
Bookkeeper blames gambling addiction for \$780,000 theft from NT Aboriginal organisations

By Tom Maddocks

21 Apr 2016

An accountant from Alice Springs has pleaded guilty to stealing hundreds of thousands of dollars from Aboriginal organisations across Central Australia in order to feed his gambling addiction.

The Alice Springs Supreme Court heard Johannes Joubert, 46, stole about \$780,000 between 2010 and 2014 when he worked as a bookkeeper for local accounting firm Centre Accounting Services (CAS), which has since closed down.

Joubert attributed his offending to a pathological gambling addiction through online betting, including poker.

The crown had alleged Joubert transferred funds from his clients' bank accounts directly into his personal bank account, he hacked financial records and manipulated the accounting system.

Ultimately he was the only person authorised to access these accounts and was "in a position of significant trust", the court was told.

Through 167 separate transactions he stole about \$550,000 from almost 20 Aboriginal organisations, mainly not-for-profit organisations from small remote communities across Central Australian including Atitjere, Pukatja and Santa Teresa.

The Australian Tax Office alerted CAS to financial irregularities in mid-2013 and the company became aware of unauthorised transactions several months later, but Joubert continued to steal money to pay for his gambling habit.

He also stole \$230,000 from the Central Australian Stolen Generations and Families Aboriginal Corporation, an organisation which provides a link-up service for family members of Stolen Generations people.

It was forced to close last year due to funding cuts, misuse of Commonwealth funds and was audited over compliance issues.

The court also heard Joubert's offending "undermines the public's confidence and trust in the management of such organisations".

He pleaded guilty to all charges of stealing relating to fraud and dishonesty, and was remanded in custody, where he has been since handing himself to police in July 2015.

Joubert will be sentenced on April 27.