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# Former Dobell MP Craig Thomson jailed over multi-million-dollar migration fraud

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ABC Central Coast

Courts

Thu 18 Dec 2025 at 5:44pm



The former federal MP for Dobell, Craig Thomson, has been jailed for a maximum four years for fraud. (ABC Newcastle: Liz Farquhar)

## In short:

A former federal Labor MP has been jailed for his role in a multi-million-dollar visa fraud scheme.

Craig Thomson will serve a minimum of two years and six months behind bars.

## What's next?

Thomson will be eligible for parole in June 2028.

Former federal Labor MP Craig Thomson has been jailed for four years for

his role in a multi-million dollar visa fraud scheme and fraudulently receiving COVID-era payments.

Thomson had previously pleaded guilty to three counts of delivering a document containing a false statement and one count of obtaining a financial benefit by deception.

In handing down his sentence, Judge Robert Newlands SC told the Sydney District Court that Thomson took money from people looking for visas even though he was not a registered migration agent.

The court heard he acted as a middle man while those applying for a visa could have gone straight to a migration agent.

He charged visa applicants up to \$50,000 to assist with their applications, regardless of their outcome.

Thomson gained approximately \$117,000 from his fraudulent conduct.



Craig Thomson was previously convicted of fraud during this time as a Health Services Union official. (AAP: David Crosling)

Judge Newlands said the offending took advantage of a system that

involved self-reporting and trust.

"[Applicants] thought they were dealing with a skilled and trusted official," he said.

"The applicants were unaware of the fraud."

The former Dobell MP also lodged 13 online forms falsely reporting that a Wyong cafe was entitled to COVID-era JobKeeper payments.

The court heard he submitted the applications without the consent of the cafe's owners and did not disclose that the eatery was not operational.

He pocketed \$61,800.

### **Financial struggles after parliamentary life**

The former union official was elected as the federal member for Dobell in the 2007 election.

In 2012 he was suspended by the Labor Party and he moved to the crossbench.

The following year he stood as an independent candidate but lost the seat to the Liberal Party.

He was expelled from Labor in 2014.



Craig Thomson served in the Australian parliament as the member for Dobell for several years. (AAP: Lukas Coch)

The court heard Thomson struggled financially after leaving parliament and spent some of the money from his crimes paying off his personal credit card debt, and mortgage and business loan repayments.

"Most people suffer financial stress from time to time in their life and do not resort to criminal conduct to deal with the situation," Judge Newlands said.

During sentencing submissions the defence argued that because Thomson was a "high-profile individual" and a former member of parliament any custodial sentence would be more onerous.

**Judge Newlands said, "[There is] no doubt the offender is high-profile, he is infamous."**

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Judge Newlands said he was conscious Thomson may suffer more in custody than others due to his career as a parliamentarian.

## History of offending

Judge Newlands said that Thomson had a history of offending, including his [fraudulent use of credit cards while a union official, for which he escaped jail time in 2014.](#)

Using union credit cards he spent tens of thousands of dollars on personal expenses, including brothel visits and travel with his wife.

He was fined \$25,000 after being found guilty of 13 charges of theft.

Judge Newlands also referenced Thompson's fraudulent claiming of two COVID-era grants from the NSW government in 2021.

He was ordered to serve a custodial sentence by way of a community corrections order in March last year for the offences.

Judge Newlands told the court the "earlier fine did not cause him to change his ways".

He told the court he believed the offender posed a "serious risk of re-offending."

Thomson will be eligible for parol in June 2028.

Posted Thu 18 Dec 2025 at 5:44pm, updated Fri 19 Dec 2025 at 11:30am