

RECIEVED
12 Nov 2016
PETITIONS COMMITTEE



The Hon Alan Tudge MP
Minister for Human Services

MB16-000390
Your reference: 1150/1657

Mr Ross Vasta MP
Chair of the Standing Committee on Petitions
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Chair *Ross*

Thank you for your letter of 12 October 2016 seeking my response to a petition raised by residents in the Electorate of Shortland on the decision to consolidate Service Centres in New South Wales.

The Government is committed to offering more one-stop-shops for Department of Human Services' (the Department) customers. Since 2009, over 200 one-stop shops have been established to offer both Medicare and Centrelink services from the one location, providing convenient, easy-to-access, coordinated services from a single point.

As property leases come up for renewal, the Department takes the opportunity to review service options to ensure the service delivering setting is meeting the needs of the community and achieving the best outcomes for taxpayer resources.

Before any services are brought together, the Department assesses the need and location for a service centre operating as a One-Stop Shop and considers many factors including;

- customer amenities
- availability and flexibility of accommodation
- demand for services in the community
- proximity of existing portfolio sites
- access to services through other channels
- capacity at each site
- local knowledge; and
- property commitments.

The Department engages with the local community for any changes to service delivery via community groups, local providers, direct customer contact, in-house communication products and local media.

As part of the community consultation for the Belmont Service Centre, federal and state members of parliament and local council representatives were contacted to communicate

upcoming changes to service delivery arrangements. Staff from the Belmont and Charlestown Service Centres also embarked on an intensive community engagement strategy to communicate the change to local community and stakeholders.

The Belmont Service Centre was offering Medicare Services with limited Centrelink services. Since Co-location, the Charlestown Service Centre offers the full suite of both Medicare and Centrelink face to face services to the community.

The Charlestown Service Centre is located near two shopping centres, provides convenient car parking and public transport options for customers, including those travelling from Belmont, with the bus stop 500m from the Service Centre. The Department is also co-located with the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) at Hilltop Plaza across the road from the Charlestown Service Centre, with this site also providing a full range of Medicare services.

The Department gives customers a variety of options when managing Medicare claims and Centrelink business. The Charlestown Service Centre has expert staff to serve customers face-to-face and help them access self-service facilities to manage their business online.

Residents in and around Belmont, and across Australia, can also choose to access Medicare services without having to visit an office. The easiest way to claim a Medicare rebate is at the doctor's. Nationally, more than 96 per cent of all Medicare claims are lodged digitally, the majority at the point of service. A range of Medicare services can also be accessed through the internet. For claims that are lodged online, the benefit is paid into the claimant's nominated bank account usually on the same business day.

The Department also has a number of smart phone applications to assist people to conveniently conduct their business. Information about the Medicare Express Plus App, as well as how to register for Online Services through the myGov portal, is available on the Department's website at www.humanservices.gov.au/selfservice.

Centrelink services are also available through the myGov portal which can be found at: <http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/subjects/self-service>.

Yours sincerely

Alan Tudge