

27 victims charmed into former realtor's \$1.1m

DAN THE SUPERMAN WAS KRYPTONITE TO HIS FRIENDS

EXCLUSIVE
Annie Lewis

Dan the Superman. A trusted friend. An expert in real estate. A fraudster.

Coffs Harbour resident Daniel Leslie Harris was charged with 115 counts of fraud after he charmed friends and acquaintances into investing their hard-earned superannuation money into a scheme over a decade, only to leave them in the lurch with no hope of recouping their losses.

The former realtor pleaded not guilty to 115 counts of dishonestly obtaining financial advantage by deception, adding up to more than \$1.1m involving 27 alleged victims.

For 16 weeks, a trial involving witnesses, hundreds of pages of evidence and detailed cross-examinations took place at Downing District Court.

While complex and detailed, the prosecution's case centred around the fact that in 2008, former realtor Harris "thought up an investment scheme" which involved using participants' self-managed super funds (SMSF) through a unit trust to invest in property and property development.

The victims were promised they would be property owners and receive an eight per cent return on their investment, but that never happened, and none of them got their investment back in full.

Similar to the infamous Melissa Caddick, Harris was also operating without an Australian Financial Services licence.

The money was withdrawn for Harris' own personal use, in what he claimed was his

wages, and for other schemes involving properties at Valla Beach, Armidale and Coffs Harbour but not in the way that was promised.

On Friday, the jury found him guilty of all 115 counts and Harris, who remains on bail, will be sentenced by a judge in November.

While they are relieved justice will be served, the victims said it does not make up for the emotional and financial toll.

“He was just super duper convincing”

‘Nora’

Fraud victim

Campbelltown resident Nora, not her real name, was one of his first victims. She met Harris through his former wife, April, who had sung at Nora's wedding.

April Lord, formerly April Harris, was convicted and fined for dealing with property proceeds of crime less than \$100,000 and one count of receiving suspected proceeds less than \$100,000 in 2021.

The charges related to money taken from the superannuation accounts but the court heard at the time that Harris was the "architect" of the scheme

In 2008, Nora visited the couple at their home in Coffs Harbour, where Harris told her about an investment scheme that would set her up for the future.

Using what Nora described as "the gift of the gab", he convinced her to set up a self-managed super fund, give him access, and he would invest that money in a property portfolio.

She used to call him "Dan the Superman", but seven years later, Nora realised she was the victim of fraud.

The first red flag for Nora was when the investors received a letter from their accountant who said the funds had been exhausted and raised concerns about the scheme. Harris blamed the accountant.

"(Harris) said he would be going to these new accountants, and he would be continuing it from there," she said.

"He was just super duper convincing that everything was above board, and we have smooth sailing again."

Another inkling that something was wrong was when Nora asked for documents and invoices regarding the developments and properties, but she did not receive anything.

Nora started to worry even more when she and her partner went to buy a new home in Campbelltown, but the bank raised concerns about liabilities with her superannuation fund – an issue Harris had told her would not be a problem.

"We almost lost our deposit. We almost lost the property," she said.

In 2015, Nora closed the Newcastle Permanent account, set up a new super fund,



Daniel Harris outside Downing Centre Courts. Picture: Damian Shaw

and left behind the scheme. She soon found out that cash withdrawals had been made from her account with a card, even though she had never set a card up, and Harris used to ring her payroll department to find out when her super contributions were getting paid into the account.

In 2018, the police contacted her, and five years later, she

found herself giving evidence at the trial.

In the end, Nora estimated she contributed more than \$40,000 into that account and never saw any of it again. Harris was charged with six counts of fraud relating to Nora, who said she had been left feeling like a "gullible person".

"He was believable. He was professional," she said.

When asked if she had anything to say to Harris, Nora referenced a conversation she had with Daniel when she first raised concerns.

"He said something along the lines of 'Well call the fraud squad, I have nothing to hide,' she recalled. "It turns out you did."

Coffs Harbour husband and wife Mary and John, not their

From humble home to childcare centre

Kirsten Jelinek

A home could soon be transformed into a multimillion-dollar three-storey childcare centre in Sydney's southwest.

A development application has been lodged with Fairfield Council by La Land Pty Ltd for the facility at 89 Mandarin St, Fairfield East.

If approved, the centre would operate across three floors, with the ground floor



A childcare centre is earmarked for Fairfield East.

featuring an indoor playroom for children aged three and under, as well as craft benches, cot rooms, a nappy change area, a staffroom, an office and a kitchen.

The first and second floors would have indoor and outdoor play areas – both for children aged from three to five.

The facility would have a capacity for 100 children and there would be 15 educators.

The proposed operating hours would be 7am to 7pm on Monday to Friday – excluding public holidays.

"While the development can be contrasted to the existing environment, the area is likely to

transition significantly over the next five to 10 years, with the higher-density developments," planning documents state.

The documents state a 1.8m acoustic barrier would surround the ground floor outdoor area, and a 1.5m acoustic barrier would be erected around the first floor outdoor play area to minimise noise from children playing.

The plans will be considered by the council.

Jail for cop ramming

A Korora repeat offender has been jailed after leading police on a wild 22km rat-run of Coffs Harbour streets in a Toyota Corolla while on parole.

Riley Jay Amos caught the attention of police when they noticed his small sedan with the headlights turned off.

A patrol vehicle activated its lights in a bid to pull him over, but Amos accelerated and a pursuit was initiated.

After a wild chase, the Corolla collided with a police car, propelling the fugitive's sedan back into another cop car.

Amos tried to drive away but the Toyota struck the front of a third police vehicle and was boxed in.

He was sentenced to two terms of 17 months jail, with a non-parole period of 10 months, and disqualified from driving for 2½ years.

self-managed super fraud



Super fraud victim 'Nora'.
Picture: Adam Yip

DANIEL HARRIS' SUPER FRAUD

115

Guilty verdicts on charges of fraud

27

Victims over 10 years

\$1.1m+

Of superannuation money lost

\$443.03 to \$50,000

The amounts of super deposits

funds we lost. On an emotional level, we trusted him, and now I find it hard to believe people. He was so good at talking, at making things sound legitimate, and so you question yourself and your ability to discern if something is for real or not."

The case first landed on Detective senior constable Shar-yin Coffee's desk in August 2018. Two fraud reports came through to Coffs Harbour Police District within a couple of weeks of each other. Soon, more victims came forward.

"On the first fraud reported, a person had contacted a solicitor, and there was some correspondence, and through that, I knew there would be some more, but I had no idea the sheer number of people who were going to be victims," Detective Coffee said.

"The hours of work into this were endless. My brief of evidence was 30 volumes which tells you the amount of paperwork involved. It was a lengthy investigation."

Detective Coffee said it soon became apparent that Harris had targeted friends and acquaintances and lured them in with the Australian dream of owning a property.

She said while she was relieved the victims could find relief in the guilty verdicts, it did not get them their money back.

"For some of the older victims, there is one woman in her sixties, they simply cannot recover," Detective Coffee said.

"You need to be careful who you trust."

real names, invested about \$140,000 of their super into the scheme, and Harris was charged with dishonestly obtaining \$103,200.

The couple met Harris through his partner in 2006 and decided to invest in his scheme in 2013 when they were in their forties. Mary rolled her entire super into the nominated account, while her hus-

band made small contributions but kept some separate.

After a few years, Mary said she caught Harris in some lies and coupled with a reluctance to pass on documentation, she knew something was not right.

"He always had an excuse and a reason as to why he was unable to deliver something we were requesting," she said.

While a small amount of

money returned, it was "nowhere close" to their original investment or what they had been offered.

"There has been a twofold impact. First is the financial. We are not going to be able to retire when we thought we wanted to, so that has pushed out at least another 10 years," Mary said.

"We will never regain the

Tough times biting many

5 million are going hungry

Vanessa Croll

One in five Australians – about five million people – are unable to meet their basic food needs, according to the nation's leading food rescue charity.

The dire statistic from SecondBite comes as its winter appeal, in partnership with Coles, begins on Wednesday, calling on shoppers to donate \$2 at the checkout.

SecondBite acting chief executive Lucy Coward said each donation would help the charity provide up to 10 meals for families in need.

"By the time you've got down to paying for food after you've paid for electricity, fuel and other things, for many families there's nothing left," she said.

"Or they're choosing a couple of meals a day, but not three meals a day, or the kids are eating but mum and dad aren't."

"With each \$2 donation, we're able to rescue food and redistribute it."

SecondBite receives excess food from retailers, growers and manufacturers, providing it free to 1100 charities and non-profit organisations across the nation.

Ms Coward said the demand for food assistance had surged.

"Some agencies are telling us that if we gave them 50 per cent more food, that wouldn't even touch the sides," she said.

Mother of three Adrienne said her family faced homelessness after her husband lost his job due to the pandemic.

"We lost everything. We had to move out because we couldn't pay the rent," she said.

"We stayed with friends for a time and then lived in our car for two weeks. We used public barbecues to cook. We were homeless, it was terrifying."



SecondBite founders Ian and Simone Carson

Through The House of Refuge, they received food from SecondBite's pantry, allowing them to secure housing and her husband to find work. But their financial struggles persist.

"We live off \$1200 a week and more than a third of that goes on rent," Adrienne said.

"Without SecondBite, I'd have to sacrifice paying a bill to buy groceries and I don't want to do that."

Penny Fowler, News Corp Australia's community ambassador, said: "In the face of community-wide economic challenges, where the cost-of-living pressures weigh heavily on so many, SecondBite's work has never been so important."

"Their remarkable and innovative food rescue efforts provide nourishment and dignity to those in need."

Coles has provided the equivalent of 200 million meals since partnering with SecondBite in 2011. "Our partnership goes beyond donating food and fundraising. We connect SecondBite to key suppliers who are also seeking to reduce food waste and support vulnerable people," general manager of corporate and Indigenous affairs Sally Fielke said.

Buy a \$2 donation card or make a donation at Coles stores until Tuesday, July 25, or Liquorland, First Choice Liquor or Vintage Cellars store until August 1.



Artist's impression of the Games symbols above the Story Bridge.

Bridge display to be part of Games story

Stephanie Bennett

A spectacular drone show illuminating the iconic symbols of the Olympic and Paralympic Games over Brisbane's Story Bridge will set the stage for the city's 9 Years To Go celebrations later this month.

The free display, set for the evening of July 22, is one of several events across the city marking the major milestone on the road to the 2032 Games.

It is also the first time Australia will have the Olympic Rings and Paralympic Agitos on prominent display since the Sydney 200 Games.

Brisbane 2032 president Andrew Liveris said Brisbane and Queensland was now the "official home of the Olympics and Paralympics in Australia", and joined a number of Olympic and Paralympic sister-cities across the world who had made history hosting the Games.

"What better way to celebrate 9 Years To Go than inviting the whole community to be part of a once-in-a-lifetime moment, where people can 'meet' the Olympic Rings and Paralympic Agitos first-hand," he said.

"We'll also celebrate with a variety of sports for people to try ... ensuring our love for sport and its benefits remain at the heart of our planning and purpose."

Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk said the milestone date meant Australia was one year closer to a "life-changing event that will place our beautiful country as the epicentre of the sporting world".

Punters are urged to stake their spot early for the 7pm drone show, with the best viewing spots from Howard Smith Wharves and other locations with a clear view of the Story Bridge.