

Deal will see him in jail to his 60s

CASE CLOSED

Anthony Dowsley, Elissa Hunt, Paul Anderson and Padraic Murphy

TONY Mokbel has struck a deal that may see him serve about 20 years in jail and taste freedom in his early 60s.

An extraordinary decade-long legal saga can finally be revealed after the crook known as Fat Tony — once the country's most wanted man — finally admitted to a monster drug empire that he boasted had netted at least \$100 million.

It can also now be revealed that the former friend and drug-dealing partner of slain gangland killer Carl Williams has been acquitted of the murder of Lewis Moran.

The case against him over the public shooting of kickboxer and hotdog vendor Michael Marshall was dropped before it reached a courtroom.

The drug kingpin, arrested in Greece in 2007 after fleeing Australia, had wanted to fight a series of drug trafficking charges against him, which could have seen him spend the rest of his life in jail, had he been convicted of them.

But after a saga that has already cost taxpayers an estimated \$50 million in legal and investigation expenses, he cracked.

There was overwhelming evidence of his brazenly running a drug operation while on the run in Greece.

The deal, brokered between the Office of Public Prosecutions and Mokbel's lawyers over the past month, means prosecutors will recommend a minimum sentence of about 20 years for the underworld tsar.

But Justice Simon Whelan will have final discretion when passing sentence.

Mokbel's breakthrough admission to years of drug dealing also means the *Herald Sun* can reveal:

HIS taxpayer-funded legal aid team used Roy Morgan research to help get his trials held in secret. The poll found 83 per cent of respondents knew of him, and the vast majority (more than 80 per cent) believed he was a drug dealer. **THE MURDER** charge

against him over the Michael Marshall killing was dropped, despite the existence of sworn statements claiming he'd offered a \$300,000 contract for the job. A hitman, who has been jailed for the shooting, told police Mokbel ordered the hit at a meeting with Williams, as revenge for the death of his old school chum Willie Thompson.

MOKBEL secretly met Purana detectives at the height of the underworld war, telling them of his dislike for Mick Gatto. Their rivalry stemmed from a meeting organised by Gatto, who stood by and watched bikies bash him.

ANOTHER witness claimed Mokbel was involved in the

notorious 1996 break-in at the St Kilda Rd offices of the drug squad.

The deal for Mokbel, 46, could see him released in his early 60s.

A source close to the underworld boss said Mokbel wanted to "live a life outside", but planned to study and take up programs offered while serving time.

Mokbel's extraordinary life as a cashed-up drug baron can be revealed after 24 suppression orders were lifted in the Supreme Court yesterday, allowing the *Herald Sun* to document his full criminal career.

A day earlier, Mokbel had pleaded guilty to three serious drug charges,

heraldsun.com.au

24-hour news

Live blog: Discuss the Mokbel case with our reporting team. Starts at noon PLUS

Video: Paul Anderson on the court hearings



He was in a jovial mood before the pleas, talking and joking with a handful of male supporters, and even yawning at one stage.

Standing before Justice Whelan, he admitted trafficking a large commercial quantity of methylamphetamine between July 2006 and June 2007.

He also pleaded guilty to a single count of trafficking a large commercial quan-

tity of MDMA between February and August 2005, and to a Commonwealth charge of urging an undercover operative to import a commercial quantity of MDMA into Australia.

Crown prosecutor Peter Kidd told the court a string of other outstanding criminal charges against Mokbel would be discontinued.

After the suppression orders were lifted yesterday,

Det. Sgt Jim Coghlan — who has spent 10 years of his police career investigating and tracking Mokbel — said he was happy with the drug tsar's guilty pleas.

"It's a great result for the Purana Taskforce," Det-Sgt Coghlan told the *Herald Sun*.

At the time of Monday's guilty pleas, Mokbel was already serving a minimum nine-year sentence for smuggling cocaine into Australia.

He fled the country before he was sentenced for that crime, triggering a global search involving Victoria Police, the Australian Federal Police, and Interpol.

A \$1 million reward was offered in an effort to

recapture the fugitive drug baron.

Authorities finally nabbed him in Greece in June 2007, after he had spent 15 months on the run.

Defence barrister Peter Faris, QC, will conduct Mokbel's plea hearing, in relation to the three outstanding drug charges, in June.

Mokbel will still be facing Victoria's longest sentence for drug trafficking.

Since 2004, only one person in Victoria has received a total sentence of more than 20 years for trafficking.

The average sentence is just seven years.

Editorial, Page 32

Have your say: Voteline, Page 35