

Ann Marie Smith taskforce finds crucial gaps in NDIS oversight of disability care

By [Leah MacLennan](#)

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Ann Marie Smith's death is being treated as a major crime. (Supplied: SA Police)

An urgent review prompted by the death of Ann Marie Smith has found the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) needs to get better at identifying vulnerable care recipients, and improve the supervision of in-home workers.

[Police launched a manslaughter investigation into Ms Smith's death](#) when it was revealed she died after allegedly being left in the same chair in her home for a year.

The 54-year-old had cerebral palsy, and had NDIS funding for six hours of care a day.

Once the investigation into her death was made public in April, the [State Government launched a taskforce to investigate potential failings in the disability care system](#).

It has now handed the SA Government an interim report, which has identified 12 gaps in the system and made five recommendations.

Eight of the gaps the taskforce found were within the federally-run NDIS, while four were within State Government services.

Key points:

- Ann Marie Smith's death in April was declared a major crime
- Police launched a manslaughter investigation into her death
- An interim report has identified crucial gaps in the NDIS system

They included the need to better identify vulnerable people, ensure they have community connections and have regular health checks.

"Vulnerable participants are not routinely identified and assigned ongoing support coordination in their NDIS plan," the interim report states.

"There is a gap in undertaking proactive visits to vet the performance of service providers.

"Regular health checks need to be available to all vulnerable NDIS participants."



Ann Marie Smith home in Bradman Court, Kensington Park. (Supplied: SA Police)

The report found the NDIS Safeguards and Quality Commission needed to accept any complaints or concerns as "alerts requiring investigation".

It also found there should be "regular supervision of in-home workers as a condition of registration".

Recommendations 'activated as we speak'

Taskforce co-chair Kelly Vincent said the strength of the report was that it came directly from people who are part of the disability community.

"This is a report that speaks to the everyday things that need to change in our lives to make us feel more safe, more protected and, most importantly, more able to assert our own rights," Ms Vincent said.

"A lot of the recommendations talk about what's known as 'developmental safeguarding', which is the idea that we arm people with the knowledge about their rights, and tools to assert those rights when they know something is going wrong."



Flowers and cards left outside Ann Marie Smith's house in Kensington Park. (ABC News: Ben Nielsen)

Human Services Minister Michelle Lensink said the State Government has accepted the recommendations and had shared the report with her federal counterparts.

"The matters which are for the State Government, particularly in relation to improving the timeliness of information which is provided to the screening unit — and some specific recommendations relating to health — are being activated as we speak," she said.

Labor has been calling for the state's Community Visitor Scheme to be strengthened, including allowing visits to NDIS participants who are being cared for at home.

The taskforce has found significant parts of the proposal would be "inoperable", and while the visitor's role should be looked at, changes should not be rushed.

But Labor spokesperson Nat Cook rejected that.

"I haven't seen anywhere written that the Community Visitor Scheme is inoperable or unworkable anywhere but in a Government document," she said.

The taskforce will present its final report to the State Government by the end of July.