



The Hon Andrew Gee MP

Federal Member for Calare
Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister

MEDIA RELEASE

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MIGRANT SUPPORT SERVICES TO REMAIN AT BATHURST

Federal Member for Calare, Andrew Gee today announced that interim funding of \$84,000 had been secured to keep a migrant support worker employed at Bathurst's Neighbourhood Centre for at least the next 12 months.

Mr Gee said that along with securing the funding to keep a migrant support worker employed, a thorough investigation will also be carried out by the Department of Social Services and Minister Paul Fletcher into the number of migrants The Neighbourhood Centre has been able to assist over the last three years.

"Having reviewed all of the data it's clear that while the numbers did drop, they were well and truly on the way up just before the new contracts were re-written. My question is whether enough consideration was given to the back-end increase and the reasons for it," Mr Gee said.

"Over the past week, I have made extensive submissions to Minister Fletcher as to why the numbers dropped and the heights they reached at the end of 2018.

"Those submissions now need to be verified by the Department. That process will commence immediately and should be complete in the coming weeks. This announcement gives us breathing space to have the whole issue considered in more detail.

"If my submissions are verified I will be seeking another extension of migrant support funding for The Neighbourhood Centre for 2021 and 2022."

Mr Gee has worked closely with Jean Fell, Executive Officer at The Neighbourhood Centre, to gather all of the available data to justify the Minister's intervention.

"I'm absolutely delighted with this outcome as a result of Andrew Gee's lobbying and there's certainly been a sigh of relief at The Neighbourhood Centre," Ms Fell said.

Mayor of Bathurst, Cr Graeme Hanger welcomed the announcement.

"This funding announcement is terrific news and is a great example of our council working with our local member to achieve a great community result," Mayor Hanger said.

Minister for Social Services, Paul Fletcher thanked Mr Gee for putting together all of the data and making the case to extend funding for migrant support services at Bathurst.

"I know how important The Neighbourhood Centre is to the Bathurst community and Andrew's strong advocacy on the issue has really been appreciated," Minister Fletcher said.

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Mr Gee added that today's announcement is also great news for Orange City Council.

"Orange City Council's total funding for migrant support services and activities has increased over three years by \$28,022.99 (\$365,680.89 compared to \$337,657.90), however the area it had to cover for migrant support has expanded significantly," Mr Gee said.

"In my discussions with Orange City Council, they have made it very clear that if the migrant support role can be retained at Bathurst, it will be able to handle the rest of its area effectively, so this announcement also ticks the key box for them."

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