



Australian Government



Services  
Australia

# Community Engagement and Servicing Redesign

Community Servicing Model

February 2026

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## **Acknowledgement of Country and Traditional Owners**

Services Australia recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the first peoples of this land and their ongoing connection to the lands, seas, and waterways.

We pay respect to all Elders, past and present, of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nations.

We recognise the enduring strength and resilience of the world's oldest continuous living cultures and value the rich diversity Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritages contribute.

We acknowledge the impacts of colonisation and are committed to working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to lessen disadvantage and improve life outcomes.

## Building stronger community servicing pathways

The Services Australia Community Servicing Model (the model) outlines how our specialists deliver payments and services in, and with communities. The re-designed model aims to better meet the needs of people who experience barriers to accessing government services.

We understand the importance of having a strong community servicing pathway so that we can connect with people where they are at.

We've been working with the community sector to understand what local communities and customers need from us. Our conversations are ongoing and ensure community voices continue to be heard and reflected as we start our new approach.

We recognise that everyone has the right to access our payments and services in a way that's accessible, supportive, and respectful of their individual circumstances. Our new model builds on the existing [Community access approach](#), making it easier for people to get the help they need, when they need it and in an environment where they feel safe. This is particularly important for people experiencing vulnerability or culturally diverse groups.

The model improves how our community specialists work together with community organisations and customers. Local community needs are placed at the forefront, along with a clearer and more consistent approach for the agency that maintains flexibility to respond to what makes each community unique.

## Who are our community specialists?

Our community specialists are staff with dedicated skills and expertise in their service. They offer a range of tailored services working with many organisations in a local area. They help customers access our payments and services and other supports in the community. Specialists include:

- [Aged Care Specialist Officers](#)
- [Community Engagement Officers](#)
- [Community Partnership Specialist Officers](#)
- [Farm Household Case Officers](#)
- [Financial Information Service Officers](#)
- [Grandparent, Foster and Kinship Carer Advisers](#)
- [Indigenous Service Officers](#)
- [Medicare Engagement Officers](#)
- [Multicultural Service Officers](#)

Community specialists provide tailored support to groups including:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- people from diverse cultural backgrounds
- faith and language groups
- people with disability
- LGBTQIA+ people and communities
- families with complex care arrangements
- people who are ageing and young people
- people experiencing family and domestic violence
- people experiencing barriers and vulnerabilities.

These specialists work closely with other teams in the agency, including local Service Centres, Remote Servicing Teams and Mobile Service Centres.

## Why we're changing

The agency has a strong history of community servicing, but we need a new approach that keeps us flexible, coordinated and responsive.

We met with community organisations and community peak bodies around Australia. We were told that the people they support often struggle with:

- complex life events and circumstances
- navigating multiple services at once
- repeating their story to multiple people
- digital access and confidence
- knowing where or who to go for help from Services Australia.

Guided by these consultations we've designed a model that responds to these issues, builds trust, and improves the way government works with local communities.

## What to expect from our model:

### 1. We're clear and consistent about where and how our specialists work

Our specialists have the right tools, training and access to help customers in community locations, connecting them quickly to agency support when needed. This includes:

- help for Centrelink, Medicare and Child Support
- support during complex life events and emergencies
- tailored assistance to people experiencing vulnerability
- assistance connecting directly to local services
- support that is culturally respectful and trauma informed
- specific outreach for parts of the community who have barriers to engaging with us, including those with accessibility and inclusion needs.

Specialists will continue to work together with community organisations to deliver tailored information that meets the unique needs of local communities.

Our specialists will offer support in ways that work for different people and situations.

This may include:

- meeting customers in accessible community locations
- providing interpreters or communication supports
- sharing information in accessible formats.

They'll make sure people can get help in person if they cannot access services online or over the phone.

#### Example 1: How we help someone through a complex life event

Sol is leaving a violent relationship and visits a local community multicultural centre for help.

English is Sol's second language which makes it hard for them to access agency services online or over the phone. Sol speaks with a Multicultural Service Officer at the community centre.

The specialist, who visits the community centre regularly, can:

- meet Sol and their caseworker in a safe, trusted community setting
- help with Centrelink, Medicare and Child Support issues in one conversation
- connect Sol urgently to an interpreter and a Services Australia social worker
- work with the centre to connect Sol to local Family and Domestic Violence services
- follow up to make sure Sol's service needs are resolved and that Sol has the support they need.

Sol doesn't have to retell their story to multiple people or visit multiple locations. They can get the help they need more quickly in an environment where their safety is prioritised. Sol's situation is treated holistically, enabling quick access to multiple layers of support.

Our specialists are committed to providing tailored community access and improving equity for people of all cultures and backgrounds, in line with the agency's [Multicultural Servicing Strategy 2023-2025](#).

### **Example 2: How we help someone with complex health needs**

Robin is experiencing homelessness due to a family breakdown. They have complex health needs and an intellectual disability. They have trouble staying on a payment and meeting their reporting expectations. Robin has looked for help in the past but doesn't trust government services so is reluctant to try again.

Robin occasionally attends a local support service. A worker introduces Robin to a community specialist who can:

- Connect Robin to the right people in the agency to assess if they are getting the right payments and support.
- Explain Robin's needs and circumstances to other agency staff and coordinate any further action.
- Support Robin and the community worker to seek, gather and lodge any required medical evidence.
- Work with the outreach centre to help Robin access housing and healthcare supports.

The specialist will resolve as many issues as possible during the first contact. Robin is treated with dignity, their needs are understood and their financial situation becomes more stable. We develop a plan for ongoing support for Robin.

## **2. Our services are culturally responsive, prioritise safety and are guided by local needs**

Although the model is consistent nationally, each community is different. Our specialists will work as a team using local data, community feedback and trusted community partnerships to shape:

- what they'll focus on and work towards
- servicing locations (including better support for communities in need)
- the type of services we provide.

This ensures local context matters, and we put our agency resources where they're needed most.

### **Example: How we'll build cultural safety into our servicing approach**

An Aboriginal community organisation supports families who are dealing with Sorry Business, caring responsibilities, disability, health, and income support challenges. Under the model:

- Indigenous Service Officers maintain relationships and work alongside trusted local leaders to support families and communities with their servicing needs.
- All specialists get cultural awareness training and work towards Closing the Gap outcomes.
- Our services are adjusted around Sorry Business, community priorities and feedback.
- Families can get direct support from the agency in trusted community settings in culturally appropriate ways.

This helps us build strong relationships with communities, giving them a say in how we can best meet their needs. Families are better supported to access services and support, improving outcomes for First Nations communities.

## **3. We work with a network of trusted community partners in a safe and collaborative way**

The model focuses on building a visible, trusted network of community partners who have:

- clear expectations about how we work together, with a customer experience focus
- simple referral pathways for mutual customers
- regular communication and ways to give feedback
- opportunities for shared problem-solving
- locally driven projects or initiatives.

We won't ask community organisations to take on government work. Instead, we want to connect our services more effectively, so people get more timely and complete support.

### **Example: How local needs will guide local servicing**

Community feedback and data from a rural town tells us that young job seekers and people with unstable housing are a major priority. In response, the local specialist team adjusts the focus of their work. They:

- embed a specialist at a local homelessness service to provide holistic support
- run fortnightly outreach sessions at a youth hub
- co-host financial information sessions with local services for people and groups at-risk of debt or financial stress
- provide tailored one on one support to help with digital set-up and identification.

Under the model, we can provide extra specialist support to a community when needed. The agency will adapt to what the community tell us they need, so our services are directed where they can help the most.

## **4. We'll have better information sharing and less complexity for customers and community organisations, including online where appropriate**

Digital options won't replace accessible in-person support for people who need it.

We'll clarify and reduce the number of steps customers and community representatives must take to get the help they need. The model aims to provide:

- clearer guidance on what help is available from the agency
- easier ways for community organisations to request specialist support
- earlier support to help people during complex circumstances
- improved digital support for organisations who support mutual customers
- a simpler and more consistent experience across our different community programs.

This will help to reduce confusion, lessen wait times, and ensure customers know what their next steps are.

## **5. We provide more support to our staff so they can better support communities**

The model will:

- strengthen specialist training and resources
- set clearer role expectations and outcomes
- provide national consistency and improved quality for specialist tools, resources and presentations
- improve safety and wellbeing measures.

Customers and communities will be able to trust that any community specialist they speak to will have the knowledge, resources and connections to get a customer the right support for their circumstances.

## What success looks like

### Customers, staff and communities should experience:

- Safe, respectful servicing:
  - with understanding at every stage
  - cultural appropriateness that avoids causing harm
  - confidence and trust in agency specialists.
- Faster, simpler access to agency payments and services with:
  - fewer steps
  - no repetition of their story and issues to service staff
  - efficient and accurate agency decisions.
- Fairer access to local support:
  - no matter where they live
  - shaped by local community needs
  - where agency resources are directed to where they have the biggest impact.
- Technology that extends our in-person community access and support where:
  - specialists have the right tools and resources to do their job
  - people can access services in ways that suit their situation and ability, including online where appropriate
  - community needs are considered and understood when we're improving our digital services.
- Real partnerships with communities where:
  - we work side-by-side with community organisations in ways that build trust and transparency
  - we work towards shared goals and better outcomes for local people
  - the agency benefits from stronger relationships, clearer feedback and more coordinated service delivery.

### Next steps:

- Our staff are now working with local communities to bring the Model to life. The first step is piloting the approach in some locations to make sure it's working.
- As we progress this work, we'll provide more clarity to community organisations about where and how to access community specialist services in your area.
- In the meantime, please visit - [Strategies - Services Australia](#).