

Concerns NDIS Fraud Squad will ‘Criminalise People with Disability’



The 100-member government task force [announced](#) on Tuesday aims to protect the scheme from rorts and the grasp of organised crime, despite proof NDIS fraud had been “minimal”.

In response, disability advocates questioned the focus of the task force and criticised the federal government for a lack of clarity in the announcement.

People with Disability Australia (PWDA) issued a statement that said: “The announcement isn’t clear whether this new task force will focus on disability providers, or on people with disability themselves. It’s also not clear how this will work with the new NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission, which is only just beginning to roll out around Australia.”

"We want to see fraud addressed, but we also want to see the resources in place to address many of the implementation issues that people with disability are raising daily with us" [@TheresePWDA](#) speaking on [@abcnews](#) last night about establishment of [#NDIS](#) fraud taskforce

Australian Human Rights Commission disability discrimination commissioner Alastair McEwin weighed in on Facebook, warning people with disability were already experiencing barriers to accessing services under the NDIS.

“The government needs to take great care that it does not create further barriers, and that it does not criminalise people with disability, or service providers, who are simply trying to access or provide services in a multi-faceted system,” McEwin said.

The disability discrimination commissioner also questioned the value of forming a 100-member task force given the service-delivery backlog plaguing the NDIS.

“There’s a compelling argument to be made that an extra 100 staff might be put to better use in lifting the NDIS staffing cap and clearing up the very real backlog that exists in providing NDIS services,” he said.

The significant backlog was laid bare in a recent Commonwealth ombudsman report, which revealed people with disability were [waiting up to nine months](#) to have their NDIS plans successfully reviewed.

Ross Joyce, the CEO of the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO), said he was also concerned about the task force announcement.

He told Pro Bono News it should have been made clear the task force was not about NDIS participants attempting fraud.

“There are substantial and onerous processes which people with disability must go through with any NDIS application, before they are approved and eligible for supports,” Joyce said.

“It needs to be made clear that the implementation of an ‘NDIS fraud task force’ is a precautionary approach, there is no identified large scale fraud

by service providers and there are definitely no concerns over the legitimacy of people with disability who are receiving funding under the scheme.”

Luke Michael is a journalist at Pro Bono News covering the social sector.