

**Submission  
No 17**

**INQUIRY INTO SERVICE COORDINATION IN  
COMMUNITIES WITH HIGH SOCIAL NEEDS**

**Organisation:** Narrandera Shire Council

**Date received:** 16/08/2015

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The Director  
Standing Committee on Social Issues  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Sir/Madam

I make this submission under on behalf of Narrandera Shire Council under the authority of Mrs Judy Charlton, Chief Executive officer.

### **Background.**

Narrandera is situated on the Murrumbidgee River in the Western Riverina in Southern New South. It is 554kms from Sydney, 437kms from Melbourne, and 339kms from Canberra. Narrandera is situated between the two major regional cities of Wagga (99kms) and Griffith (98kms). In the 2011 census the ABS listed the population as 5902 with 10% of the population identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. According to the ABS SEIFA Rankings Narrandera Shire ranks in the second decile both in NSW (16) and Nationally (18). Median weekly household incomes in Narrandera are considerably below both the NSW and National average. As at the 2011 census 37.1% of households had a weekly household income of less than \$600 in the Narrandera LGA.

### **Barriers to the effective coordination of services, including lack of client awareness of services and any legislative provisions such as privacy law.**

With this demographic Narrandera can be classified as an area with a high level of Social Needs. These needs are addressed by a range of service providers who are not based within the Narrandera LGA (Local Government Area). There is a perception that Narrandera is poorly served by its position half way between the centres of Wagga Wagga and Griffith as both centres include the LGA in their catchment area when applying for funding however few services are actually delivered locally. There is no useable public transport to the larger centres so those without private transport ,

A group of service providers meeting jointly as the Narrandera Interagency Group work to provide services within the Narrandera LGA. These providers include the Narrandera Shire Council, Mission Australia, Court Advocacy Support Services, The Salvation Army, Medicare Local, Intereach, Centacare, The Joint Investigation Response Team (made up of Community Services; NSW Police and NSW Health professionals who undertake joint investigation of child protection matters), Mental Health – Medicare Local Murrumbidgee Health District, Medicare local Primary Network South West and Narrandera / Riverina TAFE. These providers meet regularly as the Narrandera Interagency group and work co-operatively to provide a range of services to the Narrandera community. The Interagency brings representatives from community service agencies together and allows the opportunity to network, build partnerships and take action It provides a forum for

service providers to build relationships and work collaboratively to improve outcomes for the Narrandera community.

**The extent to which government and non-government service providers are identifying the needs of clients and providing a coordinated response which ensures access to services both within and outside of their particular area of responsibility.**

There is most definitely a “tyranny of Distance” that effects service provision for small rural communities. Following much discussion and an examination of available resources the Narrandera Interagency Group has identified the need for a “One Stop Community Services Hub” to facilitate provision of services to the Narrandera Community. In the same vein as the Dubbo Minister’s Action Group brought together Government and non-government service providers to drive change for the whole community it is believed that Narrandera would definitely benefit from an holistic approach to the provision of services.

Community Hubs are accessible single points of access to information, resources and services for the community, as well as local and visiting community. Evidence from other areas such as the Illawarra suggests that a Community Hub would support information sharing and provide access to resources and services for individuals and service providers within the Narrandera area. It is believed that co-location of services would result in greater demand as other hubs have reported a greater demand for services as previously unmet needs are exposed due to exposure to additional information and resources. The Community benefits from a Hub as they are facilitated in finding the right service or information when it is needed. The co-location of services such as psychologists, drug and alcohol councillors, family services etc. in a neutral, non-confronting environment greatly increases successful outcomes for the user community.

Access to funding for facilities and co-ordinators would make an immense difference to outcomes for rural communities. As an example, Narrandera clients must travel 100kms in either direction to reach some service providers. This is often a bridge too far for the people that would most benefit from the services that they provide. A hub would be a venue that provides information about parenting, child development, health, drug and alcohol information, counselling services and local service providers. It would be a meeting place where families and individuals could participate in activities and develop crucial support networks.

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