

SUPPLIED IN CONFIDENCE TO THE NSW I.C.A.C.

[Service NSW 2021 COVID-19 Micro Business Grant] 'Retrospective Clawback and Extortion Scam'

[2022 - present]



Witness Personal Account and Victim Impact Statement [Complainant #06]

The following written evidence received from Steven Ridd by email to steve@naturetrail.com.au .

[Emails (most recent at top)]

START OF EVIDENCE

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, 8 September 2024 3:28 PM
To: steve@naturetrail.com.au
Subject: Re: Service NSW Grant 'Audit' Scam - follow ups

Thanks Steve,

I know how much time and effort it all takes to get anywhere with Service NSW. I appreciate everything you have done and think your wonderful for continuing the fight for everyone that is still in the battle even though your situation has been resolved.

Sorry I haven't called you. I'm not purposely avoiding you, I actually have been flat out this week. But also actually finding thinking about it all again has stirred up some anxiety.

I get quite overwhelmed and stressed about the whole thing and I find I don't articulate myself very well when I start talking about it all. All my words come out wrong and I get incredibly emotional and then just start to cry. I'm not normally this overly emotional, sensitive and anxious but the whole situation has just turned me into a mess as also on top of the audit stuff my husband was still dealing

with the adverse reaction he had to the covid vaccine and developed pericarditis so the whole thing stirs up quite a lot for me and I feel deeply let down by our government.

My husband is encouraging me to email Lauren so I will definitely make contact with her.

I have some people contacting me with their situations, some in similar situations to us but it's really frustrating as some people who have contacted me it looks as though they actually were fraudulent in their application and knowingly over claimed. I've tried to explain to them that they actually were fraudulent and absolutely have to repay the money because they knowingly lied on the application. It annoys me that people like us are being painted with the same brush as people that actually did do the wrong thing.

[REDACTED]

Thanks for keeping in contact with me. I will let you know how I go with Lauren.



From Ash

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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, 17 August 2024 6:42 AM
To: steve@naturetrail.com.au
Subject: Re: Service NSW Grant 'Audit' Scam - follow ups

Hey Steve, do you think it is worth writing to Lauren about my situation? Or do you think it's now a done deal now I've paid them?

I posted your new story last night and I have a friend contact me about her situation.

Would it be ok to pass your contact details onto her aswell?

You were great on the news. Thankyou for doing everything to make this all happen. I hope everyone who is still fighting hets benefit from all your hard work.

I'm really cranky at myself for not being stronger and getting scared and just paying the money.

After watching that story it really brought back a lot of the stress and anxiety last night. Shows how badly the government are affecting people.

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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, 20 July 2024 1:44 PM
To: steve@naturetrail.com.au
Subject: Re: Service NSW - Micro Business Grant Debt Collection Scam - I agree with you

Thanks Steve. I will be very interested to follow that interview and share for others to see as some people have made small remarks suggesting that I may have "just applied wrong" or "got caught". It annoys me but I know that it's not the case so just ignoring it.

Sent from my iPhone

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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 19 July 2024 9:16 PM
To: steve@naturetrail.com.au
Subject: Re: Service NSW - Micro Business Grant Debt Collection Scam - time to go to the media!

Hey Steve,

thanks for the support you gave me last year. I regrettably ended up paying my debt to Service NSW as my anxiety around the whole situation was affecting my day to day life and I needed it to go away so I could move on with my life.

It makes me sick to think about it all but I used the small amount of inheritance money I was left by my Grandmother after she passed away last year to pay this debt. Although I am so incredibly sad and angry I am relieved that it is over. I have passed your details onto a friend of mine Kerry who is in a similar situation.

Thanks for all the time and effort you are putting in for everyone. I'm sad that I gave in but, 3 years of fighting was just exhausting and affecting my mental health.

I know that I was honest, did everything that was asked from me and was paid the correct payments and grant, just so sad and hurtful that my government has punished a hard working, honest small business owner. I know I'm in the right and can hold my head high that I was and still am in the right despite the outcome.

Thanks for the email. I wish everyone holding out the best in their fight.

Sent from my iPhone

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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 30 November 2023 12:01 AM
To: steve@naturetrail.com.au
Subject: Service NSW Covid Payment Audits

Hi Steve,

I have just read your post about Service NSW trying to claw back the Covid payments from you. I too am in a similar boat as you.

I am a sole trader running a [REDACTED]. I applied for the Covid payments with the help of my accountant, providing all information correctly and all documentation was provided. I was approved, payments made and now have been audited and told I am to repay \$12,000. I too have also been in contact with [REDACTED].

I am about to under go yet another review with Service NSW next week. I feel like I am banging my head against a brick wall.

I'm extremely frustrated and angry with the whole thing as I know you are aswell.

I just wanted to reach out to you and see if you have had any progress with your case or any outcomes yet?

Look forward to your reply

[REDACTED]

End of supplied evidence

This document submitted by Steven Ridd, Managing Director, Wistmans Wood Holdings Pty Limited [ACN 600 331 931] as trustee for Wistmans Wood Trust [ABN 51 965 308 493] trading as Nature Trail. Registered Address: 5 Kundibar Street KATOOMBA NSW 2780.]

By email icac@icac.nsw.gov.au

ICAC

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AGAINST CORRUPTION

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