

---

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 #12]

The following written evidence received from Steven Ridd by email to [steve@naturetrail.com.au](mailto:steve@naturetrail.com.au) .

[Emails (most recent at top)]

#### START OF EVIDENCE

---

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Friday, 18 October 2024 3:54 PM

To: steve@naturetrail.com.au

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Thanks Steve [REDACTED]

I believe I won due to me not liaising with them once I received notification. I hastened slowly and systematically worked through all of the paperwork to ensure it was double and triple checked for accuracy and couldn't be misinterpreted by them. I hand annotated bank statements with comprehensive explanations and provided them with everything they asked for. I then emailed them once with a "nuclear bomb" of sorts, with everything they needed – they really had nowhere to go. I believe taking the time in being thorough and not leaving anything open to further questioning made them realise I wasn't going to be a push over.

Hopefully they'll call it quits for the others sooner rather than later

Cheers

Nell

\*

**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** Friday, 18 October 2024 12:01 PM

**To:** steve@naturetrail.com.au

**Subject:** [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Hi Steve

I received notification from Service NSW today that I have passed the audit and that no further action will be taken. So, so relieved!

I just wanted to thank you for all your support, info and generosity of time with this.

Kind regards

Nell

\*

**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** Sunday, 8 September 2024 3:24 PM

**To:** steve@naturetrail.com.au

**Subject:** RE: 2021 Covid-19 Micro Business Grant - my delayed reply with apologies

Thanks Steve – but you very kindly did get back to me.

I haven't heard any more from them – so fingers crossed they've gone away for good!

\*

**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** Sunday, 21 July 2024 11:09 AM

**To:** steve@naturetrail.com.au

**Subject:** RE: Service NSW - Micro Business Grant Debt Collection Scam - time to go to the media!

Hi Steve

Thanks so much for all of your info and assistance with this.

I've submitted all the requested docs to Service NSW, by the required date and have heard nothing back.

Don't want to contact them and chase it up as I'm hoping my file will just fall into a black hole.

As my case is not resolved, I'd prefer to lay low and not stir the pot with the media, don't think I can handle the stress!

Kind regards

Nell

\*

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Monday, 24 June 2024 1:01 PM

To: steve@naturetrail.com.au

Subject: 2021 Covid-19 Micro Business Grant

Hi Steve

I have come across your website regarding the 2021 Covid-19 Micro Business Grant and the subsequent audit being conducted by Service NSW.

I too, have received the notification from Service NSW, as I am also being audited – and was hoping you could please help me.

At the time of the lockdowns I was operating a small importing business, importing rugs from Morocco, which hadn't been running a full year. When I applied for the Grant, the wording for the application was "anticipated earnings of over \$30k". I was on track to earn that, so applied. The grant was approved and the funds were transferred.

Upon completing my tax returns the turnover was only \$28k.

As you are aware, Service NSW has since amended the wording for the application and removed the original terms and conditions of the application. So I have no record of it.

This is where you come in – I read that you kept a record of this info as it stood at the time. The original terms and conditions of the grant (before they moved the goal posts).

Having since closed this small business, as I couldn't viably continue to [REDACTED] I have returned to helping my husband with his small business, and am actually terrified of having to try and find the funds to repay them.

I'm writing to ask if you please have any records of the original terms, if you could please email me a copy? I would be really grateful, I'm feeling sick at the thought of where we've found ourselves. I'm with you, if I was approved for the grant at the time, how/why can I be asked to pay it back retrospectively.

Please feel free to give me a call (I've left you a voicemail). Or else, any help would really be appreciated

Thanks and kind regards

[REDACTED]

[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](mailto:icac@icac.nsw.gov.au)



INDEPENDENT COMMISSION  
AGAINST CORRUPTION

Level 7, 255 Elizabeth Street  
Sydney, New South Wales  
Australia