

Charged with drug trafficking, employed by Education Division

MATTHEW VELLA

A man arrested for drug trafficking in 2005, but whose name was banned by court order during compilation of evidence stage, was employed as a supply teacher with the Directorate of Educational Services between 2006 and 2008, this newspaper can confirm.

Simon Linton Sancto from Qala – whose drug run came to an end after a dramatic police chase in Sliema in December 2005 – was 23 at the time of arrest. He had admitted to charges of conspiring to deal 1,954 ecstasy pills and a quantity of cannabis, but Magistrate Joseph Apap Bologna issued a ban on the publication of his name.

The reason for this ban was not made public at the time. His name now appears in a Criminal Court sentence on the bill of indictment presented against him.

MaltaToday can now confirm that less than a year after his arrest, university-educated Sancto was employed as a supply teacher at the Kullegg Santa Tereza in Sta Venera, where he was seconded by the education directorate to provide Maltese language lessons to a Somali pupil.

The school authorities were unaware of the criminal charges brought against Sancto, although when asked by this newspaper,

the Ministry of Education's permanent secretary confirmed that the education department is aware of the drug trafficking indictment.

Nonetheless, Sancto appears to have been kept in employment with the Directorate of Educational Services until well after the bill of indictment was presented in court against him in 2007.

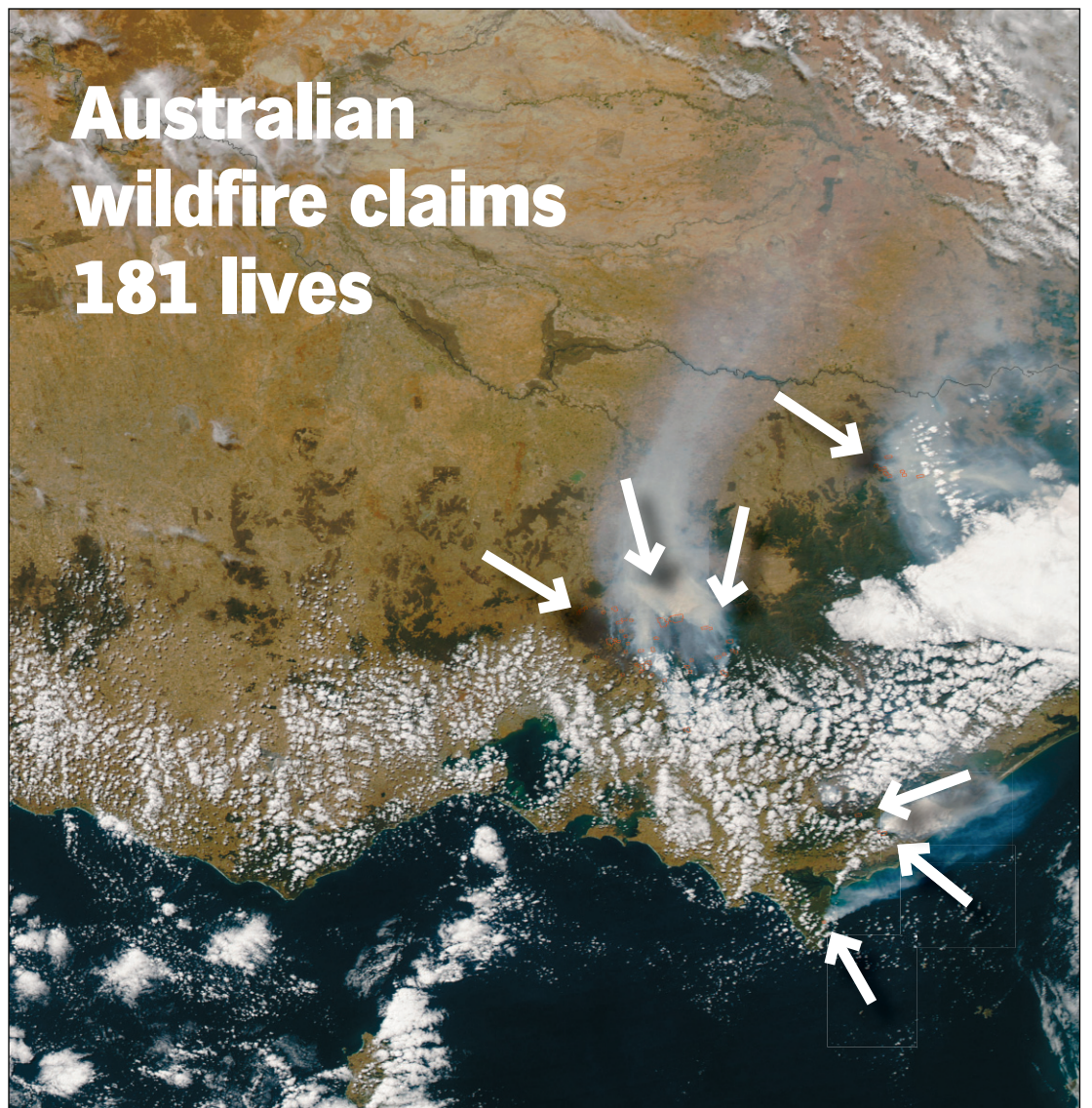
The permanent secretary told MaltaToday that Sancto's employment was only terminated on 30 January 2008, and even then, only because his services were "no longer needed".

"Mr Sancto was employed on a temporary basis as a supply teacher. As is ordinary practice, once the services of a supply teacher are no longer needed, their employment is terminated."

The ministry has not confirmed whether it was aware of the criminal charges at the time of employing Sancto as a supply teacher. Sancto was also accused of aggravated trafficking, since he was found in possession of the ecstasy pills within 100 metres of a school.

Speaking to MaltaToday, the headmaster of the Kullegg Santa Tereza confirmed that Sancto had been sent to the school as a supply teacher to assist a Somali pupil in his Maltese lessons back in 2006.

"All I can say **page 3** ▶



Australian wildfire claims 181 lives

The devastating Australian fires and their smoke as imaged by orbiting spacecraft. This shot is from NASA's Aqua Earth Observing satellite. Arrows outline areas of the active flame. Australian officials have said there have been as many as 400 separate fires, some of them believed to have been set by arsonists. Two citizens of Maltese descent, Freddy and Scott Frendo, yesterday succumbed to the 70 miles per hour flames - SEE PAGE 2

After MEPA's denial, BirdLife reveals Authority's letter of support for Life+ project **page 5** ▶

Bus owners slam Gatt's 'deceitful' tactics

KARL SCHEMBRI

BUS owners are up in arms at what they are calling the Transport Minister's "downright deceit and shameless spin" in the dispute about the payment of government subsidies last year.

On Monday, Transport Minister Austin Gatt claimed he was given an ultimatum by the Association of Public Transport (ATP) which was requesting to be paid subsidies for the four-day strike ordered last year.

But the letter actually sent by the association to the minister, and seen by this newspaper,

makes it clear it had agreed not to be paid subsidies for the duration of the strike. The issue is the amount that had to be deducted from the annual subsidy.

Speaking to MaltaToday Midweek, ATP President Victor Spiteri lambasted Gatt for "trying to turn the public against bus drivers" when the issue had to be tackled through arbitration.

"We have never asked to be paid subsidies for those four days. To the contrary, we had agreed there would be no subsidy for the duration of the strike." **page 6** ▶

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