

14 June 2016 media release

PUBLIC SHOULD WATCH FOR DODGY HEALTH WORKERS, COMMISSIONER WARNS

Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner Steve Tully says South Australians should be on the lookout for health-sector workers hoping to take advantage of clients receiving National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) funding.

Mr Tully's warning comes after concerns were raised at the weekend that the parents of autistic children eligible for NDIS funding support could be persuaded to spend thousands of dollars on 'cures' with no evidence of efficacy.

He says that while the vast majority of health sector workers are dedicated to their industry, workplaces and clients, some may not provide safe services or services likely to produce the results clients will want and expect.

'As Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner, it is my role to hear and explore concerns about the behaviour and activity of health practitioners – including those unregistered health practitioners who might attempt to exploit clients or their family members desperately seeking to help loved ones with autism, disability or other health issues,' Mr Tully says.

'While it is not my role to hear complaints about the NDIS scheme itself, it is my duty to ensure that NDIS clients who are using the services of health practitioners to support their needs, or the needs of those in their care, can do so confidently.

'There is no place for dodgy operators in the South Australian health sector.'

As Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner, Mr Tully is among the independent sources of help for people who have concerns about health professionals such as doctors, nurses and physiotherapists.

Mr Tully can also receive complaints about unregistered health practitioners, including care workers, counsellors, social workers and masseuses – whether they are employed by a health or community service provider in the public, private or non-government sector.

Mr Tully says the Code of Conduct for Unregistered Health Practitioners requires people in this second group to conduct themselves professionally at all times. Requirements include that they provide services within their skills and training, do not have improper relationships with clients and do not financially exploit clients.

Anyone with a concern about an unregistered health practitioner working in South Australia should contact Mr Tully's office. If an investigation finds that the practitioner has breached the Code of Conduct, a legally enforceable order can be issued to limit or prohibit the practitioner's activity.

Mr Tully says questions or issues related to the NDIS scheme itself should be directed to the local NDIS office and, if necessary, pursued through the Commonwealth Ombudsman (telephone 1300 362 072).

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMPLAINTS COMMISSIONER STEVE TULLY ON 8226 8633.