

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 #17]

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:** Wednesday, 4 September 2024 1:24 PM  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Fwd: 2021 COVID-19 Micro-business Grant application – Consideration for Hardship

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Grant Cremer <[Grant.Cremer@service.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Grant.Cremer@service.nsw.gov.au)>  
**Date:** Fri, 30 Aug 2024 at [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** 2021 COVID-19 Micro-business Grant application – Consideration for Hardship  
**To:** [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED],

I refer to your correspondence to Mr Greg Wells, Managing Director of Service NSW in relation to your application for the 2021 COVID-19 Micro-business Grant for ABN 77562453263, subsequent compliance audit and internal review. I am responding on behalf of Mr Wells.

Compliance audits play a crucial role in administering the NSW Government's grants and rebate programs. When a customer submits an online application, they must provide supporting documentation and consent to potential compliance audits. Additionally, customers are obligated to adhere to the grant Terms and Conditions, which include retaining documentation for five years. Service NSW regularly completes compliance reviews of NSW Government grant and rebate programs, which ensures responsible use of public funds in alignment with program guidelines.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the then Premier prioritised assistance for businesses in NSW. To ensure swift payments to assist business, some businesses were automatically approved for grants based on the self-declaration they provided at the time of the application. The Micro-business Grant application was automatically assessed where customers' responses in their application demonstrated eligibility and adherence to the Terms and Conditions, even if some supporting documentation was incomplete. In these cases, the compliance audit process allows customers to submit evidence of their eligibility.

Service NSW has completed the internal review for your business, **ABN 77562453263**, for the 2021 COVID-19 Micro-business Grant. Based on the findings of the internal review, your business has been deemed not eligible for this grant and you are required to repay the amount of \$15,214.

I note that you have indicated that you are experiencing hardship. As part of our review of your eligibility for hardship, would you like to provide further information and documentation in relation to your hardship circumstances so that we can consider this.

### **Applying for a hardship review**

If you are experiencing hardship, you can request a review by responding to this email by **30 September 2024** explaining your hardship circumstances.

Your request will be considered by the Hardship Team, which is separate to the team that undertakes the compliance review.

As part of the process, you will have an opportunity to give us more information or evidence to support your circumstances.

### **Need more information or support?**

If you would like to be connected with general business or mental health support, please call a Service NSW Business Concierge on 13 77 88.

Kind regards

**Grant Cremer** (*he / him*)

Director of Customer Payments  
Risk, Strategy & Customer Support

**Service NSW**

E [grant.cremer@service.nsw.gov.au](mailto:grant.cremer@service.nsw.gov.au)  
[service.nsw.gov.au](https://service.nsw.gov.au)

Level 20, McKell Building,  
[2–24 Rawson Place, Haymarket,](#)  
[Sydney NSW 2000](#)

**Working days** Monday to Friday,



**Service  
NSW**



I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land and pay respects to Elders past and present. I also acknowledge all the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff working with NSW Government at this time.

\*

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 4 September 2024 1:22 PM  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Fwd: Recall: 2021 COVID-19 Micro-business Grant application – Consideration for Hardship

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Grant Cremer <[Grant.Cremer@service.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Grant.Cremer@service.nsw.gov.au)>  
**Date:** Fri, 30 Aug 2024 at 3:58 PM  
**Subject:** Recall: 2021 COVID-19 Micro-business Grant application – Consideration for Hardship  
**To:** [REDACTED]

Grant Cremer would like to recall the message, "2021 COVID-19 Micro-business Grant application – Consideration for Hardship".

\*

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 4 September 2024 1:20 PM  
**To:** [REDACTED] [steve@naturetrail.com.au](mailto:steve@naturetrail.com.au)  
**Subject:** Fwd: 2021 COVID-19 Micro-business Grant application – Consideration for Hardship

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Grant Cremer <[Grant.Cremer@service.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Grant.Cremer@service.nsw.gov.au)>  
**Date:** Fri, 30 Aug 2024 at 3:54 PM  
**Subject:** 2021 COVID-19 Micro-business Grant application – Consideration for Hardship  
**To:** [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED],

I refer to your correspondence to Mr Greg Wells, Managing Director of Service NSW in relation to your application for the **2021 COVID-19 Micro-business Grant** for ABN **77562453263**, subsequent compliance audit and internal review. I am responding on behalf of Mr Wells.

Compliance audits play a crucial role in administering the NSW Government's grants and rebate programs. When a customer submits an online application, they must provide supporting documentation and consent to potential compliance audits. Additionally, customers are obligated to adhere to the grant Terms and Conditions, which include retaining documentation for five years. Service NSW regularly completes compliance reviews of NSW Government grant and rebate programs, which ensures responsible use of public funds in alignment with program guidelines.

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Service NSW has completed the internal review for your business, ABN **77562453263**, for the **2021 COVID-19 Micro-business Grant**. 2021 COVID-19 Micro-business Grant application – Consideration for Hardship deemed not eligible for this grant and you are required to repay the amount of \$15,214.

I note that you have indicated that you are experiencing hardship. As part of our review of your eligibility for hardship, would you like to provide further information and documentation in relation to your hardship circumstances so that we can consider this.

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As part of the process, you will have an opportunity to give us more information or evidence to support your circumstances.

### Need more information or support?

If you would like to be connected with general business or mental health support, please call a Service NSW Business Concierge on 13 77 88.

Kind regards

[@Grant Cremer](#) Outcome letter has not been provided to Robyn yet . Case is on hold. Perhaps we can say based on the information/document supplied, your business has been deemed ineligible

**Grant Cremer** (*he / him*)

Director of Customer Payments  
Risk, Strategy & Customer Support

**Service NSW**

M 0407 911 886

E [grant.cremer@service.nsw.gov.au](mailto:grant.cremer@service.nsw.gov.au)  
[service.nsw.gov.au](https://service.nsw.gov.au)

Level 20, McKell Building,  
[2–24 Rawson Place, Haymarket,](#)  
[Sydney NSW 2000](#)

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NSW**



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\*

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 4 September 2024 1:17 PM  
**To:** steve@naturetrail.com.au  
**Subject:** Re: Service NSW Scam - just back from the UK

Hi Steve

Hope you enjoyed your time away.

Thanks for your email. Hope you're back to "normal " time now and feeling better.

I have received a letter saying I'm ineligible and can put forward a case re in hardship circumstances.

I'm integrating this at the moment and would like to know if anyone else has done this?

Also I wonder if ACA has had much feedback from the show?

I'll send the letters I received.

The first one obviously included a message I wasn't meant to see! at the bottom of the email??

I'll send the letters in their own emails

[REDACTED]

\*

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 13 August 2024 4:16 PM  
**To:** steve@naturetrail.com.au  
**Subject:** Re: Service NSW 2102 Micro Business Grant - scam audit - important updates for you all

Hi Steve

Thanks for your email.

Your support really helps me stay positive.

I just received a phone call from Service NSW and the lady was quite ok.

Apparently I've made an error in declaring my income amount by not separating business income from total income.

She realised how upset I am and didn't want to upset me further.

Obviously I asked why did they grant the money.

She understands I'm in a hardship situation and will do what she can I think.

I'm hoping this nightmare will go away!

Thanks for letting me know the latest update and looking forward to seeing ACA!

[REDACTED]

\*

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, 18 July 2024 3:39 PM  
**To:** steve@naturetrail.com.au  
**Subject:** Micro Grant Revenue letter

Hi Steve

Here is copy of letter I received on 16/7/24.

Hope this is clear.

Many thanks again for your support .



**NSW** Customer Service  
ARBN: 81 913 830 179

**TAX INVOICE**

**INVOICE NUMBER** [REDACTED]

**AMOUNT DUE** \$15,214.00

**ISSUE DATE** 09 JUL 2024

**DUE DATE** 08 AUG 2024

Pay by the due date to avoid additional fees

**CONTACT US** revenue.nsw.gov.au | 1300 655 805

**FEE DETAILS**

COL application number: [REDACTED]

Date of Decision: 05.07.24

**REASON FOR DETERMINATION**

The fees have been charged for the MB Support Grant 21 - Application as the eligibility criteria were not met.

This matter has been referred to **Revenue NSW** to commence collection of this invoice on behalf of Service NSW regarding the **MB Support Grant 21 - Application**.

If you wish to discuss this matter further, dispute the calculation findings or provide further information, please contact Revenue NSW on 1300 655 805.

**Online:** Visit [www.revenue.nsw.gov.au](http://www.revenue.nsw.gov.au) to pay by Mastercard or Visa.\*  
\*A card payment fee may apply. This fee is not subject to GST.

**Phone:** Call 1300 655 805 to pay by Mastercard or Visa.\*  
\*A card payment fee may apply. This fee is not subject to GST.

**BPAY:** Quote Biller Code 265967 and your Reference No. [REDACTED] to pay using your cheque or savings account. Access BPAY via your financial institution's website or phone banking service. The BPAY details are unique for each invoice.

**Pay in-store:** at Australia Post by cash, cheque or EFTPOS. Please write your payment reference number and name on the back of the cheque.

**Payment Reference No.** [REDACTED]

**Amount Due:** \$15,214.00

**Due Date:** 08 AUG 2024

**billpay**

\*

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