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Party boy's high office

PAUL SHAPIRO

THE son of a Ballarat bishop sold cocaine, MDMA and LSD to fund his flashy, party boy lifestyle.

Michael Hough, 30, pleaded guilty in the County Court on Friday to various drug importing and trafficking charges.

Hough used cryptocurrency to buy drugs from dark web marketplace Empire which he collected from the post office and sold to his army of customers. The prolific dealer used encrypted browsers and messaging apps to conduct his clandestine operation between March and October 2019.

Joint Task Force Icarus investigators were alerted to Hough after authorities intercepted pure MDMA hidden in a Metal Mekanic helicopter set on June 18 last year.

Police tracked Hough while multiple consignments of ketamine, MDMA and cocaine hidden in documents and a Tension "game box" arrived at Melbourne Airport.

Investigators swooped on Hough at his Bentleigh East home on October 31. Police seized his mobile phone, which revealed he'd been pushing drugs as early as March.

Messages revealed how Hough conducted his business: "Hey boys and girls sorry for the lack of personal reply I have to copy and paste to a lot of people. My stash van was stolen the other day and I've been unable to chase it down. I've restocked MDMA but my ketamine and LSD suppliers are not available until at least next week I've managed to restock MDMA."

A customer replied: "Bro I desperately need some acid for the weekend. Can you please look out and let me know if you can find any. Thanks."

Hough also trafficked cocaine to a customer known as "Sugar Barbie". The court heard Hough wanted to be the "go to man" for drugs.

Hough — who appeared via videolink from Marngoneet Correctional Centre — was remanded for sentencing on September 25.

Academic marks two years in Iran jail

DETAINED Australian academic Kylie Moore-Gilbert's family says it has not lost hope despite the "unimaginable pain" of her two years in an Iranian jail.

The University of Melbourne Islamic studies expert will on Sunday mark two years in jail.

A prison source said she has been exercising at Qarchak prison, jogging in the exercise yard while wearing prison-issued plastic bathroom slippers.

Dr Moore-Gilbert was arrested at Tehran's international airport after attending a conference at the University of Qom. She was charged with spying — a charge she denies — and sentenced to 10 years' jail.

STORIES BEHIND THE MASK

PRIME HERO PROFILE #1367

PENNY, 51
COVID-19 DEEP CLEANING EXPERT

LOVER OF SCOTCH WHISKEY, I LOVE SHAKING MY BOOTY TO POP OR ROCK. I'M GREEK, MARRIED AND LOVE COOKING AND SPENDING TIME WITH MY GAL PALS, WHO I REALLY MISS. MY BIGGEST COVID FEAR IS FOR THE SAFETY OF MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS.

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MHSE02Z01MA - V1

Jail for guns in garage

Bikie's mate hid weapons for him

SERENA SEYFORT

THE longtime friend of a Rebels bikie enforcer has been jailed for stashing military weapons for the gang's boss.

Matthew Robert Bentley, 38, was sentenced in the County Court to a minimum 14 months' jail after pleading guilty to charges including possessing a trafficable quantity of unregistered firearms.

Bentley allowed Matthew Bruce to use his garage to store four guns — including two military-grade weapons — while Bruce tried to sell one of them for $25,000.

Police found an assault rifle inside a guitar case and 406 cartridges for it when they raided Bentley's Melton South home early on January 29, 2019. A .303 rifle was also uncovered, along with a cutdown .22 rifle and a sawn-off shotgun.

Three of the guns had been modified to make them more concealable, and the .22 rifle was modified to enable it to fit a silencer.

Judge William Stuart said the weapons were of "considerable lethality".

"Both the assault weapon and the .303 were military weapons designed to use cartridges that would go through human beings," he said.

Bentley told the court Bruce asked him to store the guns because he was banned from having them by the firearm prohibition law.

The forklift driver said he owed Bruce, who had previously sold him ice, some cash. He thought doing him the favour would enable him to get cheaper drugs in future.

He also said he was intimidated by Bruce, a claim Judge Stuart said he didn't believe after hearing of intercepted telephone calls between Bentley and Bruce in the days before the raid. During the calls, Bruce said he wanted to pick up the assault rifle so he could test it in Wombat State Forest before selling it.

The court heard the calls also disproved Bentley's claim he didn't know anything about the type of guns, and hadn't looked in the bags Bruce had put in his garage.

Judge Stuart said the phone conversations, in which Bentley and Bruce talked about the "guitar" — a code for the assault rifle — made it clear Bentley "well knew" about the weapon.

The court heard Bruce's partner, Cursty Shields, had also told authorities she had seen Bentley holding the assault rifle in Bruce's garage.

On Monday this week, Bruce was sentenced to a maximum of 22 months in jail, having already served 142 days, and fined $1000.

Bentley is serving at least 15 years for drugs, firearms and other offences.

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Picture: LIAM KIDSTON

DAMI RELEASES HER DRAGON

KATHY MCCABE

EUROVISION queen Dami Im has shaken off her "impostor syndrome" to take control of her career seven years after winning The X Factor.

The singer-songwriter will release "empowering" new single Paper Dragon this week after finding a new label home with ABC Music. The song, written by Im with emerging local artist ELKI, was originally intended to launch her bid for another crack at the Eurovision crown next year.

But when the 2020 song contest was cancelled due to COVID-19 and Montaigne was confirmed to represent Australia in 2021, Im decided to release Paper Dragon now.

The song is reminiscent of Sound of Silence, the soaring pop song that won Im thousands of fans around the globe and amassed more than 20 million streams.

"The first few years I had no idea how I was supposed to navigate through the jungle of the music industry; it was like doing an apprenticeship," Im said.

"Now I know who I am as an artist and have the opportunity to make my own choices, to call the shots instead of being a bird with clipped wings."

Ex-Tyrrell detective loses appeal

AVA BENNY-MORRISON

A FORMER deputy police commissioner has slammed a magistrate for "disappointing bias" and "a total lack of understanding" of major crime investigation after the conviction of ex-detective Gary Jubelin.

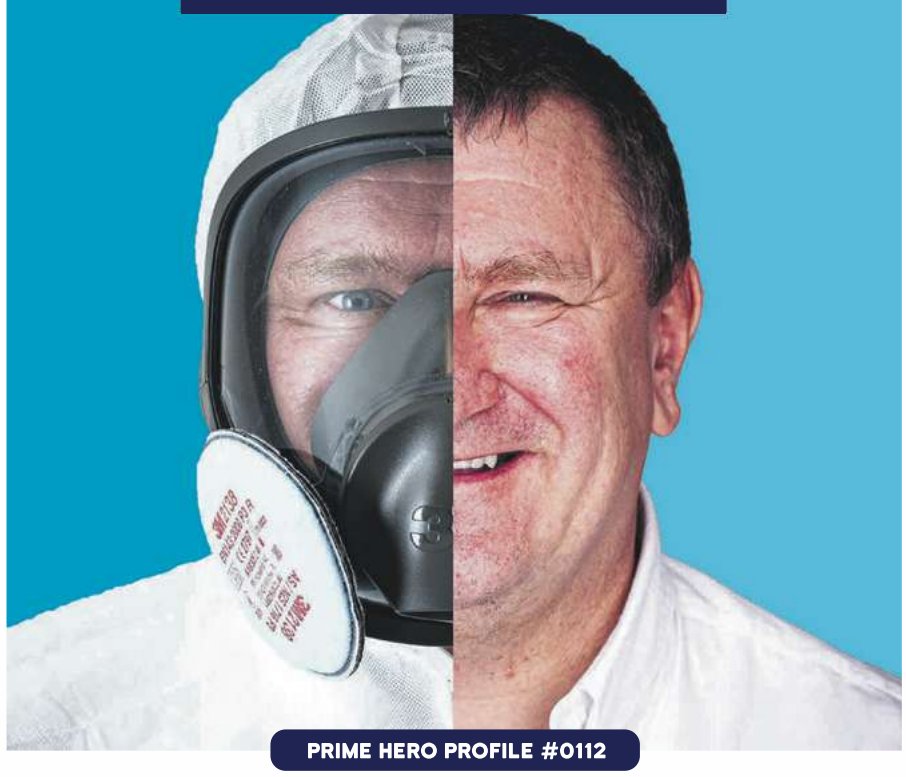
The scathing assessment of the judicial officer was contained in an affidavit from decorated ex-cop Nick Kaldas and in support of Mr Jubelin, who retired after 34 years in the police force last year, and lost an appeal against his conviction yesterday for illegally recording four conversations during the William Tyrrell investigation.

The 57-year-old claimed he made the recordings with person of interest Paul Savage in 2017 and 2018 to protect his lawful interest.

Judge Antony Townsend found Jubelin's self-made recordings weren't justified.

"It could not be said that in the present circumstances it was reasonably necessary to record conversations without a warrant," he said, adding the recordings were made at least to produce further lines of inquiry. The appeal against Mr Jubelin's conviction and $10,000 fine was dismissed.

STORIES BEHIND THE MASK



PRIME HERO PROFILE #0112

MAURISZ, 54

COVID-19 DEEP CLEANING EXPERT

I WAS BORN IN WARSAW, POLAND AND MOVED TO AUSTRALIA IN 2008. I LOVE TO SWIM, PLAY SQUASH AND HAVE A BEER WHILE CHEERING ON THE MIGHTY SAINTS. MY PROUDEST MOMENT WAS SEEING MY ONLY DAUGHTER START PREP. MY BIGGEST COVID FEAR IS THE SAFETY OF MY FAMILY WHO ARE ALL ABROAD.

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OLYMPIA'S LIFE BACK IN BALANCE

Olympia Valance has put a tough period behind her. Picture: RUSSELL SHAKESPEARE

KIM WILSON

OLYMPIA Valance is putting a harrowing phone hacking incident behind her as she and freshly retired AFL partner Tom Bellchambers make the most of their post-hub freedom.

The loved-up couple is taking a camper van along the Queensland coast before returning to Victoria.

Valance revealed last month she had been the subject of a phone hack.

"It's been a very, very tough year, but the outpouring of support has been truly incredible, and the amount of love and care and positivity has really made an extremely difficult situation a little more bearable for me," she said.

"Before I made my statement I was reading up on the statistics of cybercrime over the (COVID) period and it was up 600 per cent ... if I can be a voice for positive change then I will be."

She said the support of her ex-Essendon ruckman boyfriend was also vital. "It's been difficult for him over this period of being away from me and not being able to be there physically to support me, but he was everything and more than I needed at the time," she said.

After enduring 10 weeks apart, Valance landed a seat on the final flight out to the AFL's Gold Coast hub to be reunited with Bellchambers.

While her acting and hosting roles were on hold due to COVID-19, Valance is an ambassador for the Caulfield Cup Carnival.

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Mother of all disputes

Siblings take funeral row to court

REBEKAH CAVANAGH

A ROW between siblings over their late mother's funeral has landed in court.

Maria Marinucci took her brother, John Condo, to the Supreme Court after a dispute over the funeral and burial arrangements for their mother, Giuseppina Condo.

Ms Marinucci claimed it was her mother's wish for White Lady Funerals to conduct the service. But Mr Condo said his mother was a devout Catholic who requested a traditional Italian service with Tripodi Funeral Services.

He said his mum had worn black for 13 years after her husband Umberto's death.

But when Mrs Condo, 79, died on May 16, Ms Marinucci arranged for White Lady Funerals to collect her body from the aged-care facility without consulting her brother.

The siblings share executor duties of their mother's will.

Justice Kate McMillan dismissed the dispute and ordered a joint funeral take place. She said had Ms Marinucci been "less stubborn" the proceeding could have been avoided.

"The unfortunate consequence of the dispute was that the deceased remained unInterred more than two months after her death," Justice McMillan said.

She said Ms Marinucci had filed the litigation despite ongoing talks between her and her brother's lawyers for funeral directors from both companies to be involved.

Mr Condo had proposed White Lady conduct the embalming process and viewing, provided Tripodi could conduct the burial. He later extended his offer to allow his sister to dress their mother and select the casket, flower arrangements and santini cards.

She objected and launched legal proceedings on July 14, seeking orders giving her sole right and responsibility surrounding her mother's burial.

Mrs Condo had five children, with two others backing Mr Condo in the proceeding.

Justice McMillan said Ms Marinucci's conduct was "unnecessary".

"The plaintiff's refusal to consult with her coexecutor and at least two of her siblings on the funeral and burial arrangements and her refusal to accept what were fair compromises was unreasonable," she ruled. "The similarities between the orders and the proposals made by the defendant speak to the reasonableness of his offers, yet the plaintiff showed a marked reluctance to engage with him."

The court heard tensions had been heightened among the siblings for some time.

Justice McMillan ordered Ms Marinucci pay her brother's legal costs from her pocket — not their mother's estate.

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Treatment deal a bloody relief

TOM MINEAR

AUSTRALIANS with a rare blood disease will be able to access a breakthrough treatment for free, instead of paying an extraordinary $675,000 a year.

Federal Health Minister Greg Hunt will on Saturday announce the federal government, in partnership with the states and territories, secured an agreement worth hundreds of millions of dollars to fund the Hemlibra treatment for haemophilia patients.

Haemophilia is a disorder where blood cannot clot properly, causing excessive bleeding. About 800 patients are expected to access the new treatment a year, meaning they will not require frequent intravenous infusions.

"Hemlibra is easier to administer and is only required by patients once a week compared with more frequent and more intrusive alternatives," Mr Hunt said. "It is also more effective than current clotting products in reducing bleeding incidents when patients have problems with antibodies."

It will be funded by the National Blood Authority, with 63 per cent of costs paid by the commonwealth and the rest by states and territories.

09.25.2020 17:39 NewsCorp Australia - Tearsheet

Police fall foul of poll on approval

MARK BUTTLER

NEW polling has found a steep slump in the level of approval for Victoria Police.

The Roy Morgan research, conducted on September 14 and 15, shows only 42 per cent of respondents rate the force's performance at very high or high.

That number was 76 per cent three years ago.

The pollsters attributed the dive in support to the way COVID-19 restrictions had been enforced and the Lawyer X scandal.

Roy Morgan researchers say those polled complained about instances of excessively heavy-handed police enforcement of pandemic restrictions.

The company's CEO Michele Levine said many expressed knowledge of the police's difficult job but had reservations about the way they did it.

"There is no doubting the reputational damage caused by the 'Lawyer X' affair and by some recent violent or aggressive encounters which have been caught on camera and seen widely," Ms Levine said.

"Such a large drop over such a short period in the number of Victorians rating their police force as very high or high for honesty and ethics will surely concern all involved."

Emily Bloom, 31, and Leisha Jade, 32, at Elwood beach on Friday. Picture: JASON EDWARDS

CHEERS TO SOME FUN IN THE SUN

LOCALS lapped up the sunshine under a cloud-free sky on Friday and can expect the warm weather to stay over the weekend.

Melbourne recorded a top of 27 degrees on a windy Friday afternoon without a drop of rainfall.

Weather bureau duty forecaster Christie Johnson said the Mallee region hit the highest temperature at 33.5C, followed by Avalon at 28.2C.

Balaclava local Leisha Jade, 32, said she and her friend, Emily Bloom, reached the edge of their 5km boundaries to share a drink on Elwood beach.

"I took the day off work when I saw the weather," she said. "Such a good day to get away from the heaviness of lockdown."

Ms Johnson said locals in metropolitan Melbourne should brace for similar gusty winds over Saturday and Sunday. "It will be windy, but it is going to be warm," she said. On Saturday, temperatures are set to climb to 28C with some light clouds before rain arrives on Sunday when it reaches 25C.

WEATHER, PAGE 55

Thug back on streets

Feared Apex member has his refugee status restored

EXCLUSIVE

DAVID HURLEY

A FEARED member of a notorious street gang who has been convicted of a litany of serious crimes including sexual assault, car theft and assaulting emergency service workers has been freed from immigration detention.

The Sudanese refugee, 25, is a known member of the Apex gang, according to a dossier authorities have on him.

He is now free to walk the streets after the Federal Court ordered his refugee status be restored last month.

The Herald Sun understands the federal government has deported more than 40 Apex members and associates since the gang first came to the attention of police 4½ years ago. The gang rampaged through Melbourne at Moomba 2016 and attempted to pick fights with festival-goers in Federation Square.

In the years since police have used a range of powers and tactics to try to control youth gangs in Victoria.

The Apex member, who was born in Sudan and arrived in Australia at the age of 12, won his federal court case on September 24. He had been in immigration detention since August 2018, following his release from custody.

The Herald Sun understands police have serious concerns about his release.

In August 2016 he was sentenced to six months for robbery offences in Melbourne.

He was soon in trouble with the law after his release and on December 8, 2017, he was sentenced to nine months in prison for theft and sexual assault.

His visa was then cancelled by the federal government on character grounds.

But Justice John Griffiths has ruled the decision to strip the man of his visa was impaired "by jurisdictional error".

"The quashing of the visa cancellation decision means that the applicant's refugee visa is automatically restored," Justice Griffiths said. "Accordingly, he is no longer an unlawful non-citizen and cannot lawfully be kept in immigration detention.

"He must be released immediately from immigration detention." It is understood the federal government is now considering its next course of action in the case.

In August the Herald Sun revealed overseas-born criminals were being targeted in a deportation blitz.

Speaking about the crackdown in August, Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton said: "There is no room in Australia for these non-citizens who engage in serious criminal activity.

"My job is to keep Australians safe and I will continue doing everything I can ... to do exactly that."

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