**Two organised crime syndicate members jailed for largest precursor seizure in Victoria**

[Editor’s note: Images and vision are available via Hightail](https://spaces.hightail.com/space/lMJOb6q565)

Two men were today (12 September) sentenced in the Melbourne County Court to a total of 35 years and 6 months behind bars for importing 1.3 tonnes of the drug precursor ephedrine into Melbourne.

The men from Box Hill, 59, and Wheelers Hill, 57, were key facilitators in the importation of the ephedrine in February 2019, which was the largest-ever AFP seizure of a drug precursor in Victoria.

The Box Hill man was sentenced to 18 years with a non-parole period of 14 years. The Wheelers Hill man was sentenced to 17 years and 6 months with a non-parole period of 13 years and 10 months.

The Australian Federal Police (AFP) investigation began in 2018 in relation to an organised crime syndicate suspected to be importing commercial quantities of drug precursors into Melbourne.

Operation KUNGUR-ASH identified four Australian-based members of the syndicate who were allegedly planning to receive the shipment.

In February 2019, Australian Border Force (ABF) officers intercepted a container arriving from China labelled as ceramic tiles. ABF officers examined the container, finding 65 boxes containing a total of 260 bags of a white powder.

The total weight of the ephedrine seizure was 1,300 kilograms, with four men arrested following a controlled operation and the execution of search warrants.

The two other men charged in this investigation, both 29, were sentenced in September 2020 for possession of a drug of dependence and were released on the sentence date.

The AFP estimates the seizure had the potential to produce 922 kilograms of methamphetamine, which has an estimated street value of approximately $691.5 million dollars. This is potentially more than 9.2 million street deals of methamphetamine stopped from reaching our communities.

Detective Acting Superintendent Rick Briggs said the final sentences concludes the tremendous investigative work performed by AFP, ABF and International partners on seizing a dangerous amount of drug precursor.

“No matter how innovative or sophisticated these criminals attempt to become, we will continue to track them down and prosecute them to the full extent of the law through the tireless efforts of all of our law enforcement partners.” D/A Supt Briggs said.

“This enormous ephedrine seizure has prevented dangerous and harmful drugs, like methamphetamine, from being manufactured, sold and supplied to the Victorian public.

 This is another incredible example of the AFP keeping the community safe from drugs.”

ABF Superintendent Maritime Operations Dan Peters said ABF officers work tirelessly every day to stop illegal drugs from reaching the Australian community.

“Our officers are constantly alert to attempts to conceal illicit substances, no matter how creative criminal syndicates are in trying to hide them,” Supt Peters said.

“In this case, officers using x-ray technology detected anomalies inside plastic tubs labelled as ceramic tile and found the ephedrine inside.

“This seizure, and the dismantling of this crime group, is the result of our strong partnerships and each agency's rigorous pursuit of those who seek to exploit the community for their own benefit.”

The men were each convicted on two counts of:

* Importing commercial quantities of border controlled precursors namely ephedrine, contrary to section 307.11 of the *Criminal Code 1995*(Cth);
* Attempting to possess controlled precursors, namely ephedrine contrary to sections 11.1 and 308.2 of the *Criminal Code 1995* (Cth).