

Intertwined cartel face court

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A KERANG man allegedly involved in an international drug syndicate appeared in a Melbourne court last Wednesday.

Eng Kok Koh, 41, who was arrested in Kerang on June 30, is one of 14 accused in a case which involves an alleged international drug syndicate that operated across several locations, including in Tasmania and the Melbourne suburb of Tarnait.

Mr Eng Kok Koh is charged with trafficking a large commercial quantity of a drug of dependence, namely methylamphetamine,

between March 2, 2018, and June 30 this year, and during the same period dealing with the proceeds of crime, namely a house, vehicles and money.

Six others were also charged with trafficking a large commercial quantity of methylamphetamine over the same period.

At Wednesday's special mention before Magistrate Charlie Rozen-cwajg, Melbourne Magistrates' Court heard the operations of the alleged cartel were so intertwined it wasn't possible to split the case into separate proceedings.

"You may be able to separate (operations) between addresses for some of the lesser players, if I

can put it that way," David Bosso, for the prosecution, said.

"But that's not going to be applicable for those who are said to be higher up in the syndicate, who are involved, or said to be involved, in multiple addresses."

The prosecution undertook to provide a diagram to the court outlining the alleged hierarchy and relationships between the accused.

Mr Bosso said the evidence to be presented at a committal hearing next year would consist largely of telephone intercepts, electronic and financial information and drug analyses.

About 430 intercepted phone

calls were being translated and transcribed, with the process due to be complete by January, he said.

More than 500 drug exhibits from each alleged clandestine drug lab, plus up to 100 exhibits from other locations, would take a substantial period of time to test.

Asked whether the analysis would indicate the quantity of drugs that could be produced from the confiscated material, Mr Bosso said he believed "a lot of what was found was in effect finished product".

Police were also still waiting on a forensic accountant's statement, tax office information and e-crime analysis of computers and

tablets, the court heard.

Mr Rozen-cwajg described the evidence as seemingly "a voluminous amount of material" and expressed doubt that the defence could prepare in time for the next mention date in February.

However, with some defence lawyers arguing their clients had a lesser involvement and could be dealt with more quickly, he retained the court listing.

Mr Eng Kok Koh, together with most of the other accused, was remanded until February 24.

Four others had already been granted bail.

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Police Beat

DRINK-DRIVER SPEEDS

A KERANG man was issued with a penalty notice for speeding and driving over the blood alcohol limit after the car he was driving was intercepted on the Loddon Valley Highway.

Swan Hill highway patrol intercepted the vehicle on the Loddon Valley Highway about 3pm on Sunday, October 25, after it was detected travelling at a speed of 121km/h.

The 46-year-old was breath-tested and recorded a reading of 0.057.

CRIMINAL DAMAGE

A KERANG

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