



**Are You Inclusive?**  
A **DARE** Initiative

## Interim evaluation:

### Trial launch in Springwood (Jun-Aug 2019)

December 2019

The 'Are You Inclusive?' project is funded by an NDIS Information, Linkages and Capacity-Building (ILC) grant, 2018-2020



Funded by the National Disability Insurance Agency



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## Summary

The Are You Inclusive project (project) provides a free training and resources program (program) to businesses and services in the Blue Mountains and Nepean regions on how best to welcome and serve customers with invisible disabilities such as intellectual disability and autism. The project began in July 2018 and a program was developed based on research and local consultation. It was launched as a trial in Springwood in June to mid-August 2019, and then was rolled out across the whole Mountains and Penrith in parallel to an evaluation of the trial.

As at the time of writing this report (December 2019), over 100 businesses and services comprising of over 1100 personnel have registered for the program. Of these, over 420 people have completed the training and 42 businesses/services at 56 locations have completed the minimum training requirement and been endorsed as inclusive to their customers with invisible disabilities. This report provides an evaluation of the trial launch and thus reports on the initial outcomes during the 2.5 month trial period only.

Methods used for this trial launch evaluation included an examination of project participation data from the 30 participating businesses and services and 122 people who completed the training video and quiz during the trial period. In addition, focus groups and interviews were conducted with 68 potential customers (people with disability and their support people) and 11 of the participating businesses and services.

Business and service participation results during the 2.5 month trial period:

- At the 30 participating businesses and services, there were 289 personnel of which 122 had completed the training at the end of the trial period.
- For businesses that were cold-approached and had the decision maker present, 86% registered on the spot.
- 10 of the businesses/services had completed the training requirement at 19 different locations.
- No businesses had yet had a mystery shopper assessment.

Of the 68 potential customers consulted regarding the 2.5 month trial period:

- 44% (30 people) had been in Springwood during this time.
- 57% (17 of 30 people) noticed the sticker in at least one business or service (average number of stickers seen: 4).
- 53% who of these (9 of 17 people) had used at least one endorsed business or service (average number of businesses with sticker used: 3).
- 60% of those who visited at least one endorsed business or service did so because of the sticker.
- 100% of customers who used an endorsed business (9 people) felt the endorsement was well-deserved.
- 100% of those who had previously used an endorsed business (6 people) noticed that their experience had improved.

While the percentages described for customers above are based off small sample sizes, they indicate a positive trend for the trial, considering there was such a short period of implementation and only 10 businesses in Springwood that had been endorsed by the end of this period.

Online traffic to the Are You Inclusive website was good, with 2,553 page views from 640 new users during the 2.5 months trial. The Facebook page had 283 page likes and reached an average of 1135 people per week.

Businesses and services advised they particularly liked that the program was free, quick and easy, and was provided by locals. Other common themes raised were that the program was of good quality, sent the right message, improved their knowledge of invisible disability, made a difference to their customer service provision, provided personal satisfaction, and received positive feedback from their staff and volunteers. They also commonly noted that they enjoyed the recognition their business received from being endorsed.

Customers reported that they liked knowing that their needs are important to the business community and noted improvements to their customer service experiences. Other benefits of the program include collaborations among other organisations to train students and conduct research.

Only a few minor issues or suggested ways to improve were noted by a very small minority of stakeholders, which have largely been already incorporated to the program.

Challenges to the project included common misconceptions about the project due to its uniqueness; some businesses registering but not doing the training; and a lack of awareness of the mystery shopper program and online directory within this short period.

Overall, the trial launch was a great success, and the momentum has continued with the roll out across the whole Mountains and Penrith, occurring in parallel with this interim evaluation. We look forward to providing a full evaluation of the entire project when it concludes in June 2020.

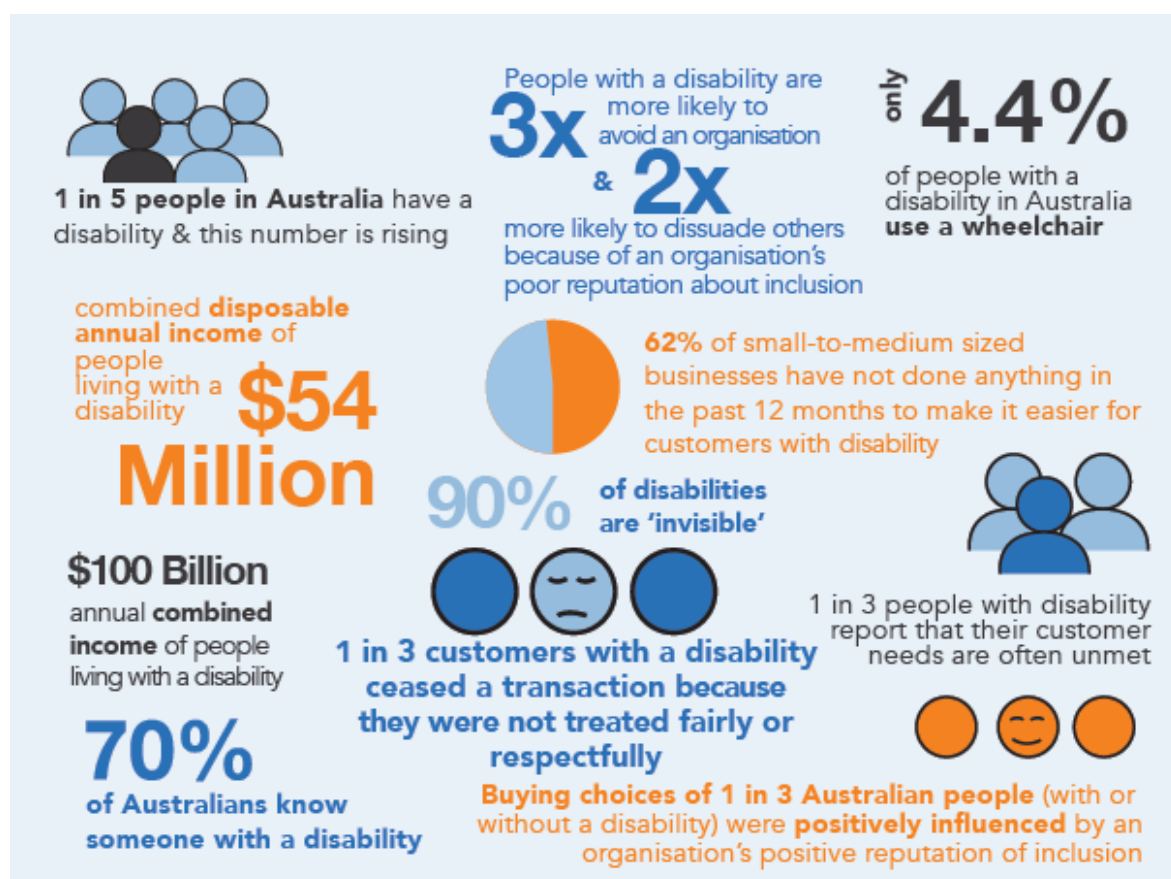
## Project Background

### What is the project and why are we doing it?

The Are You Inclusive project (project) provides a free training and resources program (program) to businesses and services on how best to meet the needs of customers with invisible disabilities such as intellectual disability and autism.

One in 20 people have an intellectual disability, autism, Down syndrome or acquired brain injury. Just like everyone, people with these disabilities need to use local businesses and services: to go shopping, see a doctor, travel, buy a car. Research has shown that Australians with disability are a significant customer group and face several challenges when using businesses (Figure 1). Current strategies, where they exist, are traditionally focused on physical access, but for people with intellectual disability and autism, it is more about customer service and feeling overwhelmed. There is little attention or information available on understanding and including people with intellectual disability or autism for businesses and services in the community.

Unlike expensive retro-fitting of a physical environment, changes to customer service can be made easily and have a direct impact on a business or service's profitability whilst making a positive impact on the community.



Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2016, 4430.0 - Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers 2015; Australian Human Rights Commission 2017 'Missing out: The business case for customer diversity'; Australian Network on Disability 2017 '2017 Disability Confidence Survey'; NSW Business Chamber 2017 'Missed business: How to attract more customers through better access. A Guide for small business'; NSW business chamber 2017 'How accessible and inclusive is your Business?'

Figure 1: Relevant statistics relating to businesses and customers with disability

## What are our goal and objectives?

Our goals and objectives are in line with NDIS Information, Linkage and Capacity-Building (ILC) programs, which focus on creating more inclusive communities for all people with disability.

**Goal:** People with intellectual disability and autism are able to use and benefit from the same mainstream services as everyone else.

- Objectives:**
1. Increase the number of businesses and services in the Nepean and Blue Mountains regions that are publically rated as intellectual disability- and autism-friendly from 0 to 100 by June 2020.
  2. Double the average number of local businesses and services used by people with intellectual disability or autism, from 7 to 14, by June 2020.

## What research is the program based on?

The following research activities were conducted during the research and development stage of the project:

- A review the literature and existing initiatives; customer, businesses and services interviews; and tag-alongs and observations of customer interactions, to determine the core issues, and
- Root cause analysis, which showed three main root causes on which to focus solutions (Figure 2).

For the full details, see the project's research report at [areyouinclusive.com.au/research](http://areyouinclusive.com.au/research)

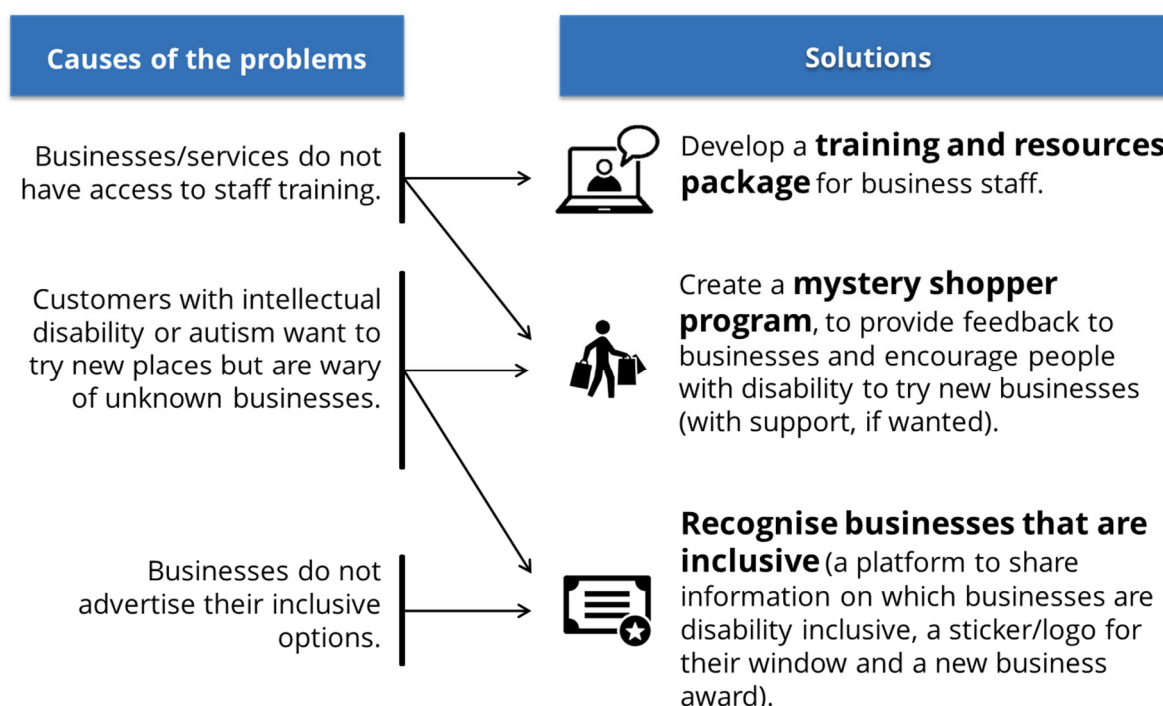


Figure 2: Causes of the main problems identified in the root cause analysis, and their corresponding solutions.

## Trial launch

The program was initially launched in Springwood to test and inform any necessary adjustments before rolling out further. This location was chosen due to its size, proximity to DARE Disability Support and strong support from the Springwood and District Chamber of Commerce.

We invited Springwood businesses and services to join the program via the Chamber of Commerce, in a Gazette article, and by approaching them directly.

The trial launch was conducted June to mid-August 2019. After this, the program was rolled out across the full geographical scope, in parallel with this evaluation, due to the overwhelming positive response during the trial and keen interest from many businesses outside of Springwood.

This evaluation informed updates to the program, as part of our continuous improvement model.

## Trial evaluation activities

The following evaluation activities were conducted in October 2019:



### **Review of data**

from participating businesses and services (30), and the training video & quiz (122 people)



### **Focus groups and interviews with potential customers**

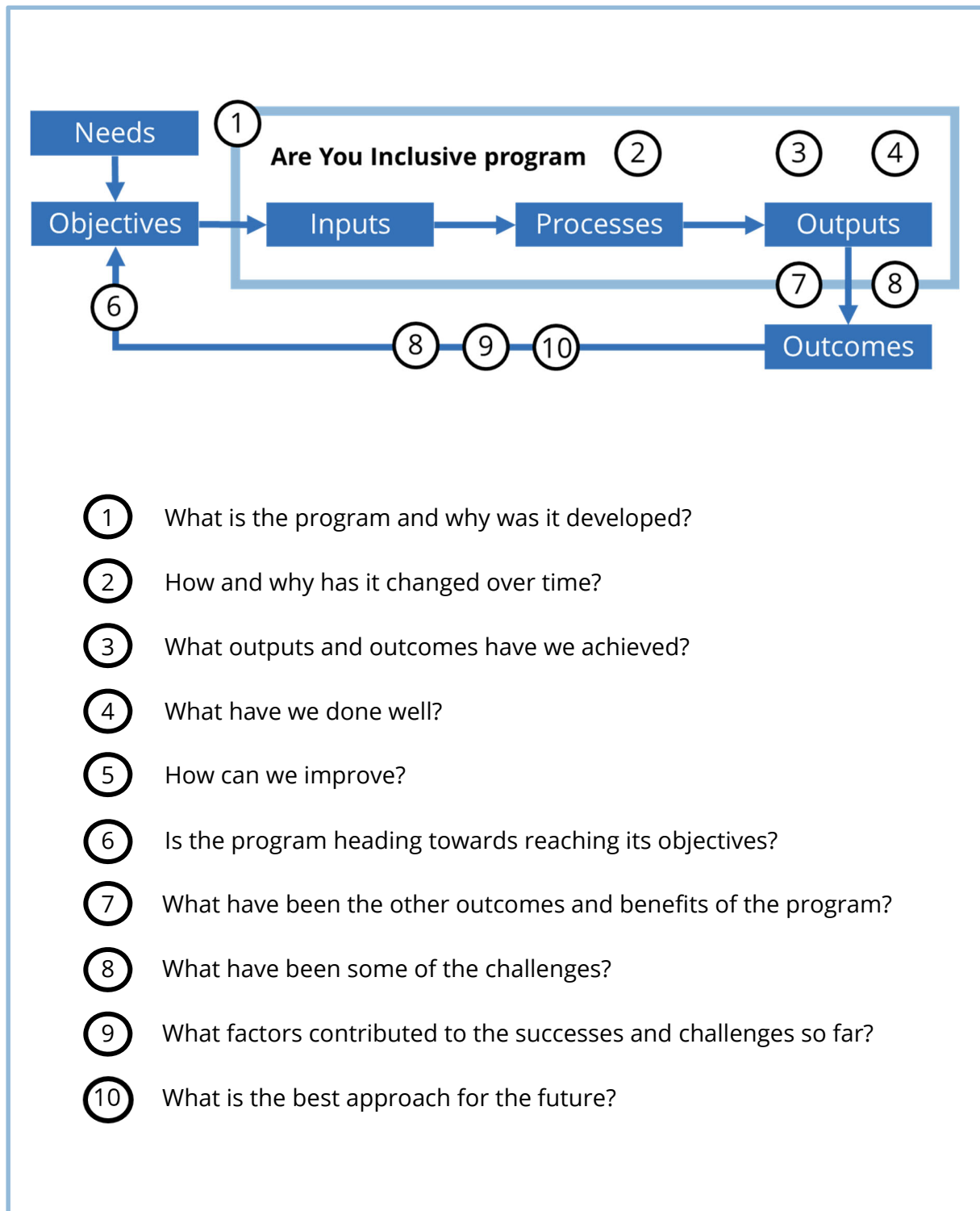
who have intellectual disability or autism (54 people), and their family and support workers (14 people).



### **Focus groups and interviews with businesses and services**

that participated in the Springwood trial launch. Eleven businesses and services participated from retail, fitness, hospitality, housing, transport and community service industries.

## Trial evaluation model and questions





## Results for the evaluation questions

### 1. What is the program and why was it developed?

The program was developed to align with the solutions identified for action in the research and development phase. The following table outlines the free training and resources for businesses and services, and the requirements to obtain them.

If a business or service completes:	
<b>Video &amp; quiz</b> (15 mins total)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50% of existing staff have watched the video and passed the quiz.</li> <li>• All new staff watch the video and complete the quiz as part of their induction.</li> </ul>
Then they are 'endorsed' and qualify for:	
<b>Sticker &amp; logo</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A sticker to go in their window, to identify the business as inclusive.</li> <li>• Electronic logo to use in their promotional material (e.g. website).</li> </ul>
<b>Online promotion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The business/service, and the details of its inclusive aspects, listed on our website.</li> <li>• Promotion of their involvement with the project and the inclusive aspects of the business/service on our Facebook page.</li> </ul>
<b>Shopper assessment</b> (limited to the first 100 businesses / services)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The option to have shopper assessors complete a transaction or enquiry at the business/service. This will be a 'mystery' shopper assessment, where possible.</li> <li>• Feedback sent to the businesses/service.</li> <li>• Promotion of all the great things the business/service is doing to be inclusive that were noted in the assessment.</li> </ul>
<b>Awards</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The business/service qualifies to be part of our 'Are You Inclusive?' awards, to be held in 2020.</li> </ul>
Additional resources:	
<b>Tip sheet</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tips for how to make adjustments to a business to help customers with 'invisible' disabilities (like intellectual disability and autism) use the business or service.</li> </ul>
<b>Pictograms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Double sided A4 sheets with pictures relevant to business. Designed to be kept at the counter to help customers with communication.</li> <li>• There is a doubled-sided sheet for several different major business/service types.</li> <li>• A template is provided if businesses would like to make their own.</li> </ul>

## 2. How and why has it changed over time?

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During the trial launch, the following minor changes were made to the program:

Resource	Change	Reason
<b>Business / service registration form</b>	Additional questions added to have all details ready for when the business is endorsed.	Reduces project admin.
	Available as an online form.	Easier for businesses to sign up. Reduces project admin.
	Added question about being approached for research.	Research project planned. Ensures asking businesses to take part in research is ethical.
<b>Welcome pack</b>	Made electronically available.	More convenient for businesses. Can be sent automatically when electronic sign up form triggers welcome email.
<b>Quiz</b>	Minor errors in quiz questions and logic amended.	Optimise quiz user experience

“ I found it enlightening and certainly learnt a lot. ”

- Quiz taker

### 3. What outputs and outcomes have we achieved?

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#### Participation

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A snapshot of businesses and services participating in the program during the 2.5 month trial launch is below. While the percentages above are based on small sample sizes, they indicate a positive trend for the trial, considering there was such a short period of implementation and at the end of the trial period only 10 businesses in Springwood had been endorsed.

During the trial Jun - Aug 2019:

Businesses and services	
Registered:	
30	businesses and services registered, with a total of
289	staff and volunteers
86%	of businesses and services that were cold-approached and had the decision-maker there at the time registered on the spot
Video and quiz training:	
122	staff and volunteers completed the training
Endorsed:	
10	businesses and services completed the training and became endorsed, at
19	different locations (9 outside of Springwood)
No businesses or services had a shopper assessment yet	

Snapshot of experiences of customers with intellectual disability or autism, and their support people, during the 2.5 month trial launch:

During the trial Jun - Aug 2019:

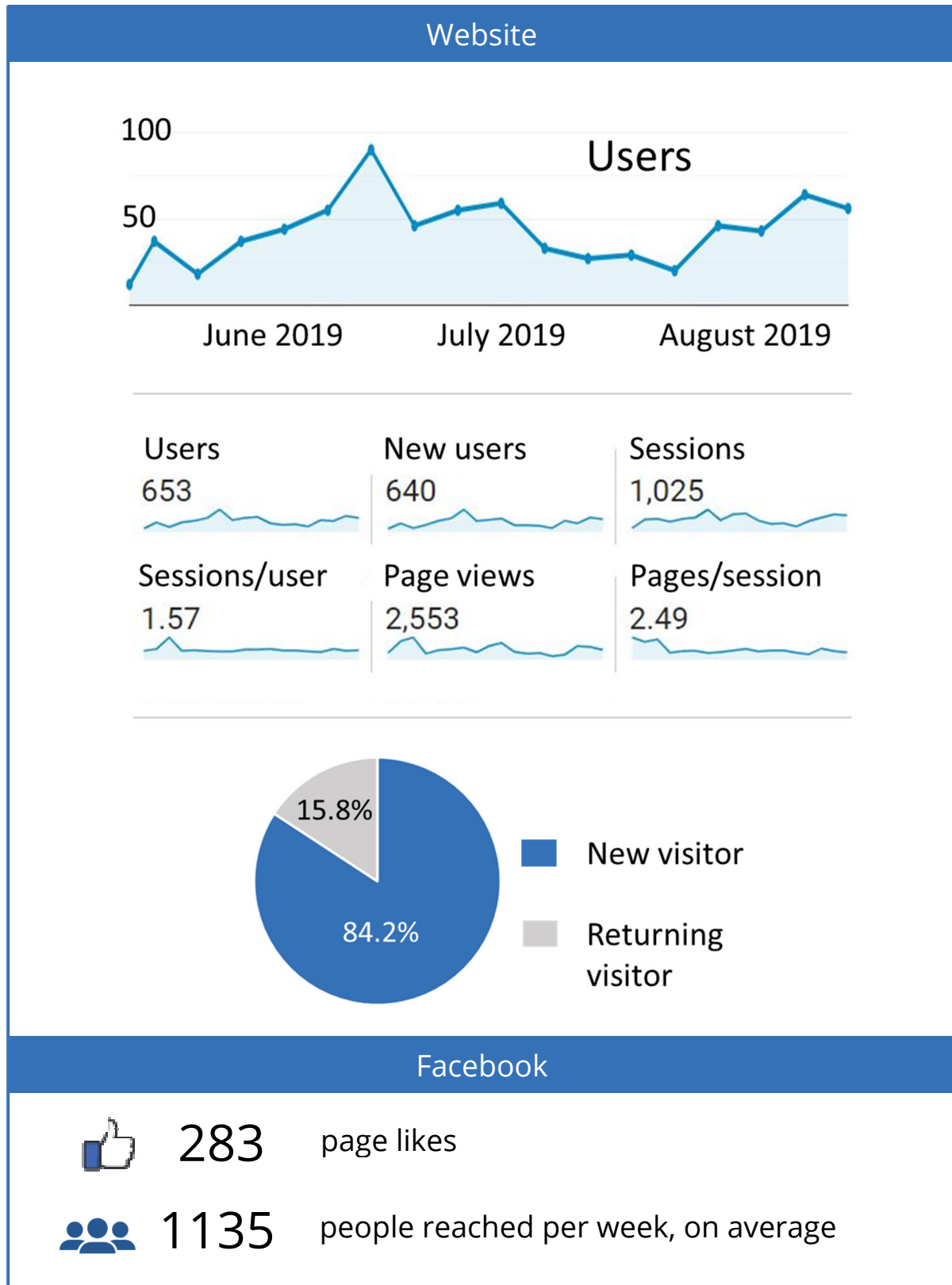


While the percentages described for customers above are based off small sample sizes, they indicate a positive trend for the trial, considering there was such a short period of implementation and only 10 businesses in Springwood that had been endorsed by the end of this period.

## Website and Facebook pages

Below are snapshots of users of the [www.areyouinclusive.com.au](http://www.areyouinclusive.com.au) website and [www.facebook.com/areyouinclusive](https://www.facebook.com/areyouinclusive) Facebook page during the trial launch.

During the trial Jun - Aug 2019:



## 4. What have we done well?

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### Positive feedback from businesses and services

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The vast majority of feedback regarding the program has been very positive.

#### Participation process:

##### It's a free and simple program

“It's easy – anybody can do it.”  
- Business manager, interview

##### The registration process was very quick and easy.

“It's all very clear and concise.”  
- Business sole trader, interview

##### Welcome pack is useful

“It's very professional. I'm quite envious of it actually.”  
- Community service provider, focus group

“It's a good reminder!”  
- Business owner, focus group

#### Video and quiz training:

Ratings of the video and quiz (see Figure 2-4) show that users are overall very happy with the training – it is an acceptable length and style, and provides helpful information.

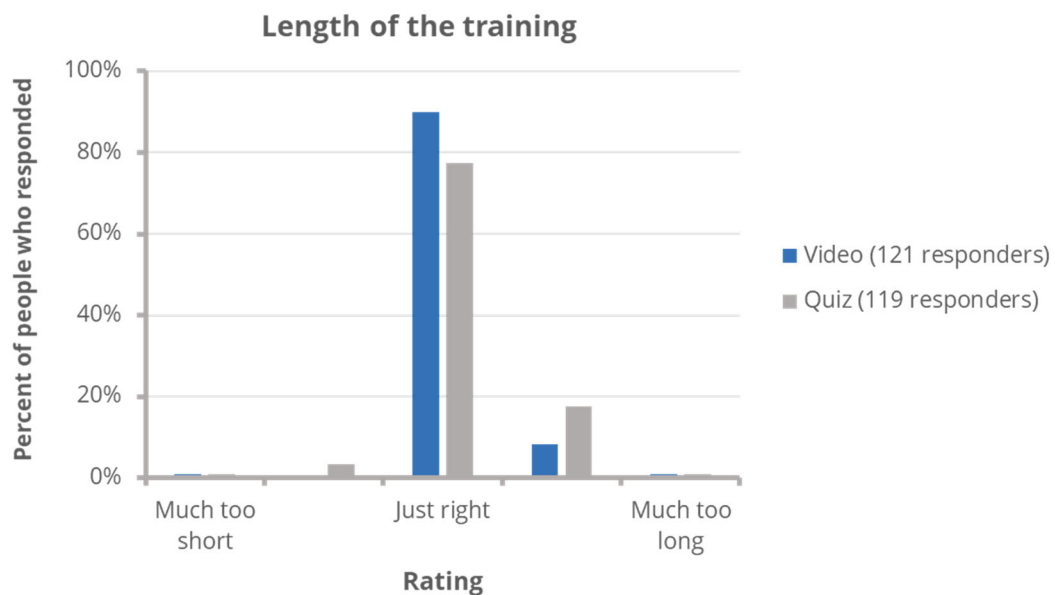


Figure 2: Ratings of the length of the training (source: training quiz)

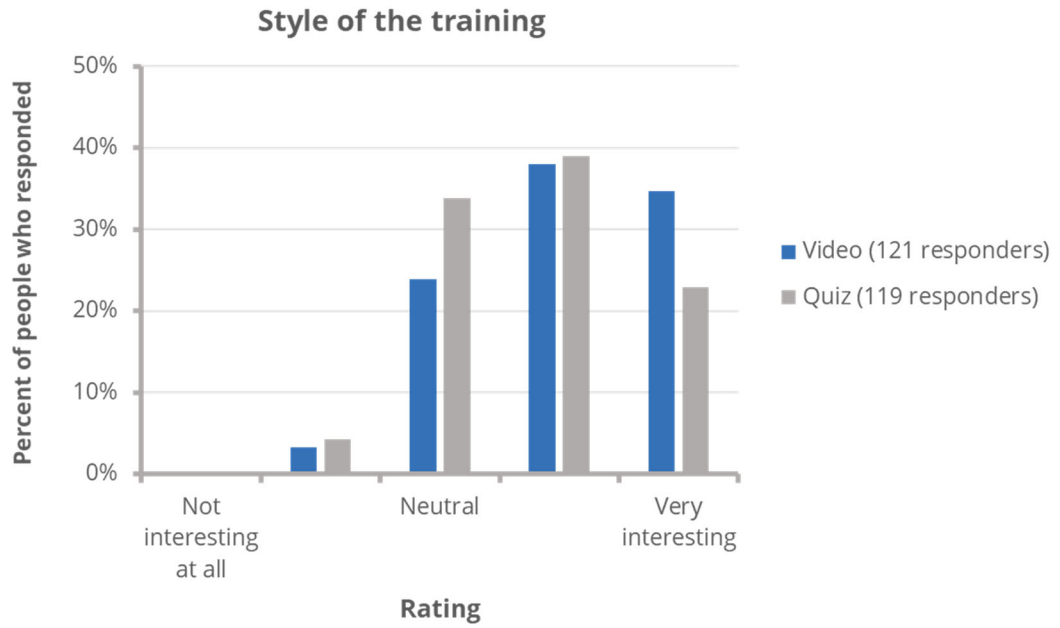


Figure 3: Ratings of the style of the training (source: training quiz)

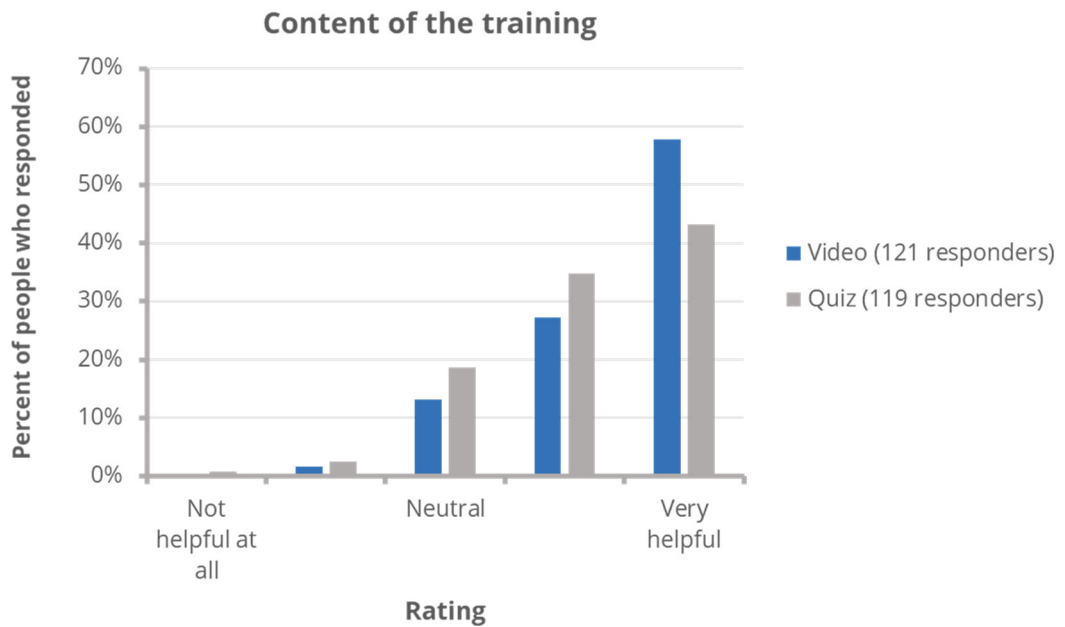


Figure 4: Ratings of the content of the training (source: training quiz)

## Common video and quiz feedback themes:

### Good quality and format.

“ It was very well put together. Really enjoyed it.  
- Customer service provider, quiz

“ Gave a thoughtful look at possible real-life situations.  
- Customer service provider, quiz

“ I like that it can be done in two halves, or with subtitles on so I could do it during my shift when it was very busy.  
- Business sole trader, focus group

“ I liked that you not only gave the correct answer but you also gave some great examples of what not to do and what to avoid.  
- Customer service provider, quiz

### Sent the right message.

“ Good to see this approach as I have a visible disability as people always try to help which is sometimes annoying.  
- Customer service provider, quiz

“ I think it's amazing this is being taught as so many people that work in customer service roles or even come across people with disabilities in day-to-day life wouldn't understand the right way to approach the situation.  
- Customer service provider, quiz

### Improved knowledge of invisible disability.

“ It made me more aware of invisible disabilities. Sometimes people are slow, and sometimes people in retail get very frustrated and angry because you think there's something wrong. The video helped clarify that not everyone's disability is visible.  
- Business owner-manager, interview

“ We've been serving customers with disability for 4-5 years now, so we know how to deal with customers with disability. But the video helped me to increase my knowledge  
- Business franchisee, interview

“ Very helpful in getting a better understanding on how to communicate and attend to customers.  
- Customer service provider, quiz



**Made a difference to customer service provision.**

“ It reminded me to listen more carefully and be more patient. It made me realise that it's not just people with physical disabilities that need help. I notice now that some people just need a bit of extra time.

- Business manager, interview

**Provided personal satisfaction.**

“ I didn't realise that I was making people with disability uncomfortable, and that makes me feel uncomfortable myself. I find it very rewarding to find out how to do it better.

- Business owner-manager, focus group

“ I was quite excited to receive the certificate!

- Business staff member, focus group

**People with disability, especially locals, could give their perspective directly.**

“ It was the first time I'd seen and heard people with disability speak about their perspective.

- Business manager, focus group

“ Very clear and to the point, and especially nice to see local people & places featured.

- Customer service provider, quiz

**Managers got positive feedback from their staff/volunteers**

“ [Staff] said they were glad to have done it. It was pleasing to hear.

- Community service provider, focus group

### **Being endorsed and promoted:**

**Customers notice their commitment to inclusion**

“ People say it's really great. I've had some positive comments.  
-Business sole trader, interview.

“ Quite a few people notice [the sticker], and not just DARE clients.

- Business sole trader, focus group

**Sticker is easy to recognise**

“ I think the sticker is concise, self, explanatory and well-designed.

- Business manager, focus group

“ Everyone can see at a glance that we include everybody.

- Business owner, interview

**Postcards help explain**

“ A few people ask what [the sticker] means. The cards are good to give them so they know what it's about”

- Business sole trader, focus group

**Enjoyed the online promotion and recognition**

“ "Excellent, I'm very happy with the Facebook posts.

- Business owner, focus group

“ The online directory is a great idea!

- Community service provider, focus group

**Other resources:**

**Fact sheet: informative and convincing**

“ I was quite surprised by the numbers, actually.

- Community service manager, focus group

**Tip sheet: helpful new ideas**

“ Great tips. I would never have thought of advertising my quietest period, but it's a good idea.

- Business owner-manager, focus group

**Mystery shopper program: would be very useful**

“ This would be great. It would be good to know if the training is working – I want to make sure it's actually making a difference to my customers.

- Business manager, focus group

## Positive feedback from customers

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All consulted customers were very positive about the program. Common themes are below.

**It's nice to see their needs are important to businesses and services**

“It's so wonderful, exciting!  
- Customer with disability, interview

“I just think it's wonderful that you're doing this.  
- Family member, interview

**The training has made a difference to customer service**

“Their attitude got better  
- Customer with disability, interview

“It has made shopping better.  
- Customer with disability, interview

**The program makes it easier to find and use businesses and services**

“There's a lot of people in this area with disability. It makes it easier for them, so they can be more independent.  
- Parent, interview

“I like the sticker and I like to find shops with the sticker”  
- Customer with disability, interview

“I saw one in the shop the other day – it's so exciting!”  
- Customer with disability, interview

## 5. How can we improve?

### Business and service perspective

While the vast majority of feedback was positive, some great constructive criticism was also received which helped the program to improve, and will inform further continuous improvements and future programs.

Common themes raised by a small minority:

Area for improvement (source)	Action taken
<b>Welcome kit:</b>	
Largely unread (focus group)	Made more succinct and accessible electronically for future reading.
Give staff/volunteers something to tell them how and why to access training (focus group)	How to Access Training fact sheet created. Sample email to send to staff members created.
<b>Video and quiz training:</b>	
Make some of the words on the screen in the video a darker colour so they are easier to read (quiz)	Engaged videographer to update.
Quiz paragraphs are a bit long for this format of quiz (quiz)	Information is succinct as possible. New quiz provider which provides better layout being looked into.
Quiz was too easy and the answers to choose from were too similar (quiz)	Added a note at the start of the quiz that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• some people may find the questions easy and some may find them hard, depending on their knowledge of and experience in customer service and disability.</li> <li>• Many questions are based on real life scenarios.</li> </ul> Quiz answer options were not made more differentiable because customers have reported that subtle differences in inclusion like these have large effects on their experience.
Job seekers and students should do the training too, as it would be very valued by employers (focus group)	Continue work with Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School (see p22). Approach other institutions to encourage student and job seekers to do the training.
Send further reminders to do the training (focus group)	Email lists of number of staff who have done the training (and their list of names) sent monthly.
Make a 3 min refresher video to brush up on skills in 12 months (focus group)	Logged as an improvement for when future funding available.

<b>Pictograms:</b>	
Make a hand-held version and/or app (focus group)	Logged as an improvement for when future funding available.
Make a “pictograms available here” sticker so customers know it’s available – can be awkward to offer the pictogram if not asked for (focus group)	Process initiated.
Make store specific	Publicise more the availability of pictogram template. Customised pictograms have been considered but are not within scope of this project.
<b>Mystery shopper program:</b>	
Very keen to have it done, but were unaware of it being available – didn’t notice references to it in the welcome pack and other promo info.	Publicise it more. Organise first ones to help spread the word.
Ensure staff member is identified to the manager during feedback, and give a card to the staff member afterwards to say they had a mystery shopper assessment (focus group)	Process initiated.
<b>Promotion of project:</b>	
Create a promotional video explaining what the program is about (focus group)	Process initiated using videos of presentations given.

## Customer perspective

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The only common theme among customers as an area for improvement was that many customers did not know about the online directory of inclusive places (but liked the idea and now intended to use it).

This indicates that the concept of this resource is good but its availability needs to be better publicised to the community.

## 6. Is the program heading towards reaching its objectives?

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**Objective 1: Increase the number of businesses and services in the Nepean and Blue Mountains regions publically rated as intellectual disability and autism-friendly from 0 to 100 by June 2020.**

At the end of the 2.5 month trial period, the program was making great progress towards this objective, with:

- a publically available central resource developed to find places endorsed by the project as intellectual disability and autism-friendly. (See [www.areyouinclusive.com.au/business-directory](http://www.areyouinclusive.com.au/business-directory))
- 18 places listed on this resource at the end of the Springwood trial period.

As the roll-out across the whole Mountains and Penrith is occurring in parallel to this evaluation, as at the time of writing this report (December 2019), more businesses and services have participated and we are even closer to fulfilling this objective. Now, over 100 businesses and services (comprising of a total of over 1100 personnel) are registered for the program. Of these, over 420 people have completed the training and 42 businesses/services at 56 locations are endorsed as inclusive to their customers with invisible disabilities.

**Objective 2: Double the average number of local businesses and services used by people with intellectual disability or autism, from 7 to 14, by June 2020.**

This was not assessed in this interim evaluation as it takes more time to achieve. However, the feedback from customers presented above shows that the outcomes for objective 1 have begun to lay the foundations for this objective to be reached. Customers are beginning to use businesses and services that they wouldn't usually, with 60% of people who had visited endorsed businesses/services using at least one of them for the first time because of the sticker.

However, it is early days, and the feedback provided by customers presented above are based on small numbers. We anticipate progress towards this objective as more and more businesses and services are endorsed, and word spreads among the community about this program.

## 7. What have been the other outcomes and benefits of the program?

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Connections and collaborations between DARE Disability Support and other organisations have been established and have led to initiation of:

- Springwood Rotary club providing support for the mystery shopper program.
- Students of Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School (BMIHMS)

at Torrens University completing the training as part of their course, prior to industry placement.

- A research project to evaluate the full program will be published in collaboration with BMIHMS.
- Multiple future funding applications submitted as lead and participating consortium member with Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District, BMIHMS and Orana.

The project was nominated for a NSW & ACT Regional Achievement and Community Award.

## **8. What have been some of the challenges?**

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- There is not one peak business body in the Blue Mountains and/or Penrith region. Multiple large and small bodies provide distinct and overlapping functions across the region.
- There are many presumptions about the program, because of other complementary work happening within the disability and business sectors. The uniqueness of this program makes it difficult to create a succinct description that is engaging but also clearly describes what the program is about. Common misconceptions that often need to be explained:
  - We are not asking businesses and services to employ people with disability, or to make changes to the physical accessibility of their premises (e.g. adding ramps). While these are very important, this is not within the scope of the project. Many businesses and services that were approached initially assumed the program was about employment or physical accessibility and were concerned about the costs associated with this.
  - The training doesn't cost anything, is not very long, and doesn't require staff to do it all at once. The project is free, and only takes a very short amount of time (approx. 15 mins). It can be done online in the trainee's own time (although workshops are available, should a business or service like all their staff to do it at once). Many businesses and services presume the training has to be conducted in person and takes much longer (often assumed to be at least half a day).
- Some businesses register when initially approached but don't take up the training, despite reminders.
- There was no uptake of the mystery shopper program within the trial period.

## 9. What factors contributed to the successes and challenges so far?

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Below are the factors that have led to the successes of the project, and have also contributed to some of its challenges.

### Scope & format



- The project is very unique, and has filled a gap in available resources that businesses and services are very interested in.
- The program is free, and the training is very quick and easy to do.

### Local involvement



- Local people with intellectual disability and autism, local places, and a local researcher featured in, and were involved with, developing the project materials.
- Business chambers and local support networks can provide support with spreading the word, but there are multiple of these that exist and they each have differing roles.

### Method of contact



- Door-knocking was the most successful way to get businesses involved, but also meant some businesses agreed face-to-face but then didn't complete the training.
- Emails are often not read – need to do follow up phone calls and drop ins.

### Reminders sent regularly



- Businesses and services are very keen to do the training, but often need a reminder to start because more urgent things need to take priority.
- Lists of staff/volunteers who have done training help serve as a reminder and help keep the momentum going.
- Need to remind businesses and services more often about the mystery shopper program.

## 10. What is the best approach for the future?

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- Continue the momentum. The project is being embraced by the community with few issues.
- Continue door-knocking to get businesses and services to join, in conjunction with other methods of communication.
- Publicise the project more, especially the mystery shopper assessments and the online directory of inclusive places.
- Invite more students/job seekers to complete the training.
- Make any remaining minor amendments to the program noted in feedback.



## Next steps



The program continues to roll out across the Mountains and Penrith, with current funding due to end in June 2020.

An awards program recognising and thanking those involved will be held towards the end of the funding period.

We are optimistic that future funding applications will ensure the solid foundations laid by this novel program will be able to continue and expand in the future.

## Acknowledgements

We acknowledge and thank the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Information Linkages and Capacity-Building (ILC) grant for funding the Are You Inclusive? project, under which the program was developed and this evaluation was completed.

We also acknowledge the support provided by the Blue Mountains Economic Enterprise and Blue Mountains City Council as partners in the project.

Other organisations that have assisted with the Are You Inclusive? project, particularly for its Springwood trial launch:

- Springwood & District Chamber of Commerce
- Blue Mountains Regional Business Chamber
- Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School
- Springwood Rotary Club

Finally, we acknowledge and thank the business and service staff, and the customers with disability and their support people, who have co-designed and participated in this project.

We look forward to providing a full evaluation of the entire project in due course.