did I do at Picton? Have I worked at Picton? I have worked in Picton. It, it does sound familiar but I don't know if Towfik was involved in the work that I did or if I assisted him in an area called Picton.

10 And, finally, Dundee?---Dundee? Where's Dundee?

You're testing my geographical knowledge but I think up in the Hunter region.---Okay. I, I'm sorry. It doesn't ring a bell.

All right. Just again focusing on Towfik Taha, can you ever recall having a conversation with Mr Dubois where you suggested that you wanted some of the work that Towfik was doing?---No.

20 Did you ever suggest to Mr Dubois that you'd do a better job and he should give that work that TTS was doing to you?---No. Towfik's my mate. Why would I do that?

Right. So you deny that that ever occurred?---It's not in my nature to stab somebody in the back, Mr Downing.

Right. I understand that's your explanation, but is the answer to my question that you deny that that ever occurred?---No. No.

30 When you say "no", you mean, no, that never occurred?---No, that never occurred.

All right. Can you recall, you say that with Towfik that you think there was a few jobs you were assisting him with. Do you recall the type of work that it was that you were assisting him with?---No, I'm sorry, I do not.

You're aware, aren't you, that Towfik had a background in landscaping and tree lopping?---Yeah.

40 That before doing RMS work, do you recall he had a business where he was doing a bit of tree lopping and landscaping around Sydney?---Yeah.

Do you recall what work he ended up doing for Mr Dubois?---I'm not sure. I don't recall.

You don't recall anything about the sort of work that he was doing?---I honestly don't recall. If you could help me jog my memory, I'd be very happy to assist you.

10 All right. Do you recall that he was doing work that often involved doing road surfacing and road aprons, that is putting together road surfaces and road aprons?---I've never had anything to do with anything like that.

So you don't recall ever assisting him with that?---No, no. I've never done anything like that.

Okay. Now, going back to when you start doing work with Mr Dubois, you've said before that you understood that it was always a requirement that to do work for a company or entity like the RTA, you had to have a company yourself?---Yes.

20 And do you recall Mr Dubois telling you that you needed to incorporate, that is, that any work wouldn't be in your name, it would be in the name of the company?---Yes.

And that's something that was discussed early on, wasn't it, that is early in the period of you doing work through your various companies?---Of course. Like you need public liability and insurances and, and workers compensation. Like you're going to go in there and just do something under your personal name. It doesn't work that way.

30 Is that your experience from doing work in other areas?---Well, that's the way things are done. You need insurances. You need to be, you need to go in there and do things, I don't know, we're a company structure.

All right. Did Mr Dubois tell you that you needed to be set up as a vendor on the RTA system in order for you to do work and be paid for it?---I don't know. I don't, I don't recall. Later on he did I think but initially I don't know. I didn't know what like a vendor was back then. I know vendor means, a company that's providing services, now.

40 Okay.---Or later on in the piece but initially I don't think so, no.

Do you recall a discussion with him early on about the way in which he had to get quotes or tenders for different jobs?---Me discussing with him?

That is him telling you this is how I have to run projects at the RTA. I have to get X number of quotes. Something like that?---Later on, yeah. Later on that was, that was discussed and - - -

So do you say with the first job, and I'll take you to the details of it in a moment, but you don't recall learning of that from him before the first job?

10 ---No, no, no, no.

Okay.---My memory is very, you're talking to me about 2011. Okay. I know I did the work. I don't know the lead-up to that work.

Okay.---I don't recall the lead-up to that work. I know I did the work.

Okay. But did you learn perhaps a later stage that depending on the dollar value of a job he had to get a certain number of quotes?---I think so. I think there was a dollar value to the, was it prerequisites. I don't know if it was
20 like 250 grand or something like that but I don't know, I didn't know the real intricacies but I know there was something around 250 grand I think he had to get a couple of quotes in.

Well, I'm going to suggest this, and tell me if this accords with your recollection or if you don't recall, but for up to \$50,000 Mr Dubois said to you he just had to get one quote but for between 50,000 and 250 had to get three quotes. Just pause there. Do you recall him telling you that?---Yeah, I think, I think, yeah, but, yeah, I learnt that later on. That's correct.

30 But learn it through him?---Yes, of course.

And did you learn from him as well that for jobs over 250 that it was supposed to go to open tender?---Later on, yes, I did.

Now, did Mr Dubois say anything to you up front, that is, before you start doing work about whether he could guarantee you a flow of work?---I don't, I don't know. I don't remember that.

Well, did he say anything to you about the fact that when it came to a
40 particular project he would make sure that your company would get that job?---I don't remember.

All right. When as best you can recall by reference to the first job you did did he first - -?---I know later on I started focusing on like steel fabrication and signage.

Right. But that - -?---And that was kind of what I, that was kind of what I was given to do and I had to do that to the best of my ability.

They became your areas of work, didn't they?---Yes.

10

And you in effect learnt on the job as to each of those areas through the RMS or RTA and RMS work you did?---Yeah. I, I learnt on the job though but, you know, through the contractors that fabricated and installed and whatnot so, yes.

So through the people that you were project managing you actually learnt about the area of work?---Yeah.

20 Right. Now, when as best you can recall by reference to the first job you did, did the discussion of the management fee first come up?---I don't remember.

Well, do you believe it was - -?---I think, I don't, I don't, I don't know, I don't if he took any money off the first job but then it was, it was discussed. I don't remember when or how or whatever but it was very clear that he wanted, he wanted a fee.

THE COMMISSIONER: He wanted what?---A fee, Commissioner.

30 A fee. Yeah. Doing the best you can, what in essence do you recall how he explained it to you?---Well, there's no way on God's - - -

40 Request of a management fee. What?---There's no way on God's green earth that a company that was run by one bloke will be able to get any form of work like this and he'd source work and he'd manage quality and he'd make sure that things are done. I would be learning on the job. This is the best that I could recollect because it wasn't my area of expertise and, and the work's done and the money that would then, whatever was left over, like whatever I did for work there's, there, there, that would be not calculated, like I would work for nothing, and whatever's left over would be split in half and the fact that we, our overheads were so low, like, I was working out

of a yard and that yard was costing me zero. I didn't have a secretary. I didn't have whatever. So you've got, Commissioner, you've got different tiers of companies that would probably need to earn \$1 million in profit to cover their overheads before they start making a dollar, but having a company - - -

THE COMMISSIONER: Well, we may discuss such matters later on, but what I'm just interested in at the moment, in terms of the discussion concerning the management fee, you understood that however it was put to
10 you, he would get a personal payment out of RMS contracts with the contractors. Is that right?---Yes. Yes.

So that - - -?---Well, that's, that's, well, that's what it was with me but that was - - -

Yeah. So I'm just talking about - - -?---Yes.

- - - how he put it to you that, in essence, however things were constructed or however they operated with the contractors which he may engage on
20 behalf of RMS, there would be a financial return from him by some process?---Yeah.

Okay. And did he explain to you what that process was, how it would work that he would derive a personal benefit for a contract that may be awarded to a contractor?---Yeah.

Well, what did he say about how it would work in terms of the process?---I don't know very - Commissioner, to the best of my recollection, okay, 50
30 per cent of the profit had to go to him, right?

Was that an across-the-board-type approach or did that vary from contract - - -?---On, on, on most jobs, unless they were, unless there wasn't enough profit in the job, then he wouldn't but on most jobs, yes, Commissioner.

Does that occasion any concern to you to know that that's the way he wanted to operate, to derive a personal benefit?---No one wants to part with money, Mr Commissioner, I can tell you that, and - - -

No, but just focusing, what I'm asking you is whether once you understood
40 what he was saying would be the process whereby he would derive a 50 per cent return, as you've described it - - -?---It was (not transcribable)

- - - did that - - -?---Yeah (not transcribable)

- - - give rise to some - - -?---Yes.

- - - concern in you - - -?---Yeah.

- - - when he made that clear?---Yeah.

- 10 What was your concern?---Well, the fact that he, he's maybe, like, earning a wage through a job but then he's benefitting, even though the work that we're doing is good quality but he's still benefitting, so there's maybe a conflict of interest.

All right. I see it's 1 o'clock. Mr Downing, we might adjourn at that point.

MR DOWNING: Thank you, Commissioner.

- 20 THE COMMISSIONER: Resume at 2 o'clock. 2 o'clock, Mr Alameddine, we'll resume, so if you could be ready to resume evidence at that time. I'll adjourn now.---Thank you.

LUNCHEON ADJOURNMENT

[1.03pm]