



# Nurse avoids jail

## Carer must repay \$19,000 stolen wages

**By TODD CARDY and  
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A NURSE who lied about the number of hours she spent caring for a severely disabled man has escaped a jail sentence, but was ordered to repay almost \$20,000 she stole in wages.

Sandra Maree Hamlin, 48, pleaded guilty to nearly 50 counts of fraud in Perth Magistrates Court this week after an investigation by the Insurance Commission of WA into work claims of her and her husband, David Hamlin, 50.

Mrs Hamlin stole \$19,038.75.

Investigators charged the couple after allegations they ripped off the commission by embellishing their work hours while caring for a man who suffered major head injuries in a car crash and was completely dependent on carers.

Three charges related to payments received for falsely claiming Mrs Hamlin took the man on outings from the care facility.

The outings, known as buddy time, included bogus day trips to shops and the beach to improve his quality of life.

A pre-sentence report read to the court stated that Mrs Hamlin first started filling out the dodgy claims "as a genuine mistake".

"She realised she could get away with it and so she kept on

doing it until she was caught," the court heard during the sentencing hearing on Thursday.

Magistrate Greg Smith told the mother she was lucky not to be sent to jail for her crimes.

"It was a serious offence of dishonesty over a period of time," Mr Smith said. "The total amount is a significant amount, an amount people have been sent to prison for."

He ordered Mrs Hamlin to repay the money and imposed a two-year intensive supervision order that requires her to complete counselling and other programs.

He said he gave her credit for her guilty plea, lack of criminal history and being the sole income earner for her family because her husband was not well enough to work.

Mr Hamlin was fined \$1000 after a magistrate in February found him guilty of eight counts of fraud. He has lodged a Supreme Court appeal against his conviction.

Outside court, Mrs Hamlin said she had "nothing to say" about the fraud.

Insurance Commission general manager Lew Watts said: "The vast majority of claims for compensation and services rendered to claimants are legitimate."

A spokeswoman for the Insurance Commission said the frauds were detected during a risk-management investigation.



**PLEADED GUILTY: Sandra Maree Hamlin outside court.** Picture: STEWART ALLEN