

Mr Steven Ridd
By email only: steve@naturetrail.com.au

Our ref: E24/1996
Contact: Stuart Griffiths
Email: icac@icac.nsw.gov.au

23 September 2024

Dear Mr Ridd

I refer to your email of 20 September 2024, addressed to Senior Assessment Officer Stuart Griffiths and the Commission.

Thank you for the further information you have provided in respect of your concerns with Service NSW. I note that within your correspondence, you indicate your intention to provide seven further batches of emails to the Commission including the personal accounts of 32 recipients of the 2021 Covid-19 Micro Business Grant (the grant), including your own.

At present, I note that the Commission has considered:

- the materials you have submitted in your emails and online forms
- the materials available within your blog (<https://naturetrail.com.au/blog-category/government-indian-givers>)
- the A Current Affair story referred to in your online submission of 14 September 2024.

In the circumstances, the Commission is willing to accept at face value that a number of other grant recipients have had experiences with Service NSW similar to yours, whereby they consider Service NSW has engaged in bullying and accusatory behaviour while seeking to recover the grant funding they received.

I appreciate the basis on which you may wish to provide the personal stories of other grant recipients, however the Commission does not have a role in remedying their personal circumstances. Providing materials from other grant recipients that are substantially the same as those you have provided is not necessary. That said, should any of the other 31 grant recipients hold unique information that indicates a likelihood that Service NSW has deliberately engaged in dishonest and menacing behaviour for a corrupt purpose, then you are welcome to provide it in support of your allegations. Critically, it should extend beyond simply cataloguing Service NSW's audit/collection activity and indicate some likelihood of involving corruption.

I appreciate that given your experience with Service NSW to date, you may hold some level of distrust towards the administrative processes of NSW public agencies, potentially including the Commission. However, I ask for your patience during our assessment of your concerns and your respect of our processes.

I assure you that the Commission will carefully consider all of the information you have provided in support of your concerns. In due course, our Assessment Panel, which is comprised of the Chief Commissioner, two Commissioners, and our Executive Directors of Investigation, Legal and Corruption Prevention, will decide what action to take in respect of the concerns you have raised.

OFFICIAL: Sensitive - NSW Government

In response to the queries in your email of 19 September 2024, I note that:

- you may provide whatever supporting information you wish in respect of your concerns, but as noted above, replicating substantially the same information across 31 other grant recipients is not necessary
- you may provide your supporting materials via email, however I would appreciate your efforts to limit the duplication of any such materials and, where possible, to focus on those materials that you consider may indicate corrupt conduct, rather than simply providing all materials associated with the grant administration process
- it is ultimately a matter for you as to whom you communicate with regarding this matter. However, it is the Commission's approach in all reports of corrupt conduct to maintain confidentiality where possible. I appreciate that your concerns have aired publicly on A Current Affair, however the Commission's approach remains the same. It is preferred, in any report of corrupt conduct to the Commission, that the report remain confidential.

I trust that this letter addresses the Commission's processes in respect of our receipt and assessment of your concerns.

I would appreciate you providing any further information in support of concerns by **Friday, 4 October 2024**. We will commence an assessment of the matters raised after that date.

Thank you for contacting the Commission.

Yours sincerely



Justin Benitez
A/Deputy Manager Assessments