

PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA

Joint Standing Committee on National Disability Insurance Scheme

NDIS participant experience in rural, regional and remote Australia

Thursday, 18 April 2024

1. “There is also from the Department of Communities, what’s called the shopfront support in Fitzroy. Communities has two officers placed based in Fitzroy as 80 per cent of the population are Aboriginal in the Fitzroy Valley. I can take that on notice to provide you with a report on the data from the shopfront, demonstrating and highlighting how effective it is having people on the ground to be responsive”.
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Answer

The idea of the shopfront originated in 2017 from feedback provided by Fitzroy Valley leaders and families as part of the work led by the previous Regional Services Reform Unit.

The shopfront concept was developed through a co-design with key stakeholders, including 17 local organisations. The co-design process was to ensure services delivered were tailored to the needs of local, mostly Aboriginal, Fitzroy Valley residents.

Based on feedback and a commitment to ongoing support to Fitzroy Valley residents, it was agreed to open a space in Fitzroy that would provide the following services:

- Offer service navigation and administration support, and referral services;
- Provide information on Department of Communities’ and in general Government services, policies and programs;
- Promote local solutions and display local community information such as upcoming community visits and local projects;
- The shopfront is designed to be a welcoming, community-friendly and culturally safe space; and to provide flexibility in its operations, including privacy for one-to-one discussions and capacity to host small group meetings; and
- Make the space available (where appropriate) to local and regional organisations for small group meetings and to deliver services and engage with local residents.

The shopfront is in the shopping centre in Fitzroy Crossing (Tarunda Shopping Centre) next to the IGA supermarket and is close to services such as Centrelink and the Post Office.

Feedback includes:

- The convenient location and easy access to support has contributed to the success of the shopfront.
- Staff provide trusted, timely and culturally appropriate advice to community members and between January and June 2023 over 900 clients were seen at the shopfront.

- Advice provided ranges from providing general community and service information, assisting people to connect with appropriate services, advocacy, and avenues for referral within Department of Communities and across other government and service delivery sectors.
- Services can range from advice on an issue through to assisting clients which could include reference letters, contacting stakeholders, supporting clients to secure and send relevant documents.
- Shopfront activities generally focus on key areas such as assisting families with housing applications or transfers, school enrolment, liaising around remote community burials and stakeholder engagement.
- Families who have been serviced by the shopfront tend to come back for subsequent matters, including connecting clients to Department of Communities staff. The service is acknowledged as providing an efficient response to requests and questions.
- Stakeholder organisations who use the space include Advocare, Horizon Power and Water Corporation.
- During the Kimberley Floods Response, the shopfront provided practical support to residents and complemented the specific social and emotional wellbeing support implemented specifically for the recovery response.

A formal evaluation of the 'shopfront support' has not been completed to date.