2 June 2022

Four people will face charges for allegedly defrauding the NDIS of more than $2 million following their arrests in Western Sydney yesterday.

Australian Federal Police (AFP) officers executed simultaneous search warrants across four separate locations in Western Sydney on Wednesday, following an investigation by the NDIS Fraud Taskforce.

The Taskforce is a multi-agency partnership between the NDIA, the AFP and Services Australia, with a focus on high risk and serious criminal activity targeting the NDIS.

Operation Pyxis resulted in the arrest of four people with links to Middle Eastern organised crime entities.

Three of the individuals, operating as disability service providers, were later charged for wrongfully claiming money from NDIS participants for services not actually received.

A fourth person, a 62-year-old man, was charged last night with allegedly dealing in the proceeds of crime.

Any NDIS participants impacted by the wrongful claims have had money reinstated to their NDIS support plans where necessary, to ensure they can continue receiving their disability-related supports.

“The NDIA continues to monitor and act on any suspicious and potentially fraudulent activity,” NDIA Chief Executive Officer Martin Hoffman said.

“Our participants, as well as their families and carers, should be assured that the Agency, working alongside our partners in law enforcement, will use all its power to ensure that funding intended to support them and their disability needs continues to be protected.”

It is also alleged the people arrested threatened violence towards participants and witnesses, and have been charged with offences including Conspiracy to Defraud and General Dishonesty.

AFP Assistant Commissioner Nigel Ryan said the AFP is passionate about working closely with its partners in the NDIS Fraud Taskforce to stop targeted attacks on Australians living with disability.

“Members of our community have allegedly been targeted, exploited and threatened by groups looking to fill their own pockets and steal public funds that have been set aside for Australians who need that support,” AC Ryan said.

“The AFP will not stop in its pursuit of these groups who chop and change companies in a pointless effort to hide their criminal behaviour from law enforcement; our level of intelligence

sharing with partners is something criminal groups should be extremely apprehensive of."

Two women, aged 37 and 32, and one man aged 27 were scheduled to appear in Parramatta Local Court via video link on Wednesday (1 June 2022).

The 62-year-old man is expected to appear in the Downing Centre Local Court today (Thursday 2 June).

The NDIS Quality & Safeguards Commission, the independent agency that regulates NDIS providers, is actively involved and has worked closely with the NDIA in this matter.

The NDIS Commission has broad powers to take compliance and enforcement action when NDIS providers and their workers are found not to have met their obligations under the NDIS Act.

The NDIS Commission will make decisions about any additional regulatory actions to be taken against these providers.

"The NDIS Commission will take swift action where NDIS providers and their key personnel fail to meet their obligations and in circumstances where they are no longer suitable to deliver NDIS supports and services," NDIS Commissioner Tracy Mackey said.

Operation Pyxis is the latest action from the NDIA's fraud team, which continues to protect the funding of people with disability by investigating anyone suspected of attempting to wrongfully obtain money from NDIS plans.

In April an NDIA investigation saw AFP officers apprehend a woman at Sydney Airport as she re-entered the country.

She will face court in July after being charged with defrauding the NDIS to the value of more than $1 million.

Four other individuals will also face court in coming weeks after a separate NDIA fraud investigation.

In that matter the Agency worked with Queensland Police, with detectives from the Rockhampton and Mackay Police Districts executing three search warrants that resulted in four people eventually being charged with general dishonesty – an offence which, if found guilty, carries a maximum penalty of 10 years imprisonment.

Anyone with information about suspected fraud involving the NDIS should contact the NDIS fraud reporting and scams helpline on 1800 650 717, or email fraudreporting@ndis.gov.au.

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