

CBA, NAB top list for banned planners

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Commonwealth Bank of Australia and National Australia Bank have notched up the most strikes against them in a crackdown on dodgy financial planners by the corporate regulator.

Five CBA planners have been banned from providing financial services and one former adviser, 38-year-old Gold Coast man Ricky Gillespie, has been charged with forgery as part of the Australian Securities and Investments Commission's Wealth Management Project.

Five planners who formerly worked for NAB have also received bans. They include Hardik Bhimani, who was stripped of his financial services licence for life after he misappropriated money owed to NAB and charged his clients excessive fees.

Mr Bhimani is one of three advisers who have received lifetime bans in a crackdown aimed at the largest financial advice firms: CBA, NAB, Westpac, ANZ, AMP and Macquarie.

Fourteen others have received temporary bans of between 18 months and a decade.

The ASIC project began in late 2014 and continues amid plunging confidence in financial planners and a political bunfight over a royal commission into banks.

A series of financial planning scandals prompted Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull to announce in April extra surveillance powers and a multimillion-dollar technological upgrade for financial services regulators.

Still under pressure from Labor to call a royal commission, Mr Turnbull last week said bank chiefs would be grilled annually by a parliamentary economics committee.

Along with bans on individuals, ASIC has imposed conditions on Total Financial Solutions (CBA) and NAB was forced to launch a financial advice remediation program, which brings both banks' hit rate up to six each, according to the regulator's latest enforcement report.

Crackdown

ASIC's investigations into financial institutions

Number of actions		Type of actions	
CBA	6	Bannings for a specified period	14
NAB	6	Conditions and fines	4
Macquarie Bank	5	Permanent bannings	3
AMP	3	Enforceable undertakings	2
ANZ	2	Persons charged in criminal proceedings	1
Westpac	2		



SOURCE: ASIC

Mr Gillespie allegedly forged 31 documents between January 1, 2007, and June 13, 2009. He is the only person to have been charged with a criminal offence under the Wealth Management Project. ASIC anticipates more enforcement action to come.

In other examples so far, former

NAB advisers Alfie Chong and Gerard McCormack were each banned for five years. An ASIC investigation found that Mr McCormack engaged in misleading and deceptive conduct when in mid-2013 he assisted his client complete and lodge false withdrawal forms for a superannuation fund.

From Westpac, Martin Hodgetts got a life ban for submitting false insurance policies to obtain benefits for himself. Between May and September in 2014, he submitted nine false policies containing invented details, such as imaginary conversations and false signatures.

Amanda Ritchie, of Shepparton in Victoria, also received a lifetime ban. She was sacked by Magnitude, a subsidiary of Westpac, in 2014.

Four former Macquarie Bank employees have been handed bans ranging from three to six years.

Ben Cheung of Epping, who worked for ANZ, was banned for 10 years after creating false documents and forging client signatures.

Former ANZ adviser Wayne Meadth was given a one-year ban but is seeking to have the decision overturned.

In September 2015, ASIC accepted enforceable undertakings from Reid Menkens, a former Millennium3 Financial Services and AMP representative, and Leo Menkens, also a former AMP representative.