

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: National Indigenous Australians Agency

Topic: Closure of Centrelink Offices

Senator: McCarthy

Question reference number: 0061

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Number of pages: 2

Question:

Senator McCARTHY: Thank you. I will put some more questions on notice around that. We appreciated some of the briefings that we had with you over last couple of months. You may recall in one of them you mentioned that Centrelink offices were closing—that there were eight closures: six in the Northern Territory, one in Queensland and one in the Kimberley. I just thought I would check whether those offices are going to reopen.

Mr Griggs: I have not had an update on that. I will take that on notice.

Answer:

Services Australia has provided the following response.

The health and safety of staff, customers and community is our highest priority. Services Australia is working hard to balance the needs of our staff while delivering critical payments to the millions of Australians relying on us. Services Australia continue to operate a large national network of service centres in line with the Australian Government Department of Health's COVID-19 response guidelines. Temporary closure of any service centre is part of Services Australia COVID-19 contingency response.

There were six site closures in the Northern Territory. The service centre at Wadeye resumed services on 25 May 2020. Service centres at Galiwinku, Hermannsburg, Papunya, Tangentyere and Yuendumu remain closed. In Queensland, services at Yarrabah remain suspended. In Western Australia, the service centre at Halls Creek resumed services on 19 May 2020.

Where office closures have occurred in remote areas, Services Australia is providing a virtual service offer that comprises regular communication with community based stakeholders and service providers, targeted outbound calls to customers at risk, and identification of

vulnerable people or those with complex needs that require direct intensive or tailored support.