

# WINEVS

## Man accused of stealing from vulnerable, Indigenous people seeks bail to study law

By Neda Vanovac

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**A man who has been banned from entering Aboriginal communities for five years by the ACCC for "unconscionable, misleading and deceptive conduct" over his dealings with sick and vulnerable people is seeking bail so he can study law.**

Nigerian-born Australian Jackson Anni, 30, has also been barred from entering Royal Darwin Hospital after he sold cheap electronic tablets to customers, claiming they were iPads.

On Thursday, he appeared in Darwin's Supreme Court to apply for bail over stealing charges, which prosecutors are opposing, saying his offending is "extensive and serious" and he should stay in jail for the community's protection.

Prosecutor Naomi Loudon told the court that after being blocked from entering Aboriginal communities, Anni had taken to "hanging around" car parks in Darwin, Katherine and Mataranka, and in public places where Aboriginal people are known to camp, offering to help sign people up for mobile phone plans.

"The accused admits that he deals solely with Aboriginal people and vulnerable people because they can't obtain iPhones and the like on their own ... their English is not such that they can deal with a contract," Ms Loudon said.

She said Anni told police he charged clients a "consulting fee" of \$1,500 for helping them set up phone contracts, but organised recurring payments of \$150 a fortnight from their accounts to his that went on "indefinitely".



PHOTO: Jackson Anni with electronic tablets and residents from an Indigenous community. (Supplied)

Some clients lost several thousand dollars before they realised their money was being drained and complained to banks and the police.

Anni also allegedly lent money to Aboriginal people, or arranged to help them purchase cars they never received, setting up ongoing electronic cash transfers to himself. This resulted in some debts of as little as \$20 ballooning to \$1800.

Ms Loudon said Anni told police there was no obligation for him to repay overpayments: "They can stop it by changing their passwords," he allegedly said.

### Victims not financially savvy: prosecutors

Ms Loudon said "more and more people" were going to banks and the police with complaints about Anni, and there would be potentially many more complainants, and more charges laid.

"They're all Aboriginal people, they aren't financially savvy, they don't have internet banking set up, the majority reside in the long grass [camp]," she said.

Anni ran unsuccessfully as an independent candidate at the August NT election for the seat of Nhulunbuy, which has a large Aboriginal population, but won only 35 primary votes.

Prosecutors consider him to be a flight risk, although he has surrendered his passport to police.

He has at least five bank accounts in Australia and three more in China, Ms Loudon told the court, and the bank transfers were his only income.

He also regularly travels and runs a business taking Chinese tourists on wine tours in Prague, the court heard.

"The accused is a person who makes things up on the run and is prepared to lie," Ms Loudon said.

### Jail 'a massive wake-up call'

Defence lawyer Peter Maley told the court it was likely the matter would not get to trial until the second half of the year, and if Anni was held on remand until then it would be far longer than the jail term he would receive should a jury find him guilty.

Mr Maley said the sum of money involved – about \$14,000 – was relatively minor, and police had Anni's computer which contained ledgers and documents that would show he had been engaged in running a legitimate business.

He said Anni had enrolled to study law at Murdoch University but had been unable to sign up for his elective courses because he was being held in prison.

"He is no fool," he said.

Jail has been a "harrowing experience" for Anni, who was bashed on Monday, Mr Maley said. Anni said it had been "a massive wake-up call".

The matter will return to court on March 1 for further submissions and a decision.

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PHOTO: Jackson Anni allegedly set up ongoing bank transfers to himself from "vulnerable" Aboriginal clients. (Supplied: FDRA website)

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PHOTO: Several people complained that Anni had set up indefinite transfers from their accounts without