



The Hon Sharon Bird MP
Federal Member for Cunningham

12 June 2018

Stephen Jones MP
Federal Member for Whitlam

Hon Michael Keenan MP
Minister for Human Services
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister

We write with regard to the recent decision to close Centrelink and Medicare at Warrawong. We strongly urge you to intervene and overturn this decision.

The decision, which has obviously been planned for some time, has involved absolutely no consultation with the local community – including ourselves and other service providers such as the Warrawong Community Centre, Illawarra Legal Centre and the Community Industry Group.

Many of the clients from the areas serviced by the Warrawong office are poorly served by public transport and are in high need communities. Some of the clients we have spoken to cannot afford a bus fare to get to Wollongong, struggle to keep their internet working and have English as a second language.

These areas are some of the most highly disadvantaged in the Wollongong City Council area with IRSEAD index scores of:

Warrawong (755.5)
Cringila (805.5)
Berkeley (886.0)

The Illawarra Legal Centre, located in Warrawong, has provided 1,390 clients with advice on general law, welfare rights and child support just this year.

The need for service centres is high in Warrawong. As an example, the New South Wales Government's Service NSW centre at Warrawong is the most visited in the Illawarra. Between November 2016 and November 2017 over 130,000 customers were served there – compared to 65,300 in Wollongong over the same period.

Our community has asked us to convey, in the strongest possible way, their view that the Warrawong remain open so that some of the most disadvantaged people in the Illawarra are able to access the help and advice they need.

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It may be useful for you to understand the significance of this issue for us to meet when Parliament sits next week.

We look forward to your earliest response.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sharon Bird".

HON SHARON BIRD MP

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Stephen Jones".

STEPHEN JONES MP

cc. Senator the Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells