

# WINE NEWS

## Ipswich City Council former CEO sentenced to five years in jail for corruption

By Rachel Riga

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**Former Ipswich City Council CEO Carl Wulff has been sentenced to five years in prison after accepting bribes worth more than \$240,000.**

Carl Wulff, 66, pleaded guilty to two counts of official corruption and one count of attempting to pervert the course of justice.

The sentence will be suspended after 20 months.

His wife, Sharon Oxenbridge, 51, and contractor Claude Walker, 61 were each sentenced to three years in prison suspended after nine months on official corruption charges for their involvement.

Businessman Wayne Myers, 64, was sentenced to two-and-a-half years in prison, suspended after six months.

The convictions of Wulff, his wife, and the two businessmen were the first to be finalised in court as a result of the Crime and Corruption Commission (CCC) probe into Ipswich City Council.

Chief Judge Kerry O'Brien said Wulff was the main driver of the corrupt behaviour.



**PHOTO:** Carl Wulff pleaded guilty to two counts of official corruption and one count of attempting to pervert the course of justice. (AAP: Jono Searle)

**RELATED STORY:** Four people plead guilty to corruption as part of Ipswich council probe



**PHOTO:** Sharon Oxenbridge, wife of former Ipswich CEO Carl Wulff pleaded guilty to corruption charges. (AAP: Jono Searle)

"Your involvement seems to have been motivated by financial difficulty," he said.

"This offending was sophisticated and involved using the company structure of [Oxenbridge's company] Bojangles to camouflage the payments."

To the group, Judge O'Brien said the offending struck at the heart of justice, and each should be punished to reflect that.

"This type of conduct can only undermine confidence in local government," he said.

"The reality is the corruption secured favourable treatment, not available to those to operating legitimately."



**PHOTO:** Contractor Claude Walker allegedly received "favourable conditions" from the council through a "kickback arrangement". (AAP: Jono Searle)

## 'Kickback arrangement'

Previously the court heard, when Wulff was CEO at Ipswich in 2012, Walker's company won a council contract for recovery work after the 2011 floods.

Using a false contract deal, Wulff received \$104,000 in corrupt payments from Walker, who would get "favourable conditions" with the council through the "kickback arrangement".

Some of the corrupt funds were disguised by being electronically transferred to a company run by Oxenbridge.

In another deal, Wulff received \$115,000 through a company owned by Myers, as well as a \$7,000 deck at his home and a \$15,000 cash payment.

Wulff resigned from Ipswich City Council in 2013 and took a position as CEO of Liverpool City Council in western Sydney, where he remained until 2016.

The CCC finalised its investigation into the Ipswich Council in August last year, and handed down a damning report alleging a culture of corruption and finding an improper use of power and inappropriate relationships.

In response, the State Government introduced drastic new laws which resulted in the sacking of the entire Ipswich Council and the appointment of an administrator.

**Topics:** law-crime-and-justice, local-government, government-and-politics, crime, corruption, ipswich-4305, qld, brisbane-4000

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