Melbourne fraud network sentenced to a combined 11.7 years jail over $800,000 Commonwealth theft

20 March 2026

This is a joint media release between partners of the Australian Government Fraud Fusion Taskforce.

A Whittlesea woman who was responsible for a daycare fraud ring and trained others in how to perpetrate the scheme has become the fifth and final person sentenced for defrauding the Commonwealth of $800,000.

She was today sentenced to two years and six months imprisonment, which will be added to previously handed-down sentences for related offenses. She will now serve a combined maximum sentence of seven years, seven months imprisonment, with a non-parole period of five years and seven months.

The woman was one of five members of a Melbourne fraud syndicate arrested in November, 2020, after the AFP-led Operation Persei found the group defrauded Services Australia, the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the Child Care Subsidy of $800,000.

The two-year investigation – which included Services Australia; the Department of Education; and the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) – identified the Whittlesea woman as the syndicate's principal offender.

The woman, 55, had a child with a disability on a NDIS plan, but misused NDIS funds to purchase a residential property.

The court also heard she set up a NDIS provider business and worked with another NDIS provider –a 57-year-old woman from Melton – to use their businesses to intentionally defraud the national scheme.

The Whittlesea woman was subject to additional charges after investigators found she fraudulently obtained government benefits related to the childcare subsidy rebate for her seven children over a four-year period.

The investigation found the Whittlesea woman recruited members of her community to divert funds intended for vulnerable and disabled members of that same community to fund their own lifestyles.

These actions resulted in disabled people not receiving the care and support earmarked for them through the NDIS scheme.

The 55-year-old acted as a teacher and consultant for other syndicate members looking to commit similar fraud offences against the Commonwealth.

The syndicate defrauded taxpayers of a total of about $800,000.

The Whittlesea woman, 55, was today (20 March, 2026) sentenced to two years and six months imprisonment.

- One count of dishonestly causing a loss to the NDIA, contrary to section 135.1(5) of the Criminal Code (Cth);
- Two counts of dishonestly causing a loss to the NDIA by joint commission, contrary to sections 11.2A and 135.1(5) of the Criminal Code (Cth); and
- One count of do anything with intent of dishonestly obtaining a gain from the NDIA, contrary to section 135.1(1) of the Criminal Code (Cth).

The Whittlesea woman, 55, had previously been sentenced on 24 October, 2025, and 19 November, 2025, to a combined six years and five months imprisonment. She was charged with:

- One count of dishonestly causing a loss to Services Australia, contrary to section 135.1(5) of the Criminal Code (Cth);
- Four counts of dishonestly causing a loss to the Department of Education, by joint commission, contrary to sections 11.2A and 135.1(5) of the Criminal Code (Cth);
- Two counts of aid, abet, counsel or procure another person to dishonestly cause a loss to the Department of Education, contrary to subsections 11.2(1) and 135.1(3) of the Criminal Code (Cth); and
- One count of obtaining financial advantage by deception, contrary to section 82 of The Crimes Act 1958 (VIC).

A Lalor man, 36, was sentenced to four years imprisonment on 24 October, 2025. He will be eligible for parole after serving two years and eight months.

He was charged with three counts of dishonestly causing a loss to the Department of Education, by joint commission, contrary to sections 11.2A and 135.1(5) of the Criminal Code (Cth).

A Melton woman, 57, was sentenced on 4 August, 2021 to a s19B Crimes Act 1914 (Cth) order for a period of 12 months. She was charged with one count of dishonestly causing a loss to the NDIA, contrary to section 135.1(5) of the Criminal Code (Cth).

A Meadow Heights woman, 38, was sentenced on 4 August, 2021 to a 12 months' Community Corrections Order and to complete 150 hours of unpaid community service.

She was charged with three counts of dishonestly causing a loss to the Department of Education, contrary to section 135.1(5) of the Criminal Code (Cth).

A Coburg woman, 37, was sentenced to a s19B Crimes Act 1914 (Cth) order for a period of 12 months. She was charged with one count of dishonestly causing a loss to the Department of Education, contrary to section 135.1(5) of the Criminal Code (Cth).

AFP Detective Superintendent Bernard Geason said stealing from a scheme funded by the Australian people for those in genuine need was abhorrent.

"The AFP works tirelessly with agency partners to protect taxpayers' money by ensuring the integrity of the welfare system,'' Det-Supt Geason said.

"This joint agency investigation not only led to arrests, but it also prevented the syndicate from further defrauding the Commonwealth. The taxes of hard-working Australians contribute to these schemes to lift up those in our community who need help. Seeking to profit off this goodwill and divert it for their own benefit in the name of greed will not be tolerated.

“The AFP and our partners will track you down using whatever means necessary. This is not a victimless crime. This is money out of all our pockets, and law enforcement and partners will work together to ensure fraud does not pay.”

A NDIA spokesperson said this latest jail sentence sent a strong message that serious crimes against the NDIS would be met with real consequences.

“Today’s outcome demonstrates the vital role of multi-agency action in identifying, disrupting and prosecuting criminal activity targeting the NDIS and other government payment programs,” the spokesperson said.

“We act to protect participants and ensure that NDIS funding goes to where it is intended – to provide the supports that NDIS participants need and deserve.”

A Department of Education spokesperson said they welcomed another outcome of Operation Persei.

“All allegations of fraud and non-compliance are taken seriously, and the Department uses sophisticated data intelligence and investigation techniques to prevent and detect this type of activity,” the spokesperson said.

“The Government continues to bolster compliance efforts, strengthen detection capability, and to pursue action, including criminal prosecution, to stamp out childcare fraud and ensure the appropriate use of government funding.”

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