

# Gamblers jailed for AUD 750,000 casino scam

Four Chinese nationals and an Australian citizen have all received jail sentences for their involvement in a sophisticated AUD 750,000 casino gambling scam.

Four men – Songtao Zhao, 35, Haibin Shao, 40, Zhigang Liu, 35, and Jianwen Liu, 40, all Chinese nationals and residents – and one woman, Wei Shan Liu, 43, an Australian citizen who resides in China, were all found guilty by a District Court jury in Brisbane of committing fraud on May 17 last year.

A sixth accused, Eberihim Abbas, was acquitted by the jury.

Judge John McGill sentenced the four men, who have already served 18 months on remand, to four years' jail, and set no parole recommendation date.

Under Queensland law they can apply for parole after serving half of their sentence. On receiving parole they will immediately be deported back to China.

Judge McGill said Wei Shan Liu had been on bail for about 18 months, on condition she not leave the country. That meant she had not had any contact with her husband and two children, aged four and 10, during that time.

He said that because of this, he would only sentence her to three years' jail, and set a parole release date in 18 months' time.

The scam took place at Jupiter's Casino on the Gold Coast, at the mini baccarat table in the members-only Club Conrad section.

In a 50-minute period the group acted together in a playing card substitution ruse which involved stealing a genuine

casino playing card, deliberately losing games, and then rigging other games to allow the group members to win.

Zhao stole the genuine card and used it to manipulate the outcome.

The group took a total of AUD 765,000, but the casino will not be out of pocket because it stopped a AUD 400,000 cheque made out to Wei Shan Liu's account, while other funds were frozen.

Judge McGill ordered the outstanding AUD 115,000 be repaid to the casino.

Police were alerted to the scam after a senior casino surveillance officer picked up on it while monitoring video footage.

The group members were playing cards as they waited at Coolangatta airport when police arrested them.