Protecting the NDIS: fraud fusion taskforce marks two-year milestone

21 November 2024

The Fraud Fusion Taskforce (FFT) has revolutionised the fight against criminals who try to steal government payments from those who need it most.

In the two years since its inception, the FFT has launched more than 500 investigations and referred 50 people to court accused of ripping off millions of dollars from people with disability and Australian taxpayers.

Set up by Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and Government Services the Hon. Bill Shorten MP in late 2022, the FFT has stopped more than $60 million in estimated fraud, with billions in NDIS payments alone currently under investigation.

The multi-agency FFT is co-led by the National Disability Insurance Agency and Services Australia, and has 19 other member agencies, including the Australian Federal Police and the Australian Tax Office.

The FFT works to prevent and disrupt fraud against government programs, like the NDIS, and includes intelligence sharing, prosecution and other regulatory actions.

Minister Shorten today acknowledged the impact the FFT is having in combating fraud against the NDIS.

“As the NDIS Minister, I started this taskforce to protect participants and taxpayer money,” Minister Shorten said.

“The establishment of the Fraud Fusion Taskforce was a line-in-the-sand moment, whereby government agencies came together to ensure any low-life individual seeking to exploit not only anyone who relies on additional support, but also Australian taxpayers, has their crimes exposed.

“It's rare to find so many government agencies working together on a common goal, and the establishment of the Fraud Fusion Centre means we can now see inside the operations of criminal networks like never before.

“Our warning for crooks is firmer than ever. If you think you can take money from the pockets of the Australians who need it the most, we are watching and taking action.”

Recent FFT NDIS data shows:

- The 21 FFT member agencies currently have 97 operations underway, with 521 active investigations and over 50 people referred to the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions or before the courts.
- The NDIA has 75 investigations underway, with hundreds of prosecutions expected to result from them.

- The value of current NDIA FFT investigations is more than $1 billion.
- The NDIS has identified over 15,000 NDIS participants who may have been impacted by fraudulent providers and supported thousands to transition to safer arrangements, including changing providers.
- The NDIS Commission has undertaken 165 FFT related compliance actions against providers and individuals, including 88 banning orders, 21 suspensions of registration, and 23 revocations of registration.
- The 88 banned providers and individuals claimed $28 million in the 12 months prior to banning. Some of the providers were also subject to provider locks to prevent ineligible claims.

More recently, the work of the FFT saw three individuals from a Western Sydney crime syndicate jailed for ripping off over $5 million in Agency funding, following two arrests through the same operation in 2022.

Minister Shorten said the FFT has made great inroads, but there is still a lot of work to be done.

“The Fraud Fusion Taskforce has lifted up a lot of rocks and will continue to do so to keep NDIS participants safe.

“These criminals aim to exercise total control over participants’ lives and their NDIS budgets. We are working tirelessly to bring them down.”

Anyone with information about suspected fraud involving the NDIS should contact the NDIS fraud reporting and scams helpline on 1800 650 717, or fill out our online NDIS Fraud reporting form.

Key Fraud Fusion Taskforce NDIS cases (*not including cases still in progress)

January / February 2023 – Operation Eclipse

- The NDIS Commission executed 7 banning orders, 2 suspensions and one revocation of registration against five NDIS providers and five individuals operating in Melbourne.
- An investigation by the Fraud Fusion Taskforce led to the execution of three search warrants in Western Sydney.
- The activity led to the arrest and charging of one man, and two other men issued with Court Attendance Notices relating to fraudulent activity totalling more than $3.3 million.

June 2023 – Operation Ivory

- A multi-agency investigation resulted in four search warrants being executed across the Western Sydney premises of four NDIS service providers, alleged to have defrauded the Scheme of in excess of $1.5 million.
- The NDIS Commission also undertook a number of enforcement activities on the day.

March 2024 - Operation Franklin

- The FFT operation saw a woman found guilty of dishonesty intending to obtain financial gain, by submitting false claims for services not provided. On 22 March, the woman was convicted and sentenced to three years and six months imprisonment, with a non-parole period of 10 months. She was also ordered to make reparation in the amount of $75,563.

May 2024 - Operation Pavo

- The FFT operation saw an occupational therapist found guilty of 22 counts of obtaining financial advantage by deception. The man was sentenced to six years, with a non-parole period of four years.

June 2024 - Operation Jumbo

- Following an FFT investigation, a woman pleaded guilty in a Sydney Court, to General Dishonesty – Obtaining a gain to the value of $29,330. It is alleged the woman fraudulently accessed NDIS funding between 2020 and 2021 after providing false reports to gain access to the scheme. She was sentenced on 16 August to an Intensive Corrections order of 18 months and repatriation order for the $29,330.

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