

QoN #1 (pg. 25): The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Can I keep playing with some numbers? You talk about people that sign up for a 12-month period or as long as they want. How many are currently actively engaged in this?

JOSIE HOWARD: I can get you the numbers.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Will you take that on notice?

JOSIE HOWARD: I can take that on notice and I can get those numbers, but in terms of people that have moved—I thought you might be interested in some numbers—950 workers have relocated from the beginning of this week and 526 of those have been health workers. Then we move into education being the next highest, and then police, DCJ, our fires and Corrective Services.

A1: As of 18/2/2025 1073 essential workers are living in the regions with the support of the program, with a further 156 having registered their intention through the program system to relocate with an intended date of arrival.

QoN # 2 (pg.25): The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Can you also provide us a breakdown of the areas they're working in?

JOSIE HOWARD: Yes.

A2: The agencies in which The Welcome Experience participants are working as at 18 February 2025 is summarised in the table below:

Agency/Industry	Number of Workers
NSW Health	568
NSW Department of Education	142
Health (non-government)	78
NSW Police Force	70
Aged Care	35
NSW Ambulance	35
Early Childhood Education & Care	31
Other	30
Education (non-government)	23
NSW Department of Communities and Justice	17
Fire & Rescue NSW	12
Disability Support	8
Corrective Services NSW	4
Veterinary Services	2

QoN # 3 (pg. 25): The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: You said 55 LGAs. What are they, what host agencies do they fill into and how do they work that way?

JOSIE HOWARD: Yes, absolutely.

A3:

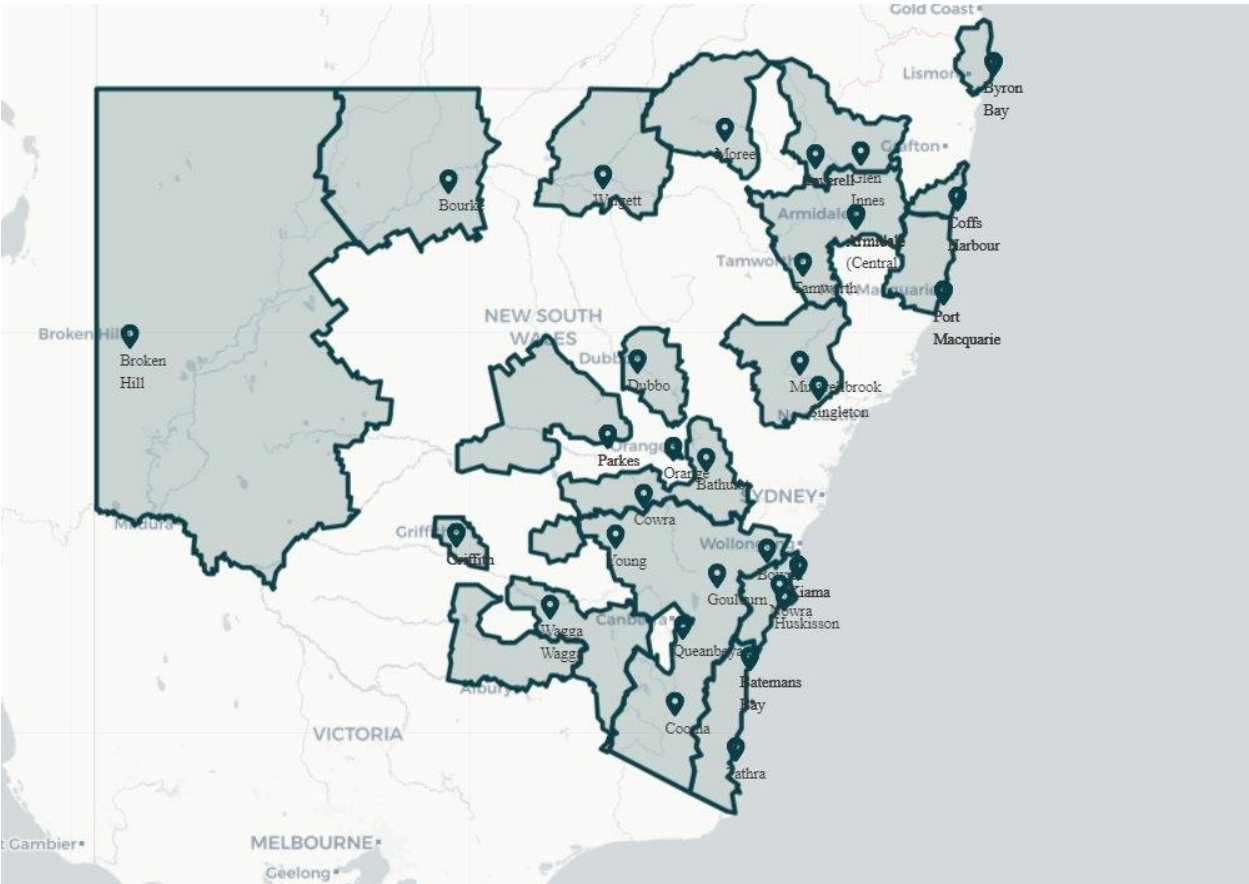
We currently have 33 local connectors engaged across 55 local government areas. This table lists the host agencies and the LGAs each host agency covers. Where an LGA is bolded, that LGA is the primary base for a Local Connector in the host agency.

Where a host agency covers multiple LGAs but is primarily based in one LGA the host agency, and in particular the Local Connector will travel to the other LGAs to conduct welcome events, introduce new essential workers to the community, and to liaise with local businesses and community groups to build awareness of The Welcome Experience and the importance of welcoming essential workers to the region. For example, Regional Development Southern NSW & ACT (RDASNA) has a Local Connector who is primarily based in Goulburn and another primarily based in Cooma. These Local Connectors have travelled to the major towns in all the LGAs RDASNA services to meet with local employers and businesses to promote the program.

Host Agency	Region	LGAs
Bega Chamber of Commerce and Industry	Far South Coast	Bega Valley, Eurobodalla
Boambee East Community Centre	Coffs Coast	Coffs Harbour , Bellingen
Local Connect	Northern New England	Glen Innes Severn, Inverell
Moree Plains Shire Council	Moree Plains	Moree Plains
Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra	Illawarra Shoalhaven	Kiama, Shellharbour, Shoalhaven
Muswellbrook Shire Council	Upper Hunter	Muswellbrook , Singleton, Upper Hunter
RDA Mid North Coast	Mid North Coast	Kempsey, Nambucca Valley, Port Macquarie
RDA Murray	Greater Albury	Albury , Federation, Greater Hume
RDA Northern Inland	Southern New England	Armidale, Tamworth , Uralla
RDA Northern Rivers	Northern Rivers	Ballina, Byron, Lismore , Richmond Valley, Tweed
RDA Orana	Orana	Bourke, Dubbo, Walgett

RDA Riverina	Riverina	Griffith , Leeton, Snowy Valleys (Tumut only), Temora, Wagga Wagga
RDA Southern NSW & ACT	Southern	Goulburn Mulwaree , Hilltops, Queanbeyan Palerang, Snowy Monaro , Upper Lachlan, Wingecarribee, Yass Valley
Regional Solutions Community Development Organisation	Far West	Balranald , Broken Hill , Central Darling, Unincorporated Far West, Wentworth
Skillset	Central West	Bathurst, Cowra, Lachlan, Lithgow, Oberon, Orange , Parkes, Weddin

The map below demonstrates the geographic coverage of The Welcome Experience as it currently operates:



QoN #4 (pg. 25): You said the social connection was number two. Can you tell us what number one is?

JOSIE HOWARD: I believe it was housing. I'll take that on notice and confirm, but I believe it was housing.

A4: In October 2023, linking to community services, of which social connection is a major part, was part of 75% of initial conversations between Local Connectors (LCs) and essential workers (EWs) and was the second most common purpose of an interaction between a LC and an EW. 77.8% of these initial conversations involved information sharing between the LC and EWs.

QoN #5 (pg. 26): The CHAIR: I have a supplementary question on that. Is there anything that you're hearing from your local connectors that—we've been hearing from organisations about what they do but also what they need. I wonder if local connectors are feeding back things that they would like to be able to be doing or providing or that they're being asked for that aren't available because it is the area that they're in or a particular region. Is there anything missing that they're asking for?

JOSIE HOWARD: Not that springs to mind. I can take that on notice and go through some of our research and see what has come back. But, typically, our local connectors are positively geared. They're the biggest smile in the community where they work. That's been the reason why they're so good at being in that role. A lot of the things that they are asking for are support and continuation and that sort of thing, as opposed to additional services within community. Some of our more isolated areas did ask for extra funding for things like events because they don't exist. There's no community group to drive it. They need to be the ones to pick it up and run with the ideas. There's certainly that element, the more isolated or smaller the community. But in terms of a primary theme, I'll have a look.

A5: The Welcome Experience operates in 55 regional LGAs (including the Unincorporated Far West), with the remaining 38 regional LGAs not receiving the service due to funding limitations. Most Host Agencies would like to service a larger area, however are limited in what LGAs they can cover by the funding they have available. As these 38 LGAs are also in need of essential workers, many host agencies receive inquiries from essential workers and employers that are not in an area serviced by a program. Additional funding to cover a larger area would resolve this issue.

For example, the Clarence Valley LGA is not covered by the current program footprint. The Local Connectors in the Northern Rivers and Coffs Coast have highlighted that this is a significant gap due to the number of essential worker roles in the region. The Clarence Valley LGA is home to the Clarence Valley Correctional Facility and is undergoing a multi-million dollar upgrade to the Grafton Base Hospital. These developments, alongside broader regional growth, have resulted in increased demand for essential workers and support services. However, because these areas fall outside the program's scope, the program is not currently able to support the enquiries.

QoN #6 (pg. 27): The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: It may be a double-barrelled question that I could split up, but where are they physically housed. They've got to be very well-connected. How do they stay so connected?

JOSIE HOWARD: They're employed with different host agencies in each of those locations. For example, you might have an RDA that is our contractor to deliver the welcome experience. They may have a local connector. Using Orana as an example, RDA Orana has their home base in Dubbo. They've got a central local connector in Walgett. They've got another one in Mudgee, and they've got another one in Bourke.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Just to save us spending some time on it now, can I ask for that to be provided on notice as well?

JOSIE HOWARD: Yes, sure.

A6: Please see the table below for the locations where Local Connectors are based.

Host Agency	Region	LGAs
Bega Chamber of Commerce and Industry	Far South Coast	Bega Valley, Eurobodalla
Boambee East Community Centre	Coffs Coast	Coffs Harbour, Bellingen
Local Connect	Northern New England	Glen Innes Severn, Inverell
Moree Plains Shire Council	Moree Plains	Moree Plains
Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra	Illawarra Shoalhaven	Kiama, Shellharbour, Shoalhaven
Muswellbrook Shire Council	Upper Hunter	Muswellbrook , Singleton, Upper Hunter
RDA Mid North Coast	Mid North Coast	Kempsey, Nambucca Valley, Port Macquarie
RDA Murray	Greater Albury	Albury , Federation, Greater Hume
RDA Northern Inland	Southern New England	Armidale, Tamworth , Uralla
RDA Northern Rivers	Northern Rivers	Ballina, Byron, Lismore , Richmond Valley, Tweed
RDA Orana	Orana	Bourke, Dubbo, Walgett
RDA Riverina	Riverina	Griffith , Leeton, Snowy Valleys (Tumut only), Temora, Wagga Wagga
RDA Southern NSW & ACT	Southern	Goulburn Mulwaree , Hilltops, Queanbeyan

		Palerang, Snowy Monaro , Upper Lachlan, Wingecarribee, Yass Valley
Regional Solutions Community Development Organisation	Far West	Balranald, Broken Hill , Central Darling, Unincorporated Far West, Wentworth
Skillset	Central West	Bathurst, Cowra, Lachlan, Lithgow, Oberon, Orange , Parkes, Weddin