

Evaluation of the NSW COVID-19 Voucher Programs

Report prepared by Accenture

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	4
Purpose	4
Background	4
Evaluation context.....	4
Findings	4
1 Background	15
1.1 Australia and NSW during the COVID-19 pandemic.....	15
1.1.1 The first cases of COVID-19 in 2020	15
1.1.2 Delta outbreak in June 2021	16
1.2 The Voucher programs.....	20
1.2.1 Dine & Discover NSW	20
1.2.2 Stay NSW	21
1.2.3 Parents NSW.....	21
1.3 Voucher program logic.....	22
1.3.1 Dine & Discover NSW.....	22
1.3.2 Stay NSW	23
1.3.3 Parents NSW.....	23
2 Evaluation context.....	25
2.1 Reason for the evaluation	25
2.2 History of the evaluation	25
2.3 Evaluation stakeholders	26
3 Evaluation purpose and scope	28
3.1 Purpose of the evaluation	28
3.2 Key evaluation questions	28
3.3 Evaluation design and methods.....	30
4 Assessment of evaluation evidence and methods	41
4.1 Assessment of evaluation evidence.....	41
4.1.1 Program governance documents	41
4.1.2 Program data.....	42
4.1.3 Illion Spend Analytics data.....	43
4.1.4 Consumer survey	44
4.1.5 Consultation with business groups	44
4.1.6 Consumer focus groups.....	45
4.2 Assessment of evaluation methods.....	47
4.2.1 Methods for quantifying the voucher programs' impact on consumer spending 47	
4.2.2 Methods for quantifying the voucher programs' efficiency	49
5 Relevance	52

5.1	Dine & Discover (D&D).....	53
5.1.1	Was the program’s policy intent and outcomes relevant and appropriate to creating a strong, resilient and diverse economy?	53
5.1.2	Did the program remain relevant throughout its lifetime?	56
5.2	Stay.....	65
5.2.1	Was the Stay program’s policy intent and outcomes relevant and appropriate to creating a strong, resilient and diverse economy?	65
5.2.2	Did the Stay program remain relevant throughout its lifetime?.....	69
5.3	Parents	73
5.3.1	Was the Parents program’s policy intent and outcomes relevant and appropriate to creating a strong, resilient and diverse economy?	73
5.4	Was the design of the D&D, Stay, and Parents programs appropriate to achieve their policy intent and outcomes?.....	78
5.4.1	Was it appropriate to target stimulus at consumers?	78
5.4.2	Were vouchers an appropriate mechanism for stimulating consumer spending?.....	79
5.4.3	Were the vouchers designed appropriately?.....	80
6	Implementation.....	87
6.1.1	Were there appropriate governance arrangements and processes to design, establish and implement the program?	87
6.1.2	To what extent was the program implemented as intended? Was it implemented within intended timeframes and costs?.....	93
6.1.3	To what extent was an appropriate data collection and evaluation framework established and implemented?.....	97
6.1.4	What is the degree of business and consumer satisfaction with the program’s delivery?	99
6.1.5	Were risks identified and managed? Were there any unintended side-effects (positive or negative) of implementing the program?.....	102
6.1.6	To what extent was the program adapted to account for changing circumstances through its lifetime?	105
7	Effectiveness.....	108
7.1	Reach and access	108
7.1.1	Residents.....	109
7.1.2	Businesses	122
7.2	Spending and revenue	124
7.3	Confident and safe	142
8	Efficiency.....	144
8.1	Benefits	144
8.1.1	Consumer and producer surplus supported by consumer spending	144
8.1.2	People getting out and about in a COVID-safe way	148
8.1.3	Reinforcing compliance with Public Health Orders	149
8.1.4	Consumer and business confidence.....	149
8.1.5	Users of the Parents vouchers reported feeling recognised and supported..	150
8.1.6	Increased business and consumer MyServiceNSW registrations.....	150
8.2	Costs	152
8.2.1	Costs to NSW Government.....	152
8.2.2	Opportunity costs and diversion of Government funding	152

8.2.3	Unequal distribution of benefits	153
8.2.4	Business implementation costs	153
8.3	Value for money	155
8.3.1	Counterfactual	155
8.3.2	Cost benefit analysis	155
8.3.3	Distributional analysis.....	161
Appendix A: Illion Spend Analytics data.....		165
Appendix B: Survey respondents and focus groups		166
Appendix C: Income versus program redemption rates		168
Appendix D: Difference-in-difference summary results		169
	Model results	170
Appendix E: Common benefit categories		186
Appendix F: Cost-benefit analysis assumptions		188
Appendix G: Table of report findings and recommendations		189

Executive Summary

Purpose

This report evaluates the NSW Government's COVID-19 Stimulus Vouchers (the 'voucher programs').

The COVID-19 pandemic was an unprecedented public health crisis which affected all aspects of society and the economy. The federal and state/territory governments reacted quickly with a raft of interventions. The NSW Government's voucher programs were a novel solution, implemented at scale and pace alongside other response programs.

The purpose of the evaluation is to:

- assess whether the voucher programs were warranted
- examine the process of implementing the programs
- assess the extent to which the programs achieved their intended outcomes
- understand any unintended consequences
- capture any insights and lessons learned.

Background

Among other recovery and support measures, the NSW Government implemented three voucher programs in response to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- **Dine & Discover (D&D):** launched in March 2021, the D&D program offered all adult NSW residents two \$25 vouchers to spend at food service (i.e. 'Dine') businesses and two \$25 vouchers to spend at arts and recreation (i.e. 'Discover') businesses in NSW. In October 2021, residents were offered one more \$25 Dine voucher and one more \$25 Discover voucher. D&D vouchers expired on 30 June 2022.
- **Stay:** launched in February 2022, this program offered all adult NSW residents one \$50 voucher to spend at accommodation (i.e. 'Stay') businesses in NSW. The vouchers expired on 9 October 2022.
- **Parents:** launched in February 2022, this program offered all NSW households with school-aged children in 2021 five \$50 vouchers to spend at 'Stay' or 'Discover' businesses. The Parents program was intended to reward and thank eligible households for their efforts to support learning from home during the pandemic. The vouchers expired on 9 October 2022.

Evaluation context

Following the completion of the programs, the NSW Government commissioned an independent ex-post evaluation. The evaluation addresses four domains:

- relevance
- implementation
- effectiveness
- efficiency.

Findings

RELEVANCE: Was the policy intent and mechanism relevant and appropriate to government and community priorities?

The voucher programs were intended to stimulate consumer spending and support targeted businesses highly affected by the pandemic public health orders, restrictions and associated consumer behaviour.

The related State Outcome is “a strong, resilient and diverse economy”.¹ Overall, the evaluation finds the voucher programs were relevant and appropriate in the circumstances.

The below table summarises the findings and recommendations related to the relevance of the voucher programs.

Was the Dine & Discover program’s policy intent relevant and appropriate?	
1.	<p>When the D&D voucher program was conceived, NSW was experiencing low consumer confidence. Spending in recreation businesses was at 37% of its pre-pandemic level. Spending in restaurants, cafes and pubs had recovered and was 8% above the pre-pandemic level.</p> <p>In this context, the policy intent to stimulate consumer demand and support businesses affected by COVID-19 was relevant. Stimulating demand aligns with creating a “strong, resilient and diverse economy”.</p> <p>It was also aligned with broader government priorities, including getting residents out and about in a COVID-safe manner.</p>
2.	<p>Recreation businesses were more affected by the COVID-19 pandemic than restaurants, cafes and pubs. Spending on recreation businesses remained depressed when the D&D program was conceived. Spending on restaurants, cafes and pubs had recovered to pre-pandemic levels. Supporting restaurants, cafes and pubs was less relevant to creating a “strong, resilient and diverse economy”.</p>
Did the Dine & Discover program remain relevant?	
3.	<p>The relevance of the D&D voucher program’s policy intent between February and June 2021 was mixed. Consumer spending on restaurants, cafes and pubs was at 98% of pre-pandemic levels when the program was launched in February 2021. Spending on recreation businesses had not recovered. It was at 35% of pre-pandemic levels in February 2021. Supporting recreation businesses was more relevant for creating a “strong, resilient and diverse economy”.</p> <p>The program continued to be aligned with broader government priorities of incentivising COVID-safe practices.</p>
4.	<p>The original policy mechanism of incentivising consumer spending and supporting businesses by encouraging in-person spending was no longer relevant to the circumstances. More broadly, public health conditions became the central policy focus and concern. In the circumstances, programs aimed at stimulating consumer spending and supporting businesses were not a government priority. However, consumer spending was depressed, including within hotels, cafes, restaurants and recreation businesses.</p>
5.	<p>The D&D program was adapted at the start of the Delta outbreak with the addition of takeaway. This was appropriate to ensure alignment with the NSW Government’s public health priorities. However, takeaway businesses were not adversely affected by the pandemic. While public health restrictions were in place following the Delta outbreak, consumer spending on takeaway businesses was above 100% of January 2020 levels.</p>
6.	<p>An extension of the D&D program in October 2021 was not relevant given the economic circumstances at the time.</p> <p>Aggregate demand was recovering across NSW. Restaurants, cafes and pubs in particular did not require further stimulus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • spending on fast food and takeaway businesses was at 100% of the pre-pandemic level • consumer spending on restaurants and cafes was recovering, at 68% of the pre-pandemic level. <p>The policy intent remained relevant for recreation businesses, where consumer spending was at 10% of pre-pandemic levels.</p>
<p>Recommendation: In line with NSW Government evaluation guidelines, a program should be evaluated, and the evaluation findings should be communicated, before extending it. The</p>	

¹ NSW Government, ‘Outcomes Statement Overview’, 2022

evaluation should assess the extent to which the program will remain relevant for the duration of the extension period. Economic circumstances and public health restrictions changed quickly during the COVID-19 pandemic. This affected the feasibility and appropriateness of undertaking standard evaluation procedures at the time.

Was the Stay program's policy intent and outcomes relevant?

7. When the Stay program was first conceived, spending on accommodation businesses was at 58% of the pre-pandemic level. Overnight domestic travel in Sydney fell by 60% in the year to 31 March 2021. The policy intent to support accommodation providers in the CBD was relevant. There was also a case for supporting accommodation providers in regional NSW. Domestic overnight visitor numbers in regional NSW fell by 20% in the year to 31 March 2021. The Stay program was also aligned with broader government priorities, including getting residents out and about in a COVID-safe manner.

Recommendation: Accommodation businesses across NSW were affected by public health restrictions and changes in consumer behaviour following the onset of COVID-19. The original policy intent of Stay and Rediscover restricted support to eligible accommodation businesses in the Sydney CBD. Future programs should consider the equity implications of eligibility criteria based on geography.

8. When the revised Stay program was announced in October 2021, spending on accommodation businesses had fallen to 31% of the pre-pandemic level. Domestic overnight visitors in the month of September 2021 had fallen by 82% compared to September 2020. The policy intent to support accommodation providers across NSW was relevant.

9. The secondary policy goal of the Stay program to encourage discretionary travel across NSW, in order to incentivise additional spending in other industries, was relevant. The Stay program encouraged residents to go on overnight trips, where they were likely to spend money in local economies. The secondary policy goal was relevant to the State Outcome of creating a "strong, resilient and diverse economy".

Did the Stay program remain relevant?

10. The policy intent to support accommodation providers in NSW was less relevant by the time the Stay program launched. Consumer spending on accommodation businesses was recovering, reaching 75% of the pre-pandemic level. Domestic overnight visitation to NSW was approximately 6% higher in January 2022 than January 2021. International borders reopened as the Stay program commenced.

11. The accommodation sector was recovering during the Stay program rollout. NSW had the highest number of domestic overnight visitors in April 2022 since May 2019. Occupancy in NSW rose by 14% in the quarter to 30 June 2022. Spending on accommodation businesses reached 114% of its pre-pandemic level in July 2022. The policy intent to support accommodation businesses statewide was no longer relevant.

Was the Parents program's policy intent and outcomes relevant?

- The businesses targeted by the Parents program had been negatively impacted by the pandemic and consumer spending remained below the pre-pandemic level. Spending on accommodation and recreation businesses was beginning to recover when the Parents program was announced. Domestic overnight visitation to NSW fell due to the Delta outbreak. NSW received the lowest number of domestic overnight visitors in September 2021 since before the pandemic. However, domestic overnight visitation was three times higher in October 2021.
12. NSW reached double vaccination targets and restrictions were being eased, in the lead up to the summer period. Spending, and domestic overnight visitation, could be expected to continue rising at this time.
- It was not relevant to support arts, recreation and tourism businesses and accommodation businesses beyond the support provided by the Stay and D&D programs.
- However, the program was aligned with broader government priorities of encouraging residents to get vaccinated.
13. The Parents program policy intent was not relevant to creating a “strong, resilient and diverse economy”.
14. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted families and parents. There was a case for supporting these groups in a relevant and targeted manner. Support can be provided several ways. Policies that ensure adequate infrastructure and services to support mental health and recovery of people impacted would directly address this objective.
- Recommendation:** Carefully consider a program's policy intent and the appropriate means of delivering on it.

Did the Parents program remain relevant?

15. The policy goals targeted by the Parents program was of limited relevance during its establishment phase. Consumer spending on accommodation businesses and, to a lesser extent, recreation businesses was recovering between October 2021 and February 2022 before the program was fully launched. In February 2022, spending on accommodation businesses was at 75% of pre-pandemic levels and spending on recreation businesses was at 55% of pre-pandemic levels. The businesses included in the Parents program did not require further support beyond the already operational D&D program and the Stay program which launched in February 2022.
16. While the Parents program was underway from February to October 2022, spending on recreation businesses and on accommodation businesses continued to rise towards pre-pandemic levels. By July 2022, spending on recreation was at 76% of its pre-pandemic (January 2020) level and spending on accommodation business had exceeded January 2020 levels. The D&D program and the Stay program were operating at the same time.
- The policy goals targeted by the Parents program continued to have limited relevance.

Was the design of the D&D, Stay and Parents programs appropriate to achieve their policy intent and outcomes?

17. The economic contraction in the sectors addressed by the D&D, Stay, and Parents programs was driven by low consumer demand. Direct support measures were already in place to mitigate the impact of this on businesses. Given this, it was reasonable to provide additional indirect support by stimulating consumer demand.
- This was also aligned with broader government priorities, including getting residents out and about and encouraging COVID-safe practices.
18. Vouchers were the most appropriate vehicle for stimulating consumer spending in a way that achieved the policy intent of all three programs.
19. D&D and Stay vouchers were targeted in line with the policy intent. Targeting vouchers to specific industries means that businesses in these industries are most likely to receive support.
20. The appropriateness of the decision not to means test cannot be assessed due to a lack of evidence. However, this decision was pragmatic given the need to rapidly deliver the stimulus programs.

	Recommendation: Data collection for future voucher programs should include information on user income to inform evaluation and policy design.
21.	The value of D&D and Parents vouchers appeared to be more effective in influencing consumer behaviour than the value of the Stay vouchers. Recommendation: Determine the value of vouchers in the context of the standard cost of the goods or services being targeted. Vouchers with a low face value relative to the typical purchase price are likely to achieve lower registration and redemption rates. Vouchers with a higher face value relative to the typical purchase price may result in lower out-of-pocket spending. Consideration of voucher value should take into account the potential multiplier effect on consumer spending.
22.	Providing multiple D&D vouchers was appropriate to achieving the policy intent as consumers were encouraged to make separate transactions in order to get the full value. Dividing the Parents program across five separate vouchers, and allowing pooling of vouchers, encouraged uptake and redemption among eligible residents. However, it may have affected the extent of additional out-of-pocket spending. Given the low value of the Stay voucher, providing one Stay voucher did not encourage uptake among NSW residents. Recommendation: Determine the number of vouchers provided and flexibility of voucher use in the context of the specific sectors being targeted having regard to consumer behaviour and spending patterns.
23.	The cliff marginal rate of reimbursement structure was aligned with other voucher programs. It was an appropriate structure given resident familiarity and experience with implementation. This structure may have affected resident incentives, the programs' ability to achieve their policy intent, the effectiveness, and the efficiency of the programs. Recommendation: Examine different options for the marginal rate of reimbursement structure of future voucher programs, having regard to the policy intent and specific context in which the program is being designed.

IMPLEMENTATION: Was the program implemented appropriately and effectively?

The evaluation examined the processes and activities involved in implementing the voucher programs. Overall, the evaluation finds the voucher programs were implemented appropriately and effectively. The below summarises the findings and recommendations of the evaluation of the voucher programs' implementation.

Were there appropriate governance arrangements and processes to design, establish and implement the programs?	
24.	The rapidly evolving circumstances meant standard processes for designing a program were streamlined. The NSW Government perceived a need to roll the programs out quickly in order to encourage consumers to get out and about and spending in a COVID-safe manner. This was appropriate to the circumstances.
25.	The NSW Government considered and relied upon on relevant information and experience to develop the program. This included previous NSW Government experience in designing and administering voucher programs, and international uses of voucher programs to stimulate consumer spending during COVID-19.
26.	The NSW Government viewed that it was necessary to establish the D&D program quickly. The program was established through an expedited approval process. This was appropriate given the circumstances.
27.	Governance arrangements were appropriate, with advisory and oversight committees convened to help establish the programs.
28.	NSW Government processes to implement the voucher programs were adaptive and reactive to changing circumstances. In some instances, approval processes were expedited.

Recommendation: Document key lessons, findings and processes for all voucher programs to inform future initiatives.

To what extent was the program implemented as intended? Was it implemented within intended timeframes and costs?

29. The voucher programs were implemented as intended. The NSW Government rolled out the voucher programs' technology successfully. It adhered to the inputs and activities as intended by the voucher program logics.

30. The NSW Government worked collaboratively to design the voucher programs. NSW Treasury and Service NSW worked together closely to design and implement the voucher programs.

31. Service NSW implemented the Parents program expeditiously and under capacity constraints. Parents vouchers had different eligibility criteria which affected the product build. Edge cases created implementation issues for the Parents voucher program.
A Project Control Group was established when Stay and Parents programs were launched to help assess and address implementation issues.

32. The programs were implemented within or close to intended timeframes and within committed budgets. Timeframes shifted for reasons including NSW Government capacity constraints and evolving health and economic circumstances.

Recommendation: Efforts should be made to ensure relevant costs can be identified for large scale initiatives, to enable accurate and timely reporting, monitoring and evaluation.

To what extent was an appropriate data collection and evaluation framework established and implemented?

33. There was ongoing data collection and monitoring throughout each of the voucher programs. This assisted decision-making and facilitated evaluation.

There were some gaps and access issues in relation to data collected and no formal evaluation framework was established.

Given the circumstances, the level of monitoring was appropriate.

Recommendation: When setting up data collection frameworks, be mindful of the potential need to share disaggregated program data to facilitate evaluation. Privacy issues that might prohibit the collection or sharing of relevant program data for evaluation should be considered early. Where possible, this should be addressed in the monitoring and evaluation plan created during the program's design.

What is the degree of business and consumer satisfaction with the program's delivery?

34. Consultation and feedback received from businesses and consumers who participated in the voucher programs indicated a high level of satisfaction with the programs' delivery. Some issues were reported with registration and redemption but these were mostly mitigated early in the program's implementation.

Were risks identified and managed? Were there any unintended side-effects (positive or negative) of implementing the program?

35. The complaints monitoring element of the NSW Government's compliance framework did not work as intended. Few complaints were received from residents or businesses with respect to non-compliance in the programs.

36. The NSW Government sought to measure non-compliance of businesses participating in the D&D program through mystery shopping exercises. Of those audited, many businesses were found to be non-compliant. 48% were accepting vouchers for takeaway and 15% were not adhering to QR code requirements. Limited action was taken to remediate this beyond warning letters.

Recommendation: Dedicate resources to detecting and addressing non-compliance. Where compliance issues are identified, carefully consider the need for program changes, communications (broad or targeted) to program users, and stronger action to remediate.

Recommendation: Ensure terms and conditions are clearly communicated to program users. Where possible, communicate to the public the measures that will be taken to detect, investigate and action non-compliance by all program users.

37.	A consequence of the original design of the D&D program was that it incentivised consumers and businesses to dine out in a way that was contrary to NSW Health advice following the Delta outbreak. This was a known potential consequence of the D&D program as outbreaks of COVID-19 could not be foreseen. The NSW Government identified the incentive problem and reacted by changing the program's scope.
38.	An unintended consequence of the implementation of the programs was that it created more benefit for individuals or businesses with higher levels of digital literacy. Some action was taken to remediate, including making vouchers available to residents through non-digital formats.
39.	An unintended consequence of the design of the programs was that it created more benefit for individuals and businesses in metropolitan areas.
	Recommendation: In designing policy interventions, policymakers should be cognisant of how accessibility, awareness and take-up in different demographic groups may be affected by mechanism design. Consider tailoring mechanism design, such as incentives and support structures for regional or remote areas, to account for geographical differences and ensure equitable outcomes.
40.	The value of the Stay vouchers may have affected ability to redeem. Individuals with higher disposable incomes are more likely to be able to afford to pay the difference between the voucher value and the purchase value. This has equity implications.
To what extent was the program adapted to account for changing circumstances through its lifetime?	
41.	The NSW Government demonstrated its ability to adapt to changing COVID-19 conditions to ensure the voucher programs remained relevant and effective.
42.	The NSW Government demonstrated its ability to monitor and adapt to ongoing feedback to ensure the voucher programs remained relevant and effective.

EFFECTIVENESS: Did the program lead to its intended outputs and outcomes?

Residents and businesses both needed to participate in the voucher programs for them to be effective. To achieve this, the programs needed to have high reach and accessibility. They also needed to encourage spending, which relied on getting people out and about.

The evaluation examines the effectiveness of the voucher programs in the context of their reach and accessibility and the extent to which they resulted in consumer spending, business revenue, and getting people out and about. The below summarises the findings of the evaluation of the voucher programs' effectiveness.

To what extent did the program reach intended audiences, both businesses and individuals? To what extent did audiences access the program? To what extent did reach and access vary between groups with different geographic, demographic and socioeconomic characteristics?	
43.	Awareness of the D&D program was high among NSW residents, particularly at the start and end of the D&D program. The NSW Government rolled out a dedicated marketing campaign for the D&D program. Awareness was relatively low for the Stay program according to survey data. The Stay program did not have a dedicated marketing campaign but received more media attention relative to the other programs. A dedicated marketing campaign may have contributed to higher awareness the Stay program. People with school-aged children were more likely to be aware of the Parents program. Among the general population, awareness of the Parents program was low.
44.	The D&D program exceeded its registration and redemption targets set by the NSW Government.

	The degree of reach and access varied with geographic and demographic factors. D&D registration and redemption was higher in metropolitan areas than regional and remote areas. Older people and people with a disability were less likely to register for and redeem D&D vouchers. While culturally and linguistically diverse residents were less likely to register for the D&D program, they redeemed their vouchers at a higher rate.
45.	The Stay program failed to meet its registration and redemption targets. The key reason for this was a lack of awareness, followed by insufficient voucher value. This is despite the Stay vouchers receiving more media attention relative to the other vouchers. Some residents reported a lack of available businesses at which to redeem vouchers and/or no interest in travel. Older people and people with a disability were less likely to register for Stay.
46.	The Parents program did not meet its registration target but did meet its redemption target. Most eligible survey respondents were aware of the program. Some residents had difficulty registering. Parents living in major cities were more likely to redeem their vouchers than parents living in regional or remote areas. Parents who were younger (40 years old or younger) and those who spoke English as a first language were more likely to report having redeemed any vouchers.
47.	There is no clear relationship observed between voucher redemption and income at the LGA level. Individual level data was not available to enable a detailed assessment of the effect of socioeconomic factors on reach and access.
48.	The extent of reach and access to the voucher programs by businesses is difficult to examine with the data available. Some businesses reported having difficulties registering for the voucher program. Service NSW provided resources and assistance to help businesses register for the programs.
To what extent did the program result in increased consumer spending and business revenue?	
49.	Mobility data indicates some correlation between the voucher programs and getting people out and about. However, other factors contributed to mobility over the life of the voucher programs. It is unclear to what extent the voucher programs caused people to go out based on footfall traffic.
50.	Survey respondents reported that they went out more as a result of the three voucher programs. They reported spending more money as a result of the Stay and Parents voucher programs than they would have otherwise. Less than half reported spending more money as a result of the D&D program.
51.	Some residents who redeemed their vouchers would have gone out and spent money without the vouchers. Around 50% of those surveyed under the age of 65 reported that they went out more because of the D&D vouchers. Evidence indicates that elderly residents were more hesitant to go out and redeem their vouchers due to ongoing COVID-19 concern. It is unclear to what extent the vouchers themselves got people out and spending compared to the easing of restrictions and increased vaccination rates.
52.	The voucher programs resulted in increased consumer and business revenue in targeted sectors. The total value of transactions for Dine vouchers was high, but Dine vouchers were associated with low additional consumer spend (\$0.59 per dollar of voucher redeemed) relative to other vouchers. Discover vouchers were associated with \$0.76 of additional spend for every dollar of voucher redeemed. Parents vouchers were associated with \$1.33 of additional spend for every dollar of voucher redeemed. Stay vouchers resulted in the greatest increase in consumer spend (and business revenue) with \$2.53 of additional spend for every dollar of voucher redeemed.
53.	Additional spending for Dine was concentrated in metropolitan areas of NSW and was highest in inner Sydney LGAs. For Discover, Stay and Parents vouchers, additional spending was more widely dispersed across the State.
54.	Voucher programs which target spending in sectors associated with infrequent and higher value purchases appear more likely to drive additional expenditure, compared to highly frequent purchases like dining out.

55.	The value of vouchers redeemed for each program as a proportion of total industry spend in the associated sectors was generally low. The total transaction value where a Parents voucher was used over the life of the program was less than 1% of total expenditure on recreation and culture and accommodation. The total value of transactions where a Dine or Discover voucher was used represents around 1.2% of total expenditure in the targeted sectors. The total value of transactions where a Stay voucher was used represents approximately 5.5% of total spending.
56.	The D&D program was most effective at encouraging spending in its first months of implementation. In May 2021, the proportion of D&D voucher transactions to total spend on food and beverages was relatively high (3.4%). The value of vouchers redeemed as a proportion of total spending increased at the end of each program's life as people used their vouchers prior to their expiry.
57.	Dine vouchers were redeemed at a variety of hospitality venues including cafes, restaurants, pubs and clubs and takeaway businesses. Survey data indicates that 59% of Dine vouchers were redeemed at cafés and restaurants. Discover vouchers were redeemed at businesses including cinemas, zoos, aquariums and amusement parks. 50% of Discover vouchers were redeemed at cinemas. 77% of Stay vouchers were redeemed at hotels or motels. Stay vouchers were also redeemed at accommodation providers such as caravan parks and holiday rentals. Over 70% of Parents vouchers were spent at Discover businesses rather than Stay businesses.
To what extent did the program result in people confidently and safely getting out and about and spending in a COVID-safe way?	
58.	The voucher programs influenced some residents' decision to get out and about and spend in a COVID-safe way. In a survey of NSW residents, respondents reported that the voucher programs made them feel confident that it was COVID-safe to go out and/or travel, when restrictions permitted.
59.	Residents and businesses were generally compliant with COVID-safe regulations and observed COVID-safe practices when redeeming their vouchers. It was more difficult for residents to be COVID-safe in instances where businesses did not do best-practice integration or comply with QR code requirements.

EFFICIENCY: Did the program deliver outcomes relative to cost?

The evaluation assessed the financial benefits and costs of the voucher programs, quantitatively and/or qualitatively. It then assessed the voucher programs' value for money by comparing the net benefits of the programs to a case where the programs did not exist.

The below summarises the findings of the evaluation of the voucher programs' efficiency.

Where were the financial costs and benefits of the program?	
What were the social costs and benefits of the program?	
60.	The total value of transactions where a voucher was used was \$1.34 billion, of which \$759 million was paid for using vouchers funded by the NSW Government. The voucher programs may have stimulated spending in transactions where a voucher was not used. This additional spending cannot be quantified. Difference-in-difference modelling is a common analytical technique for evaluating the impact of policy interventions like the voucher programs. However, program data and methodological limitations prohibited the evaluation from relying on difference-in-difference modelling results.
61.	The total value of consumer surplus across the programs is \$798.4 million. Dine supported more consumer surplus than any other program (\$377.8 million), followed by Discover (\$266.5 million), Parents (\$120 million) and Stay (\$45.2 million).
62.	The total value of producer surplus across the programs is \$182.8 million.

	<p>The Dine program supported the highest amount of producer surplus (\$66.2 million), followed by Discover (\$59.7 million). The Parents program supported \$36.1 million in producer surplus. Stay supported the lowest total producer surplus, at \$20.8 million.</p>
63.	<p>The voucher programs created a range of benefits for the broader community (these benefits have not been quantified in the cost-benefit analysis result).</p> <p>The programs encouraged people to get out and about and spend in a COVID-safe way, while reinforcing compliance with Public Health Orders.</p> <p>The voucher programs instilled a level of confidence among consumers and businesses which is likely to have influenced their spending decisions.</p> <p>Some Parents voucher users reported feeling supported by the NSW Government as a result of the vouchers in line with the policy intent.</p>
64.	<p>The D&D voucher program incurred higher costs for the NSW Government to implement than the Stay or Parents programs. Dine vouchers cost \$340 million and Discover vouchers cost \$247 million. This reflects the relatively high redemption of D&D vouchers among the NSW population. The D&D program was more costly to implement and operate than Stay or Parents. This reflects the D&D program being the first of the three voucher programs to be stood up, and its relatively long duration.</p>
65.	<p>In addition to the costs incurred by the NSW Government, the voucher programs created broader costs that are not quantified.</p> <p>The programs created opportunity costs associated with allocating government resources to the voucher programs and foregoing other initiatives. Consumers and businesses also reallocated resources towards the voucher programs, which may have been inefficient.</p> <p>There was a degree of inequity in the distribution of benefits associated with the voucher programs.</p> <p>Businesses incurred costs to participate in the voucher programs such as implementing COVID-safe measures, integrating the voucher technology and acquiring the tools and skills required to accept vouchers.</p>
<p>To what extent did the benefits of the programs outweigh the costs?</p>	
66.	<p>The benefit-cost ratio (BCR) for each voucher program is calculated based on two counterfactuals: one where all spending associated with the vouchers is additional, and one where no spending is additional. The result is presented as a range. It is likely that some proportion of spending associated with the vouchers would have occurred in the absence of the voucher programs. As such, the BCR is likely to fall somewhere within the range.</p> <p>The BCR for the Dine program is between 0.83 and 0.98.</p> <p>The BCR for the Discover program is between 0.83 and 1.01.</p> <p>The BCR for the Stay program is between 0.78 and 1.14.</p> <p>The BCR of the Parents program is between 0.82 and 1.06.</p>
67.	<p>Consumers in metropolitan areas received more benefit from the voucher programs relative to other areas of NSW.</p> <p>Consumers in metropolitan LGAs received a higher share of each program's total consumer surplus than consumers in regional or remote LGAs. Metropolitan LGAs received between 77% and 83% of the total consumer surplus. Consumers in metropolitan LGAs received a slightly higher share of consumer surplus for Dine, Discover and Parents relative to their share of the population. Consumers in remote LGAs received a lower share of consumer surplus (3%) for Dine, Discover and Parents relative to their share of the population (4%).</p> <p>The distribution of consumer surplus associated with Stay voucher was more even across NSW. Consumer surplus from Stay vouchers in regional and remote LGAs represented 19% and 4% of the total consumer surplus for the Stay program, respectively. This is closely proportionate to the spread of the NSW adult population which is approximately 18% regional and 4% remote.</p> <p>Across all areas, Dine and Discover vouchers were associated with the highest average consumer surplus, followed by Parents and Stay vouchers.</p>

68.

Businesses in metropolitan areas received more benefit from the voucher programs relative to other areas of NSW.

Businesses in metropolitan LGAs received a higher share of each program's total producer surplus than those in other parts of NSW. Discover businesses in metropolitan LGAs received 88% of the total producer surplus for Discover. Businesses in remote LGAs received just 1% of Discover's producer surplus.

Producer surplus supported by the Stay program was relatively evenly distributed between metropolitan and regional LGAs. Businesses in metropolitan and regional LGAs received 59% and 37% of the total producer surplus for the Stay program, respectively. This reflects the redemption of Stay vouchers being more evenly distributed across the State.

1 Background

The COVID-19 pandemic was an unprecedented health, social and economic crisis. It affected all aspects of our society and economy.

The Australian, state and territory governments reacted to the health crisis with a raft of interventions:

- The Australian Government imposed restrictions on international travel
- State-based Public Health Orders aimed to contain the spread of the virus by restricting activity and movement.

These restrictions, as well as broader social concern and a fall in consumer confidence, caused business activity and consumer spending to plummet. This was particularly the case for businesses in the hospitality, arts and entertainment sectors that were unable to open as a result of restrictions imposed by the NSW Government. In addition, travel restrictions and border closures impacted businesses in the accommodation sector.

The Australian and state and territory governments responded to the economic crisis with a range of economic support measures.² States and territories were largely responsible for implementing economic response and recovery measures to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in their regions. However, there were instances throughout the pandemic where the NSW Government supplemented the economic support measures implemented by the Australian Government such as supports for international students. Some interventions were co-funded by the Australian and NSW Government (see Australia and NSW during the COVID-19 pandemic). Some of the measures introduced by the NSW Government were the 'voucher programs', specifically:

- Dine & Discover NSW
- Stay NSW
- Parents NSW.

1.1 Australia and NSW during the COVID-19 pandemic

1.1.1 The first cases of COVID-19 in 2020

Australia reported its first cases of COVID-19 on 25 January 2020. The first death from COVID-19 in Australia was reported on 1 March 2020. The first recorded case of community transmission was reported the following day.

After the first recorded case, reported COVID-19 cases increased rapidly.

In response, the Australian Government implemented border closures and public health restrictions. These limited non-essential travel and activities. The NSW Government followed soon after, implementing public health restrictions in line with the Australian Government. These were implemented in stages beginning from 15 March.

After public health restrictions were imposed in 2020, the number of new COVID-19 cases reported daily stabilised, and then decreased.

Restrictions in NSW began to ease from 28 April. From 1 July, most restrictions were eased but COVID-Safe rules were introduced.³

² The stimulus measures outlined in this section do not comprise an exhaustive list of supports implemented by the Australian and NSW state government.

³ NSW Government, 'Media Release: Further COVID-19 restrictions set to ease from 1 July', 14 June 2020.

The Australian and NSW Government introduced economic support measures to alleviate some of the immediate economic impacts of the public health restrictions. These are outlined in Figure 1.1, Figure 1.2 and Figure 1.3, which outline key moments in the economic and public health responses of the Australian and NSW Government in 2020, 2021 and 2022.

The primary interventions introduced by the Australian Government in 2020 in response to the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic were the JobKeeper program and adding a Coronavirus Supplement to the JobSeeker program.

The JobKeeper program was originally intended to end on 27 September 2020, but was extended to 28 March 2021. The initial \$550 per fortnight Coronavirus Supplement within the JobSeeker payment was reduced to \$250 from 2 September 2020, and \$150 from 1 January 2021. It was reduced to zero from 31 March 2021.⁴

1.1.2 Delta outbreak in June 2021

On 16 June 2021, NSW reported its first case of the COVID-19 Delta strain. Following this, COVID-19 cases in NSW increased rapidly. Over the following weeks and months, the NSW Government imposed strict public health restrictions across the State. This included stay-at-home orders for residents in various parts of NSW including Greater Sydney, where residents were required to stay at home except for essential reasons. Travel restrictions were imposed, limiting movement between regions. Non-essential businesses were restricted from opening, including entertainment venues, gyms, cinemas and restaurants. In August 2021, the NSW Government introduced a restriction whereby Greater Sydney residents could only move within five kilometres of their home. Tighter restrictions remained in place for areas of high concern.

In October 2021, public health restrictions across NSW were eased as the State hit double-dose vaccination targets.

These public health restrictions caused significant declines in business and consumer activity, in particular for those businesses in the hospitality, arts, and recreation sectors who were forced to limit their operations, and for accommodation businesses.

The NSW Government introduced a range of economic support measures in response to the Delta outbreak, some of which were co-funded with the Australian Government. In particular, in July 2021, the NSW Government introduced the JobSaver program, co-funded 50% by the Australian Government. The program objective was to help businesses save jobs to support the economy following the lifting of restrictions.

The following timelines outline key moments in the Australian and NSW Government's economic and public health response as COVID-19 cases fluctuated and outbreaks occurred.

⁴ Parliament of Australia, 'Changes to the COVID-19 social security measures: a brief assessment', [July 2020](#); Australian Government, 'Extension of additional income support for individuals', [November 2020](#).

Figure 1.1: Timeline of COVID-19 events in 2020

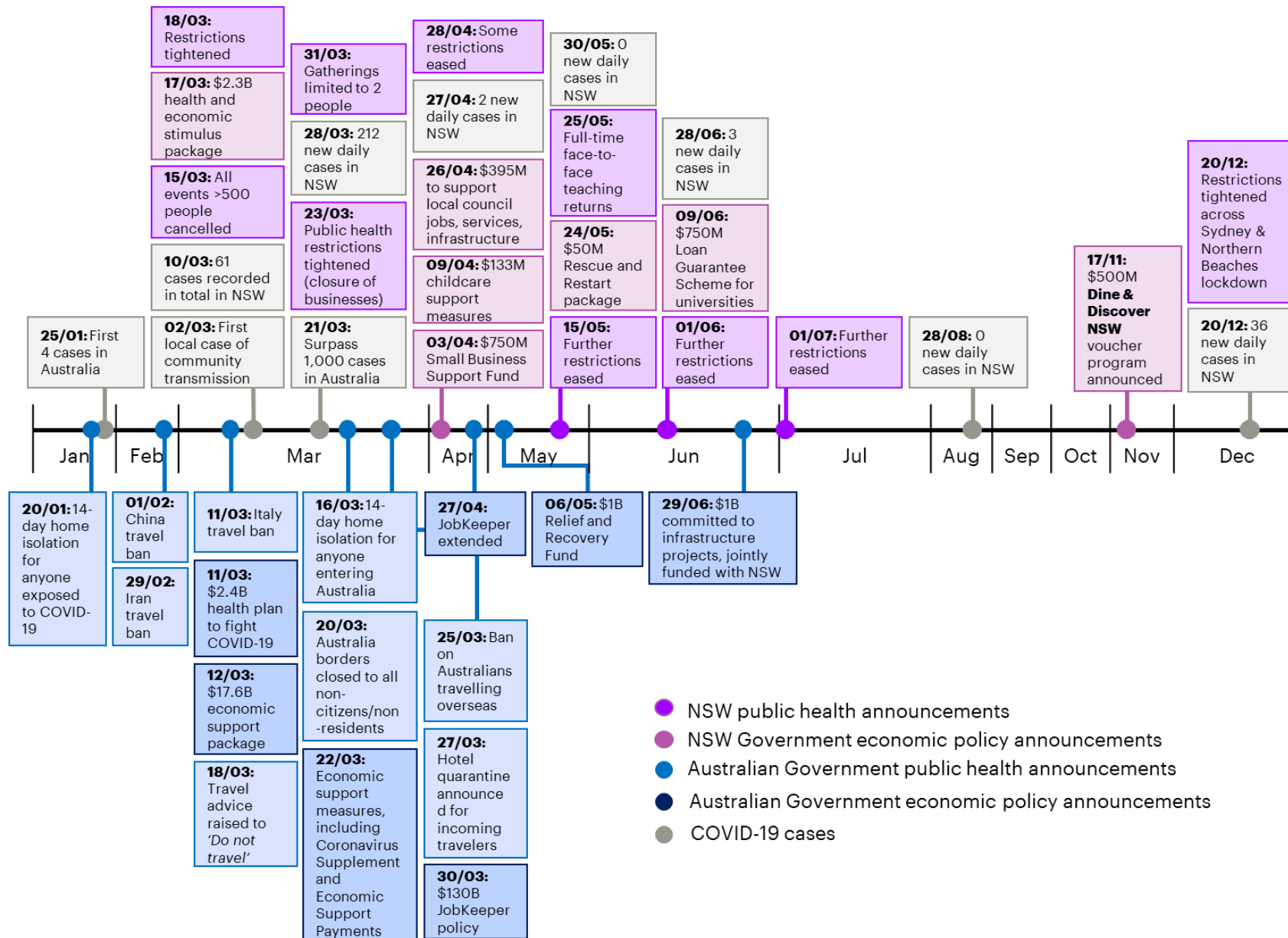


Figure 1.2: Timeline of COVID-19 events in 2021

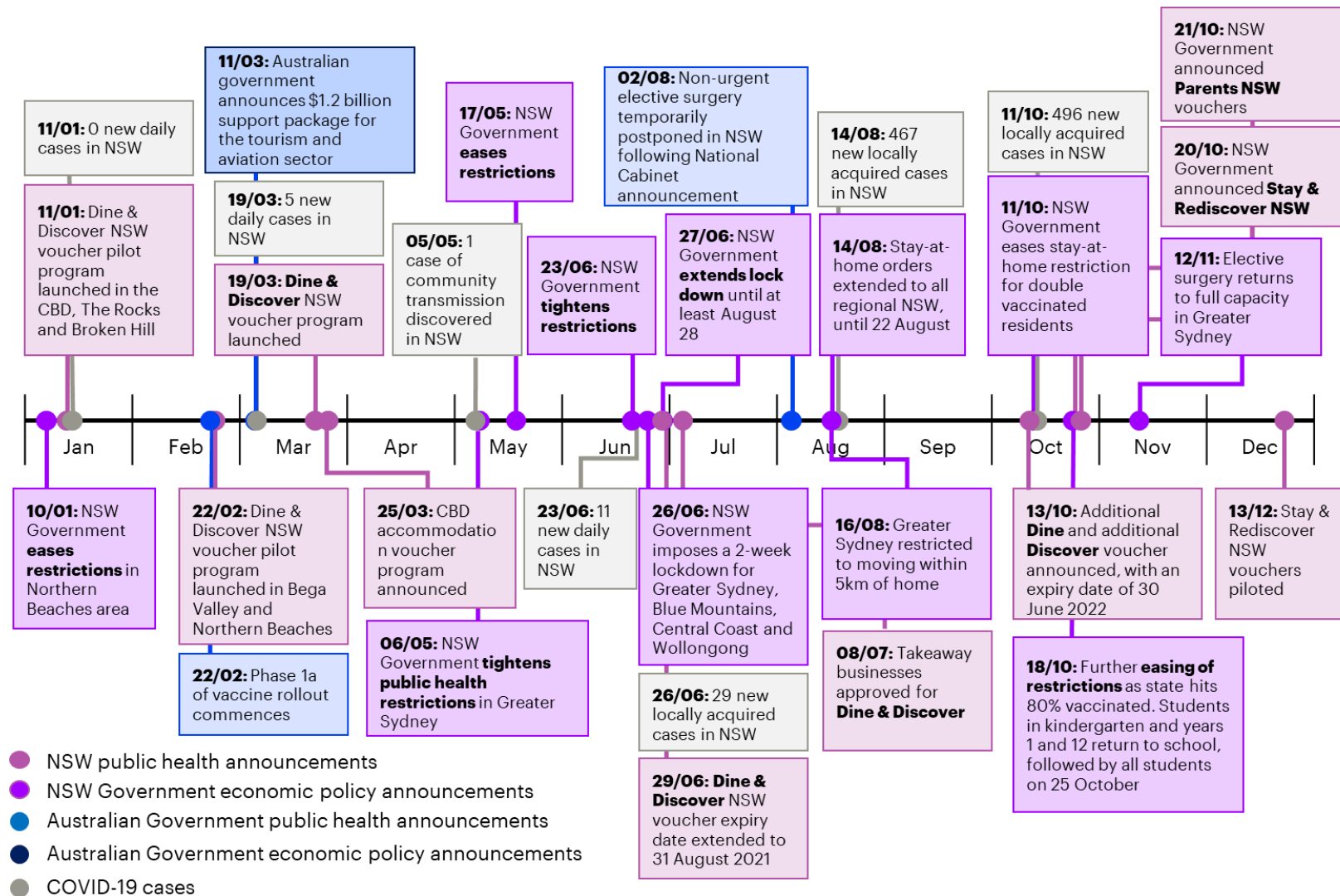
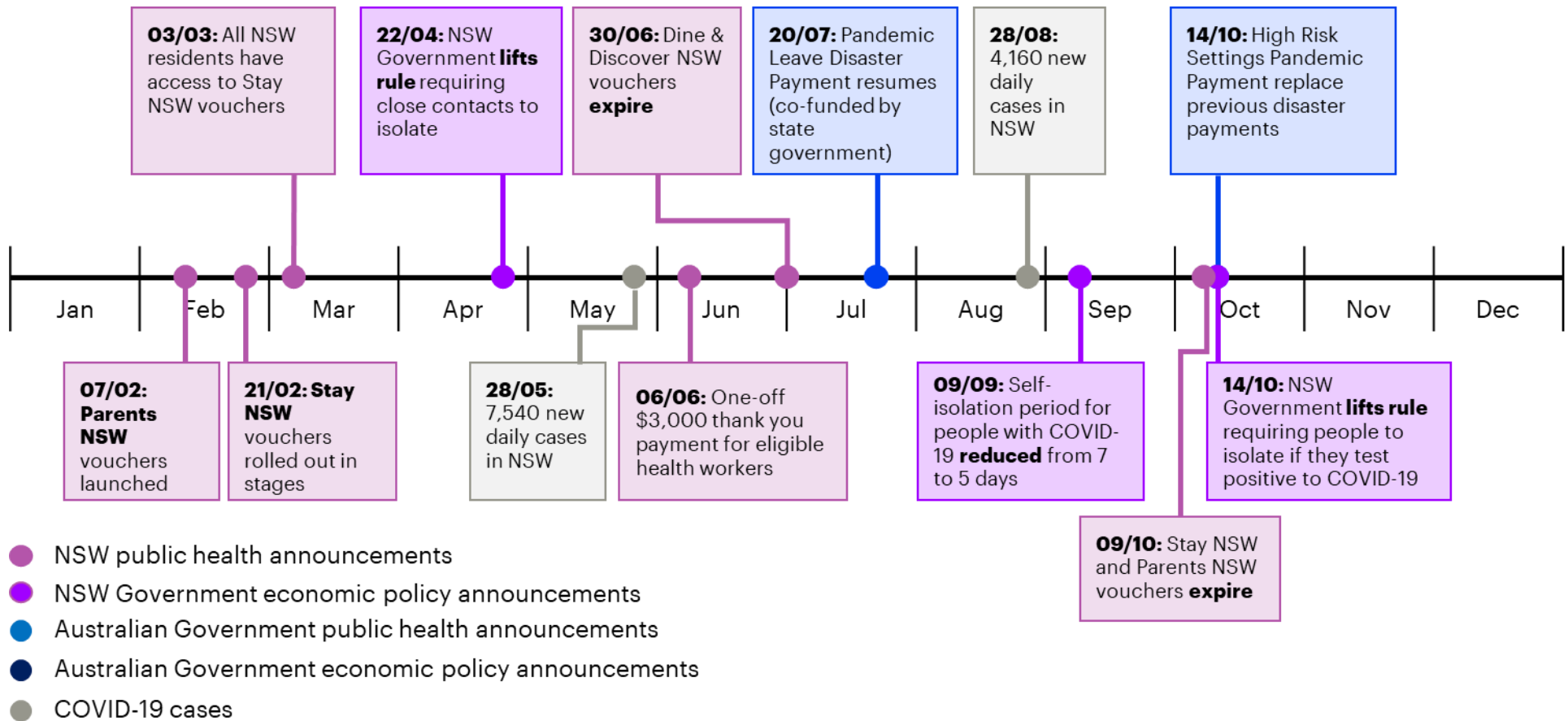


Figure 1.3: Timeline of COVID-19 events in 2022



1.2 The Voucher programs

Over the course of late 2020 and early 2022, the NSW Government announced and launched three separate voucher programs broadly intended to:

- support businesses impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic
- stimulate consumer spending
- support a strong, resilient and diverse NSW economy.

1.2.1 Dine & Discover NSW

In November 2020, the NSW Government announced the \$500 million Dine & Discover NSW voucher program (then named 'Out and About') (**D&D program**).

Under the D&D program, NSW residents aged 18 and over were offered:

- two \$25 'Dine' vouchers to spend in food service (i.e. 'Dine') businesses in NSW
- two \$25 'Discover' vouchers to spend in arts and recreation (i.e. 'Discover') businesses in NSW.

The D&D voucher program was piloted in February 2021. From 19 March 2021, the D&D program was gradually rolled out across local government areas (LGAs), with residents receiving an email notification letting them know when they could register.

The D&D program was initially designed such that Dine vouchers could not be used on weekends, based on NSW Health advice to avoid encouraging large groups of people coming together. On 25 March 2021, the NSW Government changed the D&D policy provisions to allow both Dine and Discover vouchers to be used any day of the week including weekends and public holidays. This change was based on NSW Health advice that due to low case numbers in NSW there was no longer a concern about crowding on weekends or public holidays.⁵

The Dine vouchers could be spent at participating hospitality venues including cafes, restaurants, pubs, wineries, clubs and bars, while Discover vouchers could be spent at a range of entertainment venues for activities such as live music events, cinemas, amusement parks or art shows. They could not be redeemed for alcohol, gambling, tobacco, cash, or online-only services and food delivery orders.

Residents were initially limited to using their Dine vouchers for dine-in service only. In July 2021 the NSW Government expanded this to takeaway food services (with the exception of third-party delivery services). This was to manage concerns around COVID safety during the Delta outbreak and to ensure that the vouchers were not being used in a way that conflicted with Public Health Orders.⁶

The policy intent behind the D&D program was to incentivise consumer spending and support businesses impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, the program was aimed at mitigating the economic impacts of the pandemic on businesses in the hospitality, arts and recreation and tourism sectors, as well as on the State's economy as a whole (see Voucher program logic).⁷

The D&D vouchers were initially due to expire on 30 June 2021. However, on 31 May 2021 the NSW Government extended the expiry date until 31 July 2021, to allow vouchers to be redeemed over the winter school holiday period. In June 2021, at the start of the onset of the Delta outbreak, the NSW Government extended the D&D program expiry to 31 August 2021. This policy change was in line with tightening government restrictions in response to the Delta outbreak, under which residents would not have been able to use their vouchers. It also alleviated pressure on Service NSW service centres and call

⁵ NSW Government D&D Policy Guidelines.

⁶ NSW Government D&D Policy Guidelines

⁷ Service NSW and Treasury governance documents.

centres as residents wanted information on the voucher programs while subject to stay at home orders. In August, the D&D program expiry date was again extended to 30 June 2022. This was for the same reasons as the previous extension, with the additional intent of avoiding the impression that restrictions would be eased at the previously planned expiry date. In October 2021, as NSW hit its double vaccination targets and public health restrictions were eased, the NSW Government announced that residents would receive one additional Dine voucher and one additional Discover voucher. This represented a \$250 million expansion of the D&D program and was announced as part of the NSW Government's Economic Recovery Strategy.⁸ All unused D&D vouchers ultimately expired on 30 June 2022.

1.2.2 Stay NSW

On 24 March 2021, the NSW Government announced that it would be offering 200,000 vouchers to NSW residents of \$100 each to use against the cost of accommodation bookings. This was called the Stay and Rediscover program. The purpose of this program was to incentivise consumers to stay in the Sydney CBD through accommodation vouchers, to boost economic activity in the CBD and increase business activity for CBD accommodation providers.

The government had planned to roll out these vouchers to consumers in mid-July 2021, following a short pilot program. In June 2021, business registration opened for the accommodation voucher programs.⁹ However, due to the outbreak of the Delta variant of COVID-19 and subsequent public health restrictions imposed on NSW residents from June 2021 onwards, the NSW Government did not launch the accommodation voucher program.

In October 2021, following the easing of public health restrictions as the State reached vaccination targets, the NSW Government announced a \$250 million Stay NSW voucher program (**Stay program**), as part of its Economic Recovery Strategy.¹⁰ The Stay program redesigned the previously announced accommodation voucher program. Under the Stay program, eligible individuals could register for and redeem one \$50 voucher to spend in accommodation businesses across NSW. Vouchers could be accepted online or in-person by businesses registered as accommodation providers. They could not be redeemed through the Airbnb platform, online accommodation booking platforms, or at travel agents.

The intent of the Stay program was to support accommodation businesses impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic (see Voucher program logic). The program aimed to incentivise discretionary travel across NSW, with associated benefits in other sectors as travellers would also consume meals, entertainment, parking, transport and other related goods and services.¹¹

The Stay program was piloted from December 2021. It was subsequently rolled out in stages to local government areas from 21 February 2022. Stay vouchers expired on 9 October 2022.

1.2.3 Parents NSW

In October 2021, the NSW Government announced a \$192 million Parents NSW voucher program (**Parents program**) as part of its Economic Recovery Strategy.¹² Under the Parents program, each household with a school-enrolled child in NSW could register for and redeem five \$50 vouchers to spend in arts, tourism, and recreation (i.e. 'Discover') and accommodation (i.e. 'Stay') businesses in NSW.

Each voucher could be used separately, or multiple vouchers could be used for the same purchase. As with Discover and Stay vouchers, Parents vouchers could not be used at a business providing adult entertainment, or used for Airbnb, online accommodation booking platforms and travel agents. One set of five \$50 vouchers was provided per eligible household, irrespective of the number of school-enrolled children.¹³

⁸ NSW Government, 2021, [COVID-19 Economic Recovery Strategy](#)

⁹ Service NSW Accommodation Voucher Kick-off Pack.

¹⁰ NSW Government, 2021, [COVID-19 Economic Recovery Strategy](#)

¹¹ Service NSW and Treasury, Extended Stay & Rediscover Voucher Program Policy Guidelines

¹² NSW Government, 2021, [COVID-19 Economic Recovery Strategy](#)

¹³ Where the school-enrolled child had parents or carers at separate addresses, and resides at both addresses, both households were eligible for the full set of vouchers (assessed on a case-by-case basis).

The intent of the Parents program was to reward and thank eligible NSW households for their efforts to support learning from home in 2021 (see Voucher program logic). The vouchers also aimed to encourage households to get out and about and help support NSW accommodation businesses and businesses participating in the Discover voucher program to recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁴

The Parents program was launched on 6 February 2022, ahead of the March 2022 launch date announced in the NSW COVID-19 Economic Recovery Strategy.¹⁵ No pilot program was conducted prior to the launch of the Parents program. Parents vouchers expired on 9 October 2022.

1.3 Voucher program logic

The NSW Government developed a logic model for each of the voucher programs, intended to illustrate how each initiative was intended to work by setting out inputs, activities, and outputs, and linking these with outcomes.

A program logic for each voucher program was provided to Accenture by NSW Treasury on 12 December, 2022. The program logics were prepared by NSW Treasury. The program logics were developed based on the policy guidelines and NSW Treasury’s advice to the State government on the approval and delivery of the programs. Accenture was not involved in developing these documents. Further discussion on the history of the evaluation is in History of the evaluation.

1.3.1 Dine & Discover NSW

Table 1.1 sets out the stated policy intent of the D&D program, and related state outcomes.

Table 1.1: Dine & Discover NSW program policy intent

Policy intent	<p>To incentivise consumer spending and support businesses impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>The intended program outcome was to mitigate the economic impacts of the pandemic on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> businesses in the hospitality, arts and recreation and tourism sectors by increasing customers and consumer spend, and the State’s economy as a whole, by stimulating the economy to ensure quicker overall recovery than would have occurred without the program.
Related state outcomes	A strong, resilient and diverse economy.

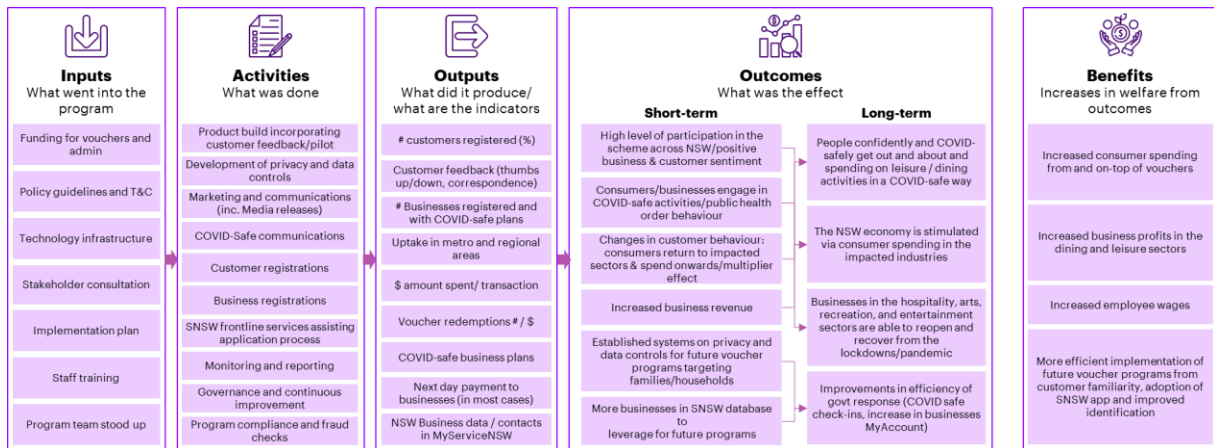
Source: NSW Treasury, 12 December 2022

The D&D program logic is outlined in Figure 1.4.

Figure 1.4: Dine & Discover NSW program logic

¹⁴ NSW Treasury, Parent NSW Voucher Guidelines

¹⁵ NSW Government, 2021, [COVID-19 Economic Recovery Strategy](#)



Source: NSW Treasury, 12 December 2022

1.3.2 Stay NSW

Table 1.2 sets out the stated policy intent of the Stay NSW program, and related state outcomes.

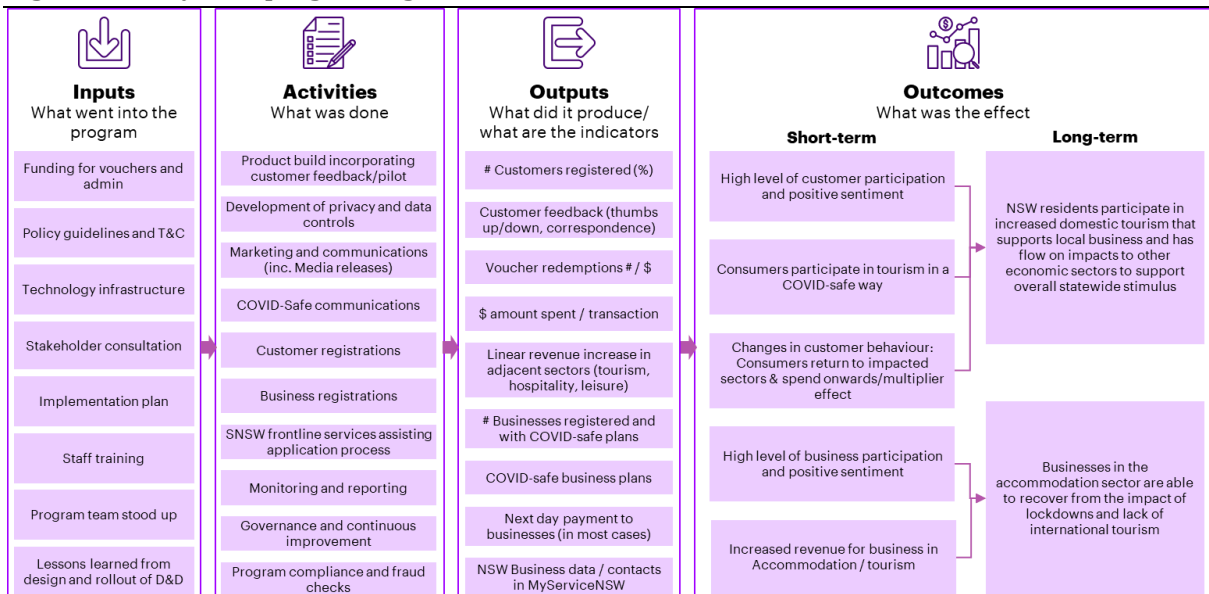
Table 1.2: Stay NSW program policy intent

Policy intent	To help support accommodation providers in NSW impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
Related state outcomes	A strong, resilient and diverse economy.

Source: NSW Treasury, 9 December 2022

The Stay NSW program logic is outlined in Figure 1.5.

Figure 1.5: Stay NSW program logic



Source: NSW Treasury, 12 December 2022

1.3.3 Parents NSW

Table 1.3 sets out the stated policy intent of the Parents NSW program, and related state outcomes.

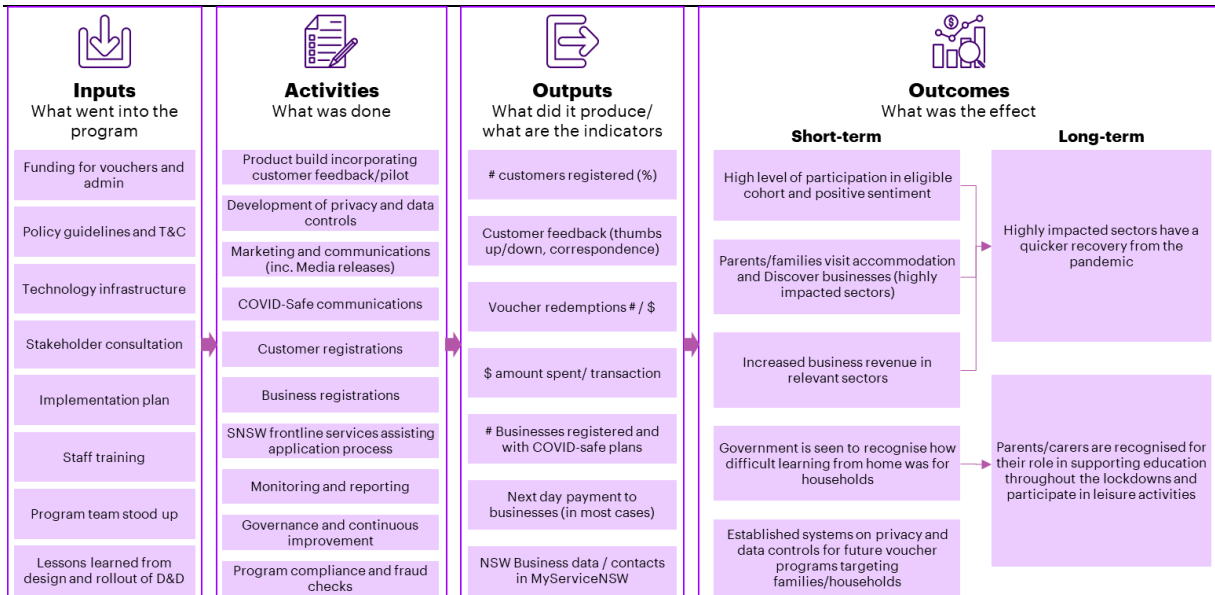
Table 1.3: Parents NSW program policy intent

Policy intent	To reward and thank eligible households for their efforts to support learning from home in 2021.
Related state outcomes	A strong, resilient and diverse economy.

Source: NSW Treasury, 12 December 2022

The Parents NSW program logic is outlined in Figure 1.6.

Figure 1.6: Parents NSW program logic



Source: NSW Treasury, 12 December 2022

2 Evaluation context

2.1 Reason for the evaluation

The voucher programs were large and complex:

- total expenditure over the life of the programs was around \$788 million¹⁶
- they required cooperation between agencies
- they required resources and cooperation across multiple teams within Service NSW¹⁷
- they were designed and implemented quickly, in the context of an unprecedented and quickly evolving health and economic crisis.

NSW Government evaluation guidelines require that initiatives resourced by the NSW Government are regularly examined. Government departments, agencies or organisations must prioritise evaluation of new and ongoing initiatives of 'significant size, government priority, and risk'.¹⁸

This evaluation assesses the effectiveness of the programs in achieving State Outcomes. This assessment will help to develop an evidence base of 'what works' in NSW with respect to stimulus and voucher programs.¹⁹ It is intended to ultimately inform future decision-making.

2.2 History of the evaluation

When the programs were conceived, Service NSW and NSW Treasury discussed and agreed success indicators for the programs. These are set out in Figure 2.1.²⁰

Figure 2.1: Success indicators for NSW COVID-19 voucher programs

<p>Dine & Discover (D&D)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Uptake by 70% of eligible customers• Uptake by 65% of eligible businesses• 90% positive feedback from customers and businesses• Average response of 4 to feedback question on how much did the voucher influence your decision to go out• Average additional consumer spend of \$30 in addition to the value of the voucher in response to how much money did you spend• Increase in consumer activity as measured by macro-economic indicators (both during and after the scheme period)• 80% agreement from surveyed businesses that it improved their cashflow• 80% agreement from surveyed businesses that it has made their business more sustainable• 80% agreement from businesses surveyed 3 months after the scheme that it has had a lasting impact on their business revenue• Less than 10% of new COVID-19 cases during and in the 2 weeks after the scheme linked to business locations registered under the scheme
<p>Stay</p>

¹⁶ This figure includes cost of implementing and operating the voucher programs and cost of the vouchers (2023 Present Value). Program costs data provided by Service NSW and Treasury.

¹⁷ Service NSW explained that implementing the D&D program at times involved 10-15 product teams, as well as contractors and consultants (Service NSW consultation, April 2023).

¹⁸ NSW Treasury Policy and Guidelines: Evaluation TPG22-22, p.3

¹⁹ NSW Treasury Policy and Guidelines: Evaluation TPG22-22, p.7

²⁰ The same success metrics were applied for all three voucher programs, except for average customer spend targets.

- Registration by 65% of eligible customers
- Time taken to register is less than 2 days
- Registration for Program by 60% of eligible businesses
- 90% positive feedback from customers and businesses on experience of applying / redeeming.
- Average response of 60% to customer feedback question on how much did being able to use the voucher influence your decision to book accommodation in NSW
- 70% agreement from surveyed businesses that it improved their cashflow compared to their expected cashflow without the scheme
- Less than 5% of expenditure is subject to fraud

Parents

- 65% of eligible population registers
- 75% of registered customers use at least 3 of their vouchers
- Average response of 60% to customer feedback question on how much did being able to use the voucher influence your decision to book accommodation and/or participate in NSW
- 70% agreement from surveyed businesses that it improved their cashflow compared to their expected cashflow without the scheme
- Less than 5% of expenditure is subject to fraud

Source: Dine & Discover NSW Vouchers – Internal Policy Guidelines; Parents NSW Voucher Program Guidelines; Extended Stay and Rediscover Voucher Program Guidelines

Following the completion of the Dine & Discover (D&D) program in June and the Stay and Parents programs in October 2022, NSW Treasury and Service NSW sought to commission an independent ex-post evaluation. As part of this process, NSW Treasury and Service NSW designed key evaluation questions. These were framed around the success indicators.

NSW Treasury subsequently designed a program logic, which was sent to the evaluator on 12 December 2022. Minor refinements were made during the course of the evaluation.

While no formal evaluation plan was developed, there was ongoing monitoring of the program’s implementation and outcomes through:

- NSW Treasury and Service NSW daily stand-up meetings
- NSW Treasury Steering Committee meetings (internal)
- NSW Treasury and Service NSW COVID-19 Stimulus Package Steering Committee meetings
- NSW Treasury and Service NSW Project Control Group meetings
- regular reporting and updates to the Minister for Digital and Customer Service and Treasurer from November 2020 to November 2022.

The NSW Government released a Request for Quote on 16 September 2022. The evaluation commenced on 28 November 2022. Consultations with stakeholders were conducted between January 2023 and April 2023.

2.3 Evaluation stakeholders

This evaluation draws on insights from stakeholders in the voucher programs.

Stakeholder	Role in the programs	Involvement in the evaluation
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NSW Treasury	<p>Primary responsibility for voucher programs' policy development</p> <p>Ongoing monitoring</p>	<p>Consulted with the evaluator</p> <p>Provided relevant documentation produced prior to and throughout the programs</p> <p>Provided ongoing feedback on evaluation outputs</p>
Centre for Evidence and Evaluation	N/A	<p>Consulted with the evaluator to validate and refine the approach to economic modelling</p>
Service NSW	<p>Primary responsibility for the voucher programs' design and implementation</p>	<p>Consulted with the evaluator</p> <p>Provided voucher program (registration and redemption) and costs data</p> <p>Provided relevant documentation produced prior to and throughout the programs</p> <p>Facilitated workshops and surveys with internal and external stakeholders</p> <p>Provided ongoing feedback on evaluation outputs</p>
NSW businesses	<p>Access and receive vouchers</p>	<p>Selected businesses participated in interviews with the evaluator</p>
NSW customers	<p>Access and use vouchers</p>	<p>Engaged by the evaluator to participate in interviews, surveys and focus groups. See: Assessment of evaluation evidence</p>

3 Evaluation purpose and scope

3.1 Purpose of the evaluation

The COVID-19 pandemic was an unprecedented challenge. It necessitated swift and innovative responses by federal and state governments. The NSW Government's voucher program was a novel solution, devised and implemented at scale and pace. It was implemented alongside other response programs which affected the government's capacity to deliver.

The purpose of this evaluation is to:

- assess whether the voucher programs were warranted (at the time and in hindsight)
- examine the process of designing and implementing the programs
- assess the extent to which the programs achieved their intended outcomes and impacts
- understand any unintended consequences (positive or negative)
- capture any insights and lessons learned.

The evaluation aims ultimately to provide insights to inform evidence-based policy design and future decision making.²¹

3.2 Key evaluation questions

To guide the evaluation, a set of specific evaluation questions were developed in partnership with the NSW Government. The questions span four domains:

- relevance
- implementation
- effectiveness
- efficiency.

²¹ The purpose of this evaluation aligns with objectives articulated in Treasury's Request for Quote, dated 16 September 2022, and NSW Treasury Policy and Guidelines: Evaluation TPG22-22.

Table 3.1 sets out the key evaluation questions. The evaluation questions apply to each of the programs individually.

Table 3.1: Key evaluation questions

<p>Relevance</p> <p>Was the policy intent and mechanism relevant and appropriate to government and community priorities?</p> <p><i>Program logic reference: policy intent</i></p>	<p>A.1 Were the program’s policy intent and outcomes relevant and appropriate to creating a “strong, resilient and diverse economy”?</p> <p>A.2 To what extent was the particular design of the policy (including policy mechanism, timing and resourcing) appropriate for achieving the program’s policy intent and outcomes?</p> <p>A.3 Did the program remain relevant throughout its lifetime?</p>
<p>Implementation</p> <p>Was the program implemented appropriately and effectively?</p> <p><i>Program logic reference: inputs, activities, outputs</i></p>	<p>I.1 Were there appropriate governance arrangements and processes to design, establish and implement the program?</p> <p>I.2 To what extent was the program implemented as intended? Was it implemented within intended timeframes and costs?</p> <p>I.3 To what extent was an appropriate data collection and evaluation framework established and implemented?</p> <p>I.4 What is the degree of business and consumer satisfaction with the program’s delivery?</p> <p>I.5 Were risks identified and managed? Were there any unintended side-effects (positive or negative) of implementing the program?</p> <p>I.6 To what extent was the program adapted to account for changing circumstances through its lifetime?</p>
<p>Effectiveness</p> <p>Did the program lead to its intended outputs and outcomes?</p> <p><i>Program logic reference: outputs, outcomes</i></p>	<p>O.1 To what extent did the program reach intended audiences, both businesses and individuals? To what extent did audiences access the program?</p> <p>O.2 To what extent did reach and access vary between groups with different geographic, demographic and socioeconomic characteristics?</p> <p>O.3 To what extent did the program result in increased consumer spending?</p> <p>O.4 To what extent did the program result in increased business revenue?</p> <p>O.5 To what extent did the program result in people confidently and safely getting out and about and spending in a COVID-safe way?</p>
<p>Efficiency</p> <p>Did the program deliver outcomes relative to cost?</p> <p><i>Program logic reference: outputs, outcomes</i></p>	<p>E.1 What were the financial costs and benefits of the program?</p> <p>E.2 What were the social costs and benefits of the program?</p> <p>E.3 To what extent did the benefits of the program outweigh the costs?</p>






Source: Accenture and NSW Government

3.3 Evaluation design and methods

The evaluation plan used for this evaluation was designed by the evaluator after the programs were completed. The evaluation plan was thus retrofitted based on the data that was available as well as what could be collected ex post. See Implementation for further discussion.

The staging of the evaluation is pictured in Figure 3.1: Evaluation plan.

Figure 3.1: Evaluation plan

 Stages	 Project inception	EVALUATION				 Evaluation report
EVALUATION						
 Activities	<p>Project set-up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kick-off meeting Project planning Agreeing governance and approval processes Scheduling Agreeing on comparison groups to report differences in program outcomes Developing stakeholder engagement plan and schedule Conducting desktop research on the voucher program and context Designing evaluation framework <p>Data preparation:</p> <p>Prepare and classify raw disaggregated expenditure and income data to generate population level inferences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location-based mapping Data cleaning and treatment of outliers Imputation and data adjustments as required Sample weighting Quality assurance Collation of internal data on voucher use Survey design 	<p>Work with NSW Government to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirm the objectives of the programs Identify the logical linkage between the need of the programs, the outcomes being sought by resolving the need, and the inputs, activities and outputs required to deliver this Agree key evaluation questions <p>Develop detailed evaluation plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the data and information needed to assess the program Determine appropriate methods for analysing data in order to answer key evaluation questions 	<p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake desktop research into the need for the programs and the outcomes being sought Collate and analyse data from program participants Identify alternative options considered Supplement with additional data collection to fill data gaps Summarise insights on the level and nature of need for intervention Test preliminary findings Refine as needed 	<p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a framework for assessing design and implementation Assess departmental evaluation material Identify data and information gaps Engage with key stakeholders to gather insights and perceptions Design and facilitate semi-structured interview questions for key stakeholders Design and conduct online survey of key stakeholders Confirm risks identified at the commencement of the program, proposed and implemented mitigations and identify risks that materialised Identify the governance and reporting framework used to oversee the program and assess efficacy of operation Identify potential recommendations 	<p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and agree the key cohorts for analysis Analyse survey data Use 1-on-1 interview/focus groups to obtain qualitative information Undertake outcomes analysis using consumer spend and income data Assess the accessibility of the program, and how the program changed consumer and business behaviour Collate additional information on outcomes Identify the cost of achieving program outcomes and the benefit of achieving them Test outcome and value for money conclusions 	<p>Drafting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree style and format for draft report Develop and test preliminary report structure Prepare draft report Present draft report to key internal stakeholders and refine as needed Finalise report and present to NSW Treasury and Service NSW
 Deliverables	<p>Inception report including project plan</p>	<p>Evaluation framework, including program logic and key evaluation questions</p>	<p>...</p>	<p>...</p>	<p>...</p>	<p>Draft evaluation report Final evaluation report, including appendices as required</p>

Source: Accenture

3.3.1.1 Project inception

The project inception and evaluation commenced on 28 November 2022 with a meeting between the evaluator and staff from NSW Treasury and Service NSW who were involved in the delivery of the COVID-19 voucher programs.

The evaluator developed a preliminary approach and stakeholder engagement plan, pictured below in Figure 3.2, as well as a project plan.

Figure 3.2: Preliminary approach and stakeholder engagement plan

Key exercises for program evaluation	1 Economic modelling (incremental benefit of vouchers)		2 Stakeholder consultation		3 Review of governance documents
	Illion	Program data	Service NSW and NSW Treasury	Customer and business groups	
Evaluation question domains informed by exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estimate causal effect of program on consumer spending <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Across sectors Across geographies Across demographic groups Estimate efficiency using total program cost and total causal benefits 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult with Department of Customer Service, Service NSW and NSW Treasury 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct interviews and focus groups with customer and business groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of SNSW and Treasury governance documents, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy guidelines Steering Committee packs Program summaries
	Effectiveness Efficiency		Appropriateness Implementation	Appropriateness Implementation Effectiveness	Appropriateness Implementation

Source: Accenture

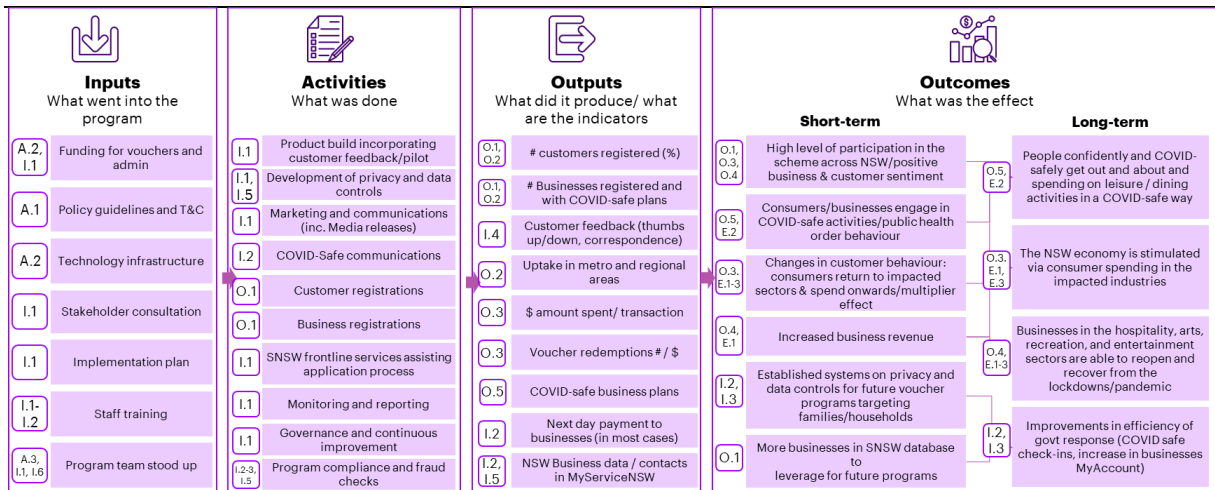
Evaluation framework

The NSW Government provided a program logic for each of the voucher programs, along with the policy objectives and related state outcomes.

The NSW Government provided initial draft evaluation questions in the Request for Quote. The questions spanned four domains: relevance, implementation, effectiveness, efficiency. The evaluation plan was subsequently agreed at the end of 2022.²²

Changes to the evaluation plan were subsequently agreed. The revised evaluation plan mapped evaluation questions directly to test the program logic. See Figure 3.3, Figure 3.4 and Figure 3.5.

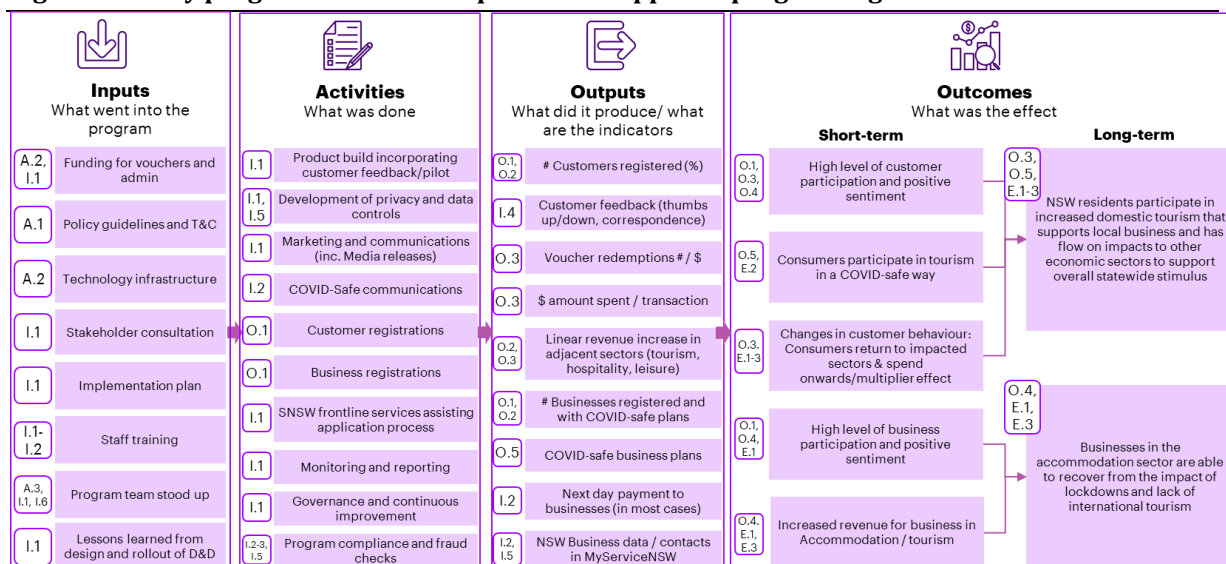
Figure 3.3: Dine & Discover program - evaluation questions mapped to program logic



Source: Accenture

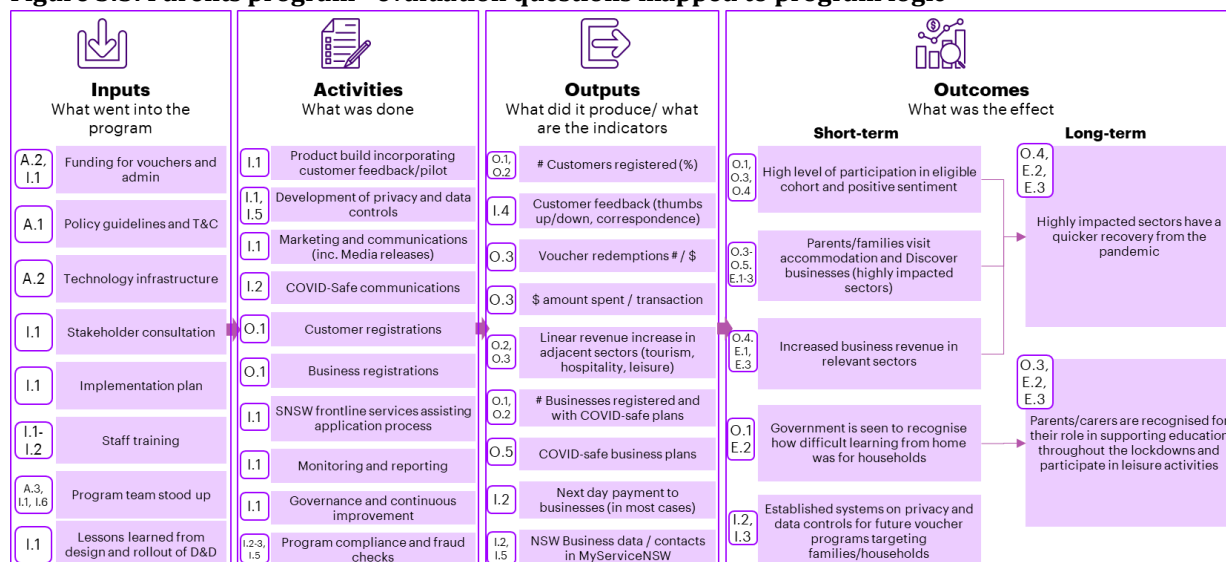
²² Accenture and NSW Department of Customer Service Inception Report meeting, 24 December 2022.

Figure 3.4: Stay program - evaluation questions mapped to program logic



Source: Accenture

Figure 3.5: Parents program - evaluation questions mapped to program logic



Source: Accenture

Detailed evaluation plan

After the evaluation questions were constructed, the evaluators created a more detailed evaluation plan. The detailed plan sets out data source/s and evaluation method/s to address each evaluation question.

Ideal data sources were not always available (for detailed discussion on this, see 4.1)

- the data collected through the program was not collected for the specific purpose of evaluation
- privacy constraints prohibited access to transaction-level data for the purpose of the evaluation (see Program data)
- some data was collected after the program was completed (see Consumer survey).

Where ideal data is not available, the evaluation uses supplementary data and/or proxy measures. For more details see Assessment of evaluation evidence and methods.

The data sources and evaluation methods used to inform the response to each evaluation question are set out in Assessment of evaluation evidence and methods.

Table 3.2: Data sources and evaluation methods for key evaluation questions

Evaluation question	Data source/s	Evaluation method
A.1 Were the program’s policy intent and outcomes relevant and appropriate to creating a “strong, resilient and diverse economy”?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ABS data²³ • Illion Spend Analytics • Westpac Index of Consumer Sentiment • Xero Small Business Index • DestinationNSW travel data • COVID-19 case data • Consultation with NSW Government internal stakeholders 	Quantitative analysis Qualitative analysis
A.2 To what extent was the particular design of the policy (including policy mechanism, timing and resourcing) appropriate for achieving the program’s policy intent and outcomes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic literature • Consultation with NSW Government internal stakeholders • Service NSW and NSW Treasury governance documents 	Qualitative analysis
A.3 Did the program remain relevant throughout its lifetime?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 case data • Public health restrictions • ABS data • Illion Spend Analytics • Westpac Index of Consumer Sentiment • Consultation with business groups 	Qualitative analysis
I.1 Were there appropriate governance arrangements and processes to design, establish and implement the program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation with NSW Government internal stakeholders • Service NSW and NSW Treasury governance documents 	Qualitative analysis

²³ A broad range of data is collected from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), including National Income, Expenditure and Product data, Labour Force data, and State Account data.

I.2 To what extent was the program implemented as intended? Was it implemented within intended timeframes and costs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation with NSW Government internal stakeholders • Service NSW and NSW Treasury governance documents • Service NSW voucher program costs data 	Qualitative analysis
I.3 To what extent was an appropriate data collection and evaluation framework established and implemented?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation with NSW Government internal stakeholders • Service NSW and NSW Treasury governance documents 	Qualitative analysis
I.4 What is the degree of business and consumer satisfaction with the program's delivery?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumer focus groups • Consultation with consumer groups • Consultation with business groups • Surveys of voucher users 	Qualitative analysis
I.5 Were risks identified and managed? Were there any unintended side-effects (positive or negative) of implementing the program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation with NSW Government internal stakeholders • Service NSW and NSW Treasury governance documents • Consumer focus groups • Consultation with consumer groups • Consultation with business groups • Surveys of voucher users 	Qualitative analysis
I.6 To what extent was the program adapted to account for changing circumstances through its lifetime?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation with NSW Government internal stakeholders • Service NSW and NSW Treasury governance documents • COVID-19 case data • Public health restrictions 	Qualitative analysis
O.1 To what extent did the program reach intended audiences, both businesses and individuals? To what extent did audiences access the program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service NSW and NSW Treasury governance documents 	Quantitative analysis of voucher data Qualitative analysis

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service NSW voucher redemption and registration data • NSW Department of Customer Service cost of living campaign evaluation 	
0.2 To what extent did reach and access vary between groups with different geographic, demographic and socioeconomic characteristics?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service NSW voucher redemption and registration data 	Quantitative analysis of voucher registration and redemption by both businesses and consumers across sectors / geographies / demographics Qualitative analysis
0.3 To what extent did the program result in increased consumer spending?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illion Spend Analytics data • Service NSW voucher redemption and registration data • ABS data • Consumer focus groups • Surveys of voucher users • Consultation with customer groups • Academic literature 	Quantitative analysis Qualitative analysis
0.4 To what extent did the program result in increased business revenue?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illion Spend Analytics data • Service NSW voucher redemption and registration data • ABS data • Consultation with business groups 	Quantitative analysis Qualitative analysis
0.5 To what extent did the program result in people confidently and safely getting out and about and spending in a COVID-safe way?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumer focus groups • Surveys of voucher users • Consultation with customer groups 	Qualitative analysis
E.1 What were the financial costs and benefits of the program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data and findings for Q0.3-0.4 • Service NSW voucher program costs data 	Quantitative analysis
E.2 What were the social costs and benefits of the program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data and findings for Q0.5 	Qualitative analysis

E.3 To what extent did the benefits of the program outweigh the costs?

- Data and findings for QE.1-E.2

Quantitative analysis
Qualitative analysis

Source: Accenture

3.3.1.2 Need for government intervention

The 'relevance' assessment is informed by desktop research. The research examined the need for the voucher programs and the outcomes being sought. It considered the specific circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on NSW.

NSW Government provided the evaluator with alternative policy interventions it considered when designing the programs. The evaluation considers the relative merits of these alternatives, as well as other possible options.

It is difficult to robustly identify and quantify the counterfactual. COVID-19 was unprecedented, and the vouchers were made available to all residents. The evaluation considers the economic circumstances and trends in spending at the time the vouchers were conceived and implemented.

See Relevance for analysis and findings.

3.3.1.3 Process evaluation

The evaluation leverages detailed insights from stakeholder consultations to inform the process evaluation. This consultation supplemented governance documents and data provided by Service NSW and NSW Treasury.

Stakeholder consultation included:

- semi-structured interviews with 12 key personnel at NSW Treasury, Service NSW and NSW Department of Customer Service
- semi-structured interviews with five business representative groups
- semi-structured interviews with four consumer representative groups
- three focus groups with consumers who participated in each of the voucher programs
- a survey of over 1,000 NSW residents over the age of 18.

3.3.1.4 Outcomes evaluation and value for money evaluation

The evaluation plan identified the ideal approach for analysing outcomes and value for money. This approach was not feasible because of access to data.

The evaluator employed difference-in-difference modelling to examine the impact of the voucher programs on consumer spending.

There are limitations to the difference-in-difference modelling approach. These are discussed in Assessment of evaluation evidence and methods. These limitations mean that the results cannot be relied on. As a result, the evaluation uses a literature-based approach to quantifying benefits of the voucher programs (measured in terms of additional spending).

The evaluation uses a cost-benefit analysis (CBA) to measure the benefits of the voucher programs relative to their costs. This provides an assessment of value for money and net social benefit.

The CBA was conducted in accordance with NSW Government evaluation guidelines.

4 Assessment of evaluation evidence and methods

Evaluation evidence and methods impact evaluation results, and the ability of the evaluation to answer the evaluation questions.²⁴

The evaluation relies on a mixture of qualitative and quantitative data. The data was collected from government and non-government sources. The data available informs the choice of analytical techniques and the evaluation results.

This evaluation analyses the data available, using a range of analytical techniques, to answer the evaluation questions. The assumptions and limitations inherent in these techniques affect the reliability of the evaluation findings.

4.1 Assessment of evaluation evidence

Table 4.1 summarises the main data sources collected for the evaluation.

Table 4.1: Data collected for the evaluation

Data	Source	Level of aggregation	Time period	Time collected
Program governance documents	SNSW NSW Treasury	n/a	Ad hoc	September 2020 – November 2022
Business registrations for voucher programs	SNSW	LGA	Cumulative	November 2022
Voucher redemptions	SNSW	LGA	Weekly	February 2021 – October 2022
Interviews with NSW Treasury, Service NSW and Department of Customer Service staff	NSW Treasury SNSW DCS	Individual	Ad hoc	January 2023
Consumer survey (N=53,000)	SNSW	Individual	Ongoing	March 2021 – June 2022
Consumer survey (N=1,017)	Accenture	Individual	Ad hoc	January 2023
Consultation with consumer groups	Accenture	Individual	Ad hoc	January 2023
Consultation with business groups	Accenture	Individual	Ad hoc	January 2023 – February 2023
Consumer focus groups (3 groups, N=17)	Accenture	Individual	Ad hoc	January 2023

Source: Accenture

4.1.1 Program governance documents

Service NSW and NSW Treasury provided program governance documents, including:

- program logic models
- voucher program and costs data

²⁴ NSW Treasury Policy and Guidelines: Evaluation TPG22-22, p.33

- voucher program policy guidelines
- correspondence from consumers
- meeting papers from internal committees
- communication with ministers
- program delivery reports.

These provide background information on the design and implementation of the programs.

Service NSW provided voucher costs data for the evaluation. Costs data are split by:

- voucher value: the costs incurred by the NSW Government represented by the value of redeemed vouchers. This was provided by Service NSW for each program.
- implementation costs: the costs incurred to establish each voucher program. This was provided by Service NSW for each program.
- operational costs: the ongoing operational costs of the voucher programs. This data was provided by Service NSW for each program.

4.1.2 Program data

Service NSW provided data on:

- registrations:
 - total (cumulative) number of business registrations for each of the voucher programs, aggregated by LGA of incorporation
 - the number of weekly consumer registrations for each of the voucher programs, aggregated by LGA of residence
- redemptions:
 - the number of weekly consumer redemptions for each of the voucher programs, aggregated by LGA of residence
 - the value of weekly consumer redemptions for each of the voucher programs, aggregated by LGA of residence
 - the total weekly value of consumer spending on transactions where a voucher was used, aggregated by LGA of consumer's residence
 - the number of weekly business redemptions for each of the voucher programs, aggregated by LGA
 - the value of weekly business redemptions for each of the voucher programs, aggregated by LGA
 - the total weekly value of transactions where a voucher was redeemed, aggregated by business LGA.

This data was used to inform the outcomes evaluation.

Service NSW captured and collected data on individual registrations, redemptions and transactions.

The data was provided to the evaluator in an aggregated form. Specifically, the data was aggregated by:

- location (LGA)
- time period (week or longer).

Having data in this form affected the choice of analytical methods, the evaluation results, and the ability of the evaluation to answer the evaluation questions.

- Data is aggregated geographically. This means that analysis cannot control for individual characteristics that may affect voucher registration and redemption.

- Data is aggregated geographically. This means that analysis cannot measure the proportion of individual transactions, within an LGA or by an individual, where consumers spent more than the value of the voucher.
- Data is not matched between consumers and businesses. This means that the analysis cannot determine the extent to which consumers tried new businesses, or went outside of their own LGAs, to use their vouchers.
- Data is aggregated by time period. This means that there are fewer observations, which may affect the accuracy of modelling results.
- Data is aggregated by ANZSIC code. This limits the ability to analyse the impact of the programs on businesses of different sizes or characteristics.

Service NSW advised that disaggregated data could not be provided to the evaluator as doing so would not have met its privacy obligations to its customers. Instead, de-identified aggregate data was provided. This was done to protect the identities of individual program participants.

4.1.3 Illion Spend Analytics data

The illion Spend Analytics dataset provides de-identified information of bank transactions of individuals. It includes:

- information on the consumer's LGA of residence, derived from:
 - information they provide when applying for a credit check
 - machine learning algorithms which identify the most likely home location of an individual based on spending patterns
- estimates of age, income, the value and date of the transaction
- the type of business where the transaction was made.

A key strength of this source is it provides a large *n* dataset (around 1 million consumers observed across NSW) containing granular information on spending patterns across NSW LGAs.

A limitation of the illion Spend Analytics data is the way that transactions are categorised by business industry. These categories differ to ABS industry categories. It is not possible to create a 1:1 match between spending captured in this dataset and the specific ANZSIC codes that were included in the Dine & Discover (D&D), Stay, and Parents programs. Instead, spending at businesses eligible for the Dine, Discover, and Stay programs is estimated using the illion industry category which best matches the ABS industry category.

- For businesses eligible for Dine, this is the 'restaurant, cafes and pubs' spending category
- For businesses eligible for Discover (and Parents), this is the 'recreational events, memberships and tickets' spending category
- For businesses eligible for Stay (and Parents), this is a custom category representing accommodation businesses

A summary of the correspondence between the ANZSIC codes included in the voucher programs, ABS industry categories, and illion industry categories can be found in Appendix A: Illion Spend Analytics data. This also includes a breakdown of how the illion spending categories are constructed.

To avoid confusion, throughout this report when referring to illion consumer spending data the names of the illion categories are used. For example, spending at Dine businesses is referred to as spending at 'restaurants, cafes and pubs' or 'fast food and takeaway'. Similarly, when referring to ABS industry statistics, the relevant ABS industry category name is used. Otherwise, businesses are referred to as 'Dine', 'Discover', or 'Stay' businesses.

4.1.4 Consumer survey

The evaluator conducted a survey in January 2023 of NSW residents (N=1,017) over the age of 18 and asked them a series of questions about their experience using the D&D, Stay and Parents vouchers.

The survey collected quantitative and qualitative data in relation to a respondent's:

- demographic characteristics²⁵
- reasons for not registering for vouchers (if applicable)
- reasons for not redeeming vouchers
- types of businesses where vouchers were redeemed
- spend at businesses where vouchers were redeemed
- level of agreement with statements about their experience accessing and using the vouchers and changes in their behaviour.

The survey provided insights into a large sample of voucher users' experiences. It was primarily used to inform the implementation and effectiveness evaluation.

However, there are some limitations to the survey in relation to sampling and the time it was conducted.

- Respondents were paid to participate in the online survey and respondents had to be technologically enabled to complete it.²⁶
- Quotas were employed to ensure a representative sample of the NSW population was surveyed, however when segmented by populations of interest (First Nations residents, rural residents, parents), the sample sizes were relatively small. Where sample sizes were too small to produce meaningful results, they are not reported in the evaluation.
- Considerable time had lapsed between the voucher programs and the survey being conducted. The survey included text to assist the respondent in remembering key details of the voucher programs.
- Survey responses may have been subject to recency bias as respondents may have based their responses on the most recent experience with the voucher programs (in June 2022 or October 2022). Responses would therefore not reflect the overall experience with the programs, during which circumstances evolved over time.

4.1.5 Consultation with business groups

The evaluator conducted semi-structured interviews with a range of business representative groups to gather business perspectives on the relevance of the voucher programs, the accessibility and use of the vouchers, and the effectiveness of the programs.

The following business representative groups were consulted:

- Tourism Accommodation Australia
- Restaurants and Catering Association
- Business NSW
- Merivale
- Hoyts Cinemas.

These groups were selected to capture a broad cross-section of the accommodation, hospitality, arts and recreation, and tourism industries. They were selected with input from the NSW Department of Customer Service stakeholder engagement team.

²⁵ See Appendix for a breakdown of survey sample demographic characteristics.

²⁶ This may bias the sample as offering payment attracts individuals who are more likely to respond. Further, only those who are able to use an online platform to complete the survey are included in the sample.

The interviews were conducted in three parts:

1. **Economic conditions during COVID-19:** questions were related to the extent to which the business faced economic challenges during the pandemic and believed there was a need for stimulus.
2. **Accessibility of the vouchers:** questions were related to the extent to which the business was involved in the voucher programs' development and the business' experience in accessing and participating in the programs.
3. **Effectiveness of the vouchers:** questions were related to the extent to which the voucher programs led to intended outcomes.

Insights from these interviews supported the evaluation of the voucher programs' implementation and effectiveness. They also provided anecdotal evidence to support the quantification of benefits of the voucher programs.

There are limitations to the ability to rely on this feedback for the evaluation:

- consultations were conducted six months after the D&D program ended and three months after the Stay and Parents programs ended, meaning considerable time had lapsed before the business groups were consulted
- feedback from these five groups cannot be taken to be representative of all businesses' experience and opinions. For example, the experience of culturally linguistic and diverse (CALD) business owners may not have been captured in a representative way.

4.1.6 Consumer focus groups

As part of the evaluation of the voucher programs, the evaluator conducted consumer focus group sessions to better understand the perception, accessibility, and use of the vouchers. Separate focus groups were conducted with users of the D&D, Stay and Parents programs. Each focus group session consisted of a structured discussion in which participants were prompted to give their opinions on the programs, including what worked and what didn't work. The discussion focused on four main themes:

1. **The accessibility of the voucher program** including the registration process, the ease of finding participating businesses, and participants' feelings about going out after lockdowns had ended
2. **Use of the vouchers** including where they were used, whether the vouchers prompted participants to engage in consumption they otherwise would not have, and whether the expiry period was long enough
3. **Perception of the Parents program** including whether participants felt appreciated for supporting their children in learning from home in 2021
4. **COVID-19 Safety** including whether the vouchers made participants more confident that it was COVID-safe to visit businesses and or travel within NSW.

The information collected during focus groups was recorded in the form of an interview transcript.

The purpose of these focus groups was to gain in-depth insights about the individual experiences of customers. A key limitation of this data source was the small sample size (17 participants in total). As such the results from focus groups are not taken to be representative of the overall effectiveness of the vouchers but are instead used to provide anecdotal examples of the experience of some customers. The information collected through this process is intended to complement the larger *n* datasets used in the evaluation (in particular, spend analytics and survey data).

4.2 Assessment of evaluation methods

4.2.1 Methods for quantifying the voucher programs' impact on consumer spending

The D&D and Stay voucher programs had the policy intent of supporting businesses in selected industries by incentivising consumer spending.

The outcomes evaluation looks to quantify the extent to which each voucher program incentivised consumer spending. To do so robustly, the evaluation must establish:

- the counterfactual – what would have happened to consumer spending in these industries in the absence of the voucher programs?
- the outputs and outcomes – what happened after the introduction of the voucher programs?
- causation – to what extent did the programs themselves (as opposed to other policies or changes in the environment) directly lead to an increase in spending in targeted industries?

The evaluation establishes three counterfactual scenarios and quantifies two (section 8.3.1).

This has implications for the extent to which the evaluation can produce robust findings. This is noted where relevant in chapters 7 and 8.

4.2.1.1 Counterfactual

The evaluation could not establish a reliable counterfactual, because:

- there is no appropriate comparison group
- trend projections would not be accurate.

All NSW residents aged 18 and over could access the D&D and Stay programs. As a result, there was no control or comparison group in NSW.

The Evaluator considered comparison against Queensland and Victoria. A common pre-trend could not be identified, and this was ruled out. It is challenging to compare against a group from another region (locally or globally) due to differences in contexts, policies, and factors such as public health restrictions.

The Parents NSW vouchers were available to all parents with children enrolled in schools in NSW. A comparison could be made to parents with children who are too young to be enrolled in school. However, these households are not likely to be directly comparable. Early childhood education and care centres remained open for in-person care, while school-aged children participated in online learning in Greater Sydney.²⁷ Given this and other differences, households with younger children are not a suitable control group to establish a counterfactual for the Parents NSW vouchers.

The COVID-19 pandemic was unprecedented and evolved quickly. Many policy interventions were implemented at or around the same times. It is not possible to reliably determine what would have happened in the absence of the voucher programs.

This affects the evaluation's results and findings. In the absence of an appropriate basis for comparison, the evaluation implicitly assumes that the economy would have continued along the same trajectory without the voucher programs as it would have before they were launched (or amended). However, this assumption is imperfect as the economy would have continued to shift in response to other exogenous trends.

²⁷ National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance, 2022, COVID-19 in schools and early childhood education and care services – the experience in NSW: 16 June to 17 September 2021, https://ncirs.org.au/sites/default/files/2022-02/NCIRS_NSW_Schools_COVID_Summary_Term%203%202021_Report_18-02-2022_FINAL_0.pdf.

4.2.1.2 Outputs and outcomes

The evaluation documents the outputs of the program, and some of the outcomes. These data points help to quantify the voucher programs' impact on consumer spending. For example, data collected for the evaluation quantifies:

- the number of residents who registered for the vouchers (outputs)
- total value of vouchers redeemed (outputs)
- total spending in voucher-related transactions (outcomes)
- total spending on accommodation and food businesses, by sub-industry (outcomes).

4.2.1.3 Causation

Ideally, the effect of the voucher programs on spending would be modelled using a randomised controlled trial (RCT) or other experimental treatment structure. An experimental treatment structure would allow causal attribution of spending to the voucher programs.

This structure was not practical or ethical in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Each of the vouchers were made available to all NSW residents.
- Individual transaction data was not available for purpose of the evaluation (see Assessment of evaluation evidence).

The evaluation thus considered other analytical methods for understanding the impact of the programs on spending.

4.2.1.4 Difference-in-difference modelling

Difference-in-difference (DiD) is a common analytical method used to evaluate the causal effects of policy interventions.²⁸ DiD modelling can control for both individual fixed effects and time effects. In the context of the voucher programs, this means:

- controlling for unobserved LGA-specific characteristics which might impact voucher registration, voucher redemption and spending
- controlling for variations over time, such as changes to Public Health Orders.

The evaluation uses DiD modelling to estimate the effects of the voucher programs on consumer spending at the LGA level.

There is a risk that the DiD modelling produced biased estimates for the following key reasons.

Estimators may be biased because parallel trends assumptions do not hold.²⁹

DiD models assume 'parallel trends'. In the context of the voucher programs, this means assuming that, if there were no vouchers, the difference in spending between LGAs would be constant over time.

This assumption is unlikely to hold.

LGAs faced differing public health restrictions and COVID-19 case numbers. They have different demographic and socio-economic characteristics. The proportion of residents able to continue working during COVID-19 varied between LGAs.

²⁸Brantly Callaway, Pedro H.C. Sant'Anna, Difference-in-Differences with multiple time periods, *Journal of Econometrics*, Volume 225, Issue 2, 2021, Pages 200-230, ISSN 0304-4076, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeconom.2020.12.001>.

²⁹ Brantly Callaway, Pedro H.C. Sant'Anna, Difference-in-Differences with multiple time periods, *Journal of Econometrics*, Volume 225, Issue 2, 2021, Pages 200-230, ISSN 0304-4076, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeconom.2020.12.001>.

The parallel trends assumption cannot be applied to the voucher programs.³⁰ As such, the estimates of the DiD model are likely to be biased.

Estimators may be biased because of omitted variables.

The DiD model specification incorporates control variables. Control variables in the model include LGA demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, and whether an LGA was in lockdown. These may affect consumer spending within an LGA.

The model includes the ABS Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD) dataset as a control variable. This controls for the effect of factors such as educational attainment and digital literacy. These factors may vary across LGAs and time and may have effected consumer spending habits.

The model also uses LGA and time fixed-effects. LGA fixed effects control for unobserved LGA-specific characteristics which do not change over time. Time fixed effects control for unobserved variables that are constant across all LGAs at a specific point in time.

However, there remains a risk of omitted variables. This would lead to biased estimates.

As such, the evaluation notes, but does not rely upon, the DiD modelling results.

4.2.1.5 Literature-based approach

As a result of the risks and limitations associated with the DiD modelling, the evaluation applies literature-based evidence to program data to quantify the benefits of the voucher programs. This approach involves leveraging findings from established academic research on the deadweight losses associated with vouchers (see 8.1.1.1):

- Principe, K., and Eisenhauer J., (2008), Gift-giving and deadweight loss, *The Journal of Socio-Economics* 38 (2009) 215–220
- Offenberg, J. (2007), Markets: Gift cards, *Journal of Economic Perspectives—Volume 21, Number 2—Spring 2007—Pages 227–238.*

The cost-benefit analysis also references academic literature on the effect of similar voucher programs on consumer spending (see 8.1.1) to help validate findings on the additional consumer spend associated with the voucher programs:

- Chang-Tai Hsieh, Satoshi Shimizutani, and Masahiro Hori, 'Did Japan's Shopping Coupon Program Increase Spending?', *Journal of Public Economics* 94, no. 7 (2010): 523–29
- Seokjin Woo et al., 'Consumption Response to Seoul's Covid-19 Shopping Coupons: Evidence from Consumer Data', SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester, NY, 28 August 2021)
- Hao Geng, 'Evaluating Hong Kong Consumption Voucher Scheme', Department of Economics, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, (2022).

4.2.2 Methods for quantifying the voucher programs' efficiency

4.2.2.1 Cost-benefit analysis

To assess the voucher programs' value for money, the evaluation uses a cost-benefit analysis (CBA) framework to measure the benefits of the voucher programs relative to their costs.

The CBA results include:³¹

³⁰ Brantly Callaway, Pedro H.C. Sant'Anna, Difference-in-Differences with multiple time periods, *Journal of Econometrics*, Volume 225, Issue 2, 2021, Pages 200–230, ISSN 0304-4076, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeconom.2020.12.001>.

³¹ NSW Treasury Policy and Guidelines: Evaluation TPG22-22, p.17

- description of major costs and benefits of the voucher programs
- assessment of net social benefit for NSW
 - net present value
 - qualitative assessment of likely net social benefit
- benefit-cost ratio, as a means of assessing value for money.

4.2.2.2 Benefits

The CBA quantifies three categories of benefits:

- consumer surplus
- producer (business) surplus
- labour surplus.

Limitations in how these benefits are calculated affect the evaluation results and the benefit cost ratio.

- Consumer surplus figures are derived from the value of the vouchers and additional spending in voucher transactions. The evaluation uses a literature-based approach to determine:
 - additional spending from the vouchers (see Difference-in-difference modelling)
 - the deadweight loss associated with the vouchers themselves.
- The estimates produced for consumer surplus are indicative, given the reliance on literature-based figures rather than context-specific data. As a result, estimates are presented as a range.
- Business surplus figures are calculated based on the value of the vouchers and additional spending. The calculation involves:
 - i) applying general ratios sourced from the ABS to determine profit associated with this revenue. While the ABS ratios are a useful guide, they are not specific to the COVID-19 period or NSW businesses. This creates uncertainty as to their accuracy.
 - ii) applying a leakage rate to account for profits “leaking” out of NSW. The leakage rate is based on ABS data on the economic activity of foreign owned businesses in Australia. It is not specific to NSW. The leakage rate encompasses leakage overseas only, omitting leakage to other states. This is likely to mean the leakage rate is understated and thus overall estimates may be overestimated.
- Labour surplus is derived based on the assumption that the additional revenue earned by businesses is associated with additional employment for individuals already in the industry who are underemployed. However, there is a possibility that the additional revenue resulted in improved utilisation of existing staff time, rather than increasing staff hours. Where this is the case, estimates of labour surplus used in the evaluation will be overstated.

To mitigate the limitations and risks associated with the evaluation methods, the evaluation presents all estimates as a range, rather than a point estimate. This accounts for the likely variability and inherent uncertainty of the results.

Evaluation deliverables



5 Relevance

NSW Government initiatives seek to “deliver outcomes that benefit the people of New South Wales, improve wellbeing, and contribute to State Outcomes” in a way that is “suitable for a community or context”.³²

Relevance of outcomes

The voucher programs had the broad intent of supporting affected businesses and stimulating aggregate demand. The related State Outcome is “a strong, resilient and diverse economy”.³³ This was not the only outcome that the programs sought to deliver.

The evaluation focuses on the relevance of the programs with reference to the identified State Outcome. However, it notes relevance in the context of broader government priorities and outcomes.

Relevance in context

The voucher programs were envisioned and designed in the context of COVID-19. Public health and economic circumstances were changing daily. These conditions, and information available at the time, informed evolving government priorities. They also informed the establishment of the voucher programs.

Programs were adapted at several points, with amendments made to:

- when vouchers could be redeemed
- the expiry date of vouchers
- how many vouchers were issued to each eligible resident
- industries and business types that were able to register to accept vouchers.

The relevance of any program will vary throughout its lifetime, as circumstances change. Programs should be adaptable, and react to paradigm shifts. However, frequent changes to programs or policies can undermine confidence and regulatory certainty.

Economic circumstances and public health restrictions changed quickly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The relevance of voucher programs varied throughout their lifetimes as a result.

The evaluation considers the relevance of the programs throughout their lifetime, with reference to both circumstances at the time and hindsight. It focuses on the relevance of each program at the points when the program was amended. These points represented opportunities to reconsider the relevance of each program, and consider any program changes.

³² NSW Government, ‘Policy and Guidelines: Evaluation’, [2023](#)

³³ NSW Government, ‘Outcomes Statement Overview’, [2022](#)

5.1 Dine & Discover (D&D)

The D&D voucher program was conceived in September 2020. It was publicly announced on 17 November 2020 and became available to residents over the age of 18 from 9 February 2021.³⁴ Its policy intent was to **incentivise consumer spending** and **support affected businesses** (see Voucher program logic).

5.1.1 Was the program's policy intent and outcomes relevant and appropriate to creating a strong, resilient and diverse economy?

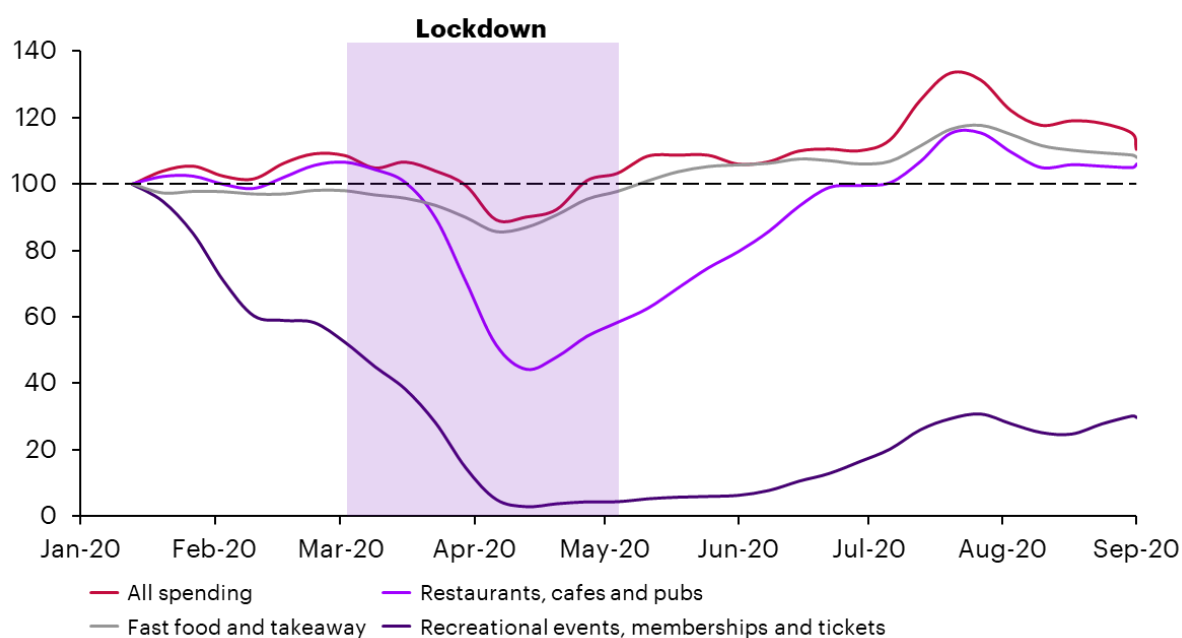
The D&D program was conceived in the wake of COVID-19 Public Health Orders resulting in business closures across NSW. Public health orders, restrictions on business operation and movement, and general economic conditions led consumer spending to fall.

Businesses which rely on face-to-face interaction were particularly affected. Figure 5.1 shows that spending on:

- restaurants and cafes (as defined in illion data) fell 50% in April 2020 (relative to January levels)
- leisure businesses (as defined in illion data) fell 95% over the same period.³⁵

Figure 5.1: Consumer spending index for D&D businesses from January – September 2020

Average consumer spend (\$), indexed to January 2020



Source: illion Spend Analytics data

When the D&D program was conceived in September 2020, the State was re-opening in a COVID-safe manner. Many of NSW's public health restrictions had eased:

- there were 10 or less new confirmed COVID-19 cases in NSW being reported daily³⁶
- NSW residents were able to travel within the State for accommodation

³⁴ NSW Government, 'Dine and Discover vouchers to support local economy', 2020; NSW Government, 'Dine & Discover NSW vouchers – Internal Policy Guidelines', 2022

³⁵ Accenture analysis of illion Spend Analytics data

³⁶ COVID Live, NSW Cases, 2023.

- NSW public schools were open for full-time, face-to-face teaching
- hospitality venues were able to welcome sit-in customers, so long as they were registered as COVID-safe businesses, patrons were seated and social distancing rules were applied.³⁷

However, overall consumer spending and confidence in NSW was still low.

- NSW household final consumption expenditure fell by 6.3% in the quarter ending 30 September 2020 compared to the same quarter in 2019, in seasonally adjusted terms.
- NSW state final demand had contracted by 2% in the quarter ending 30 September 2020 compared to the same quarter in 2019, in seasonally adjusted terms.³⁸
- Consumer confidence was low: the Index of Consumer Sentiment was still pessimistic in September 2020.³⁹
- Consumers remained hesitant to get out and about, with statewide foot traffic still 6% below the pre-pandemic baseline.⁴⁰

International borders remained closed. Sydney airport received almost 880,000 international arrivals in January 2020. From April to December 2020, monthly international arrivals were less than 2% of January levels (with a total of 108,000 international arrivals over this 9-month period). The majority of these arrivals were returning Australian citizens.⁴¹ State borders were also closed or subject to sudden and unpredictable closures and changes of entry requirements.⁴² This impacted restaurants, cafes and leisure businesses in areas reliant on international and interstate visitors and areas close to state borders.

In the context of improved public health conditions and weak consumer confidence, the NSW Government was seeking to:

- encourage businesses to establish COVID-safe plans⁴³
- encourage residents to get out and about in a COVID-safe manner.⁴⁴

Spending was recovering in some sectors when the D&D program was conceived. However, the pandemic had impacted businesses targeted by the program:

- consumer spending on 'restaurants, cafes, and pubs' (as defined by illion) had recovered by July 2020, but only after a severe contraction (Figure 5.1)
- consumer spending on 'fast food and takeaway' (as defined by illion) had recovered by May 2020 after a smaller contraction (Figure 5.1)
- spending on 'recreational events, membership and tickets' businesses (as defined by illion and referred to as 'recreation businesses' hereafter) remained at just 36% of the January spending level in September 2020 when the program was conceived (Figure 5.1).⁴⁵

In the quarter to 30 September 2020:

- the broader 'hotels, cafes and restaurants' industry (as defined by the ABS) in NSW had recorded a 36% contraction in household final consumption expenditure (HFCE) (Figure 5.2)
- the 'recreation and culture' industry (as defined by the ABS) had recorded a 7% decrease in HFCE (Figure 5.2).⁴⁶

³⁷ Note: Includes casinos, food and drink premises, pubs, registered clubs and small bars. See: NSW Government, 'Public Health (COVID-19 Restrictions on Gathering and Movement) Order (No 5)', [2020](#)

³⁸ ABS, 'Australian National Accounts: Income, Expenditure and Product – Table 26', ([2023](#))

³⁹ Westpac-Melbourne Institute Index of Consumer Sentiment, 13 September 2022.

⁴⁰ Google, "COVID-19 Community Mobility Report – NSW", [2022](#)

⁴¹ Department of Industry, Science, and Resources, 'Airport Traffic Data for top twenty airports: January 2009 to current – June 2023', [2023](#)

⁴² Parliament of Australia, COVID-19: a chronology of state and territory government announcements (up until 30 June 2020), [2020](#)

⁴³ NSW Government, 'Stay COVID-19 safe as restrictions eased', [2020](#); and NSW Government, 'Public Health (COVID-19 Restrictions on Gathering and Movement) Order (No 5)', [2020](#)

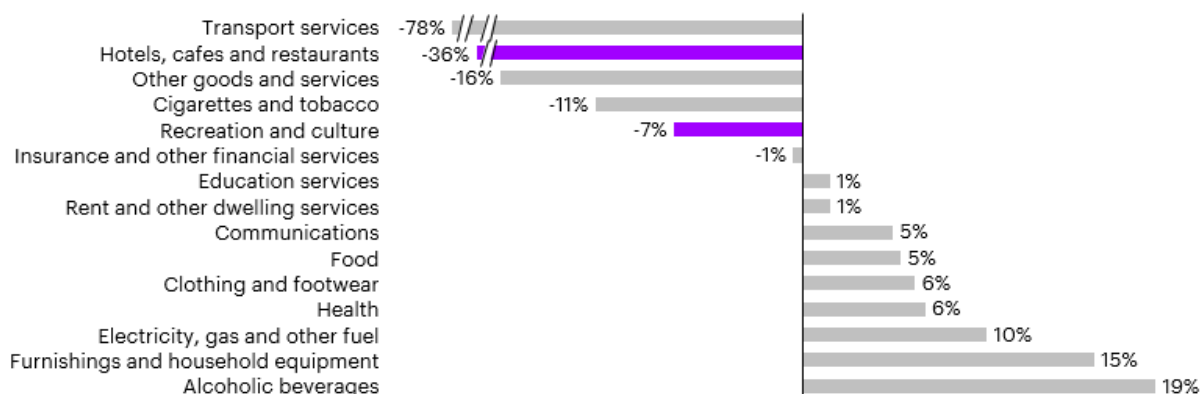
⁴⁴ NSW Government, Weekly Update – 25 September 2020, 'Launch of COVID safe summer plan', [2020](#)

⁴⁵ Accenture analysis of illion Spend Analytics data

⁴⁶ ABS, 'Australian National Accounts: State Accounts – Table 2', [2023](#)

Figure 5.2: NSW household final consumption expenditure in 2020 relative to 2019

% change in household final consumption expenditure, chain volume measures, seasonally adjusted, quarter ending 30 September 2020 vs quarter ending 30 September 2019



Note: ABS HFICI data does not disaggregate hotels and food services businesses. The ABS category 'recreation and culture' does not correspond perfectly with the group of businesses included in the Discover program.

Source: ABS, 'Australian National Accounts: National Income, Expenditure and Product – Table 26', 2023

When the D&D voucher program was conceived, a range of policies were already in place to support businesses affected by COVID-19. Many of these took the form of direct financial support for businesses:

- NSW Government initiatives included grants for small businesses, funding for council childcare centres, sports clubs and local councils, waiving payroll tax for small business and providing funding to arts and cultural organisations in financial distress.⁴⁷
- Australian Government initiatives included the JobKeeper program, Coronavirus Supplement, cash flow boosts for small businesses, and funding support for childcare centres and tourism businesses.⁴⁸

There was also specific support for some D&D businesses through the Rescue and Restart package (NSW) and the Restart Investment to Sustain and Expand (RISE) Fund (Commonwealth). However, these were not directly seeking to encourage consumer spending in affected industries.

Finding:

When the D&D voucher program was conceived, NSW was experiencing low consumer confidence. Spending in recreation businesses was at 37% of its pre-pandemic level. Spending in restaurants, cafes and pubs had recovered and was 8% above the pre-pandemic level.

In this context, the policy intent to stimulate consumer demand and support businesses affected by COVID-19 was relevant. Stimulating demand aligns with creating a “strong, resilient and diverse economy”.

It was also aligned with broader government priorities, including getting residents out and about in a COVID-safe manner.

Finding:

⁴⁷ NSW Government, Closed COVID-19 support programs – statistics, 2023; Parliament of Australia, COVID-19: a chronology of state and territory government announcements (up until 30 June 2020), 2020;

⁴⁸ IMF, 'Policy Responses to COVID-19', 2021

Recreation businesses were more affected by the COVID-19 pandemic than restaurants, cafes and pubs. Spending on recreation businesses remained depressed when the D&D program was conceived. Spending on restaurants, cafes and pubs had recovered to pre-pandemic levels. Supporting restaurants, cafes and pubs was less relevant to creating a “strong, resilient and diverse economy”.

5.1.2 Did the program remain relevant throughout its lifetime?

Post-launch until onset of Delta – February to June 2021

The voucher programs were conceived, designed, established, and launched in condensed timeframes. However, lags are still to be expected between when a program is conceived and when it is launched. Additionally, the pandemic meant that economic conditions were unpredictable. This meant that by the time D&D was launched, economic conditions were significantly better than when the program was first conceived.

Between when the D&D program was conceived (September 2020) and commenced (February 2021), confirmed COVID-19 case numbers remained relatively low and stable.⁴⁹ This is notwithstanding the Northern Beaches outbreak, which began on 16 December 2020. A total of 151 cases were epidemiologically linked to this outbreak. From 20 December, public health restrictions were introduced in the Northern Beaches LGA. The outbreak was successfully contained, and restrictions were removed on January 9 2021.⁵⁰

Following the launch of the program, public health restrictions continued to ease, and the vaccination rollout began. The NSW Government continued to focus on ensuring people and businesses remained COVID-safe:

- continued limits on the number of persons permitted to gather in residential, commercial, and public spaces (subject to the 1 person per 2 square metre rule for most premises)
- enforcement of COVID-safe practices in all commercial and public spaces including the requirement that many premises and events have a COVID-19 Safety Plan in place
- requirements to record personal contact details of all persons entering premises, by QR code check-in or otherwise, to enable contact-tracing.⁵¹

Economic conditions in the businesses in NSW targeted by the Dine vouchers had improved:

- HCFE for hotels, cafes and restaurants in the quarter to 30 June 2021 was 117% higher than the same quarter in 2020.
- HFCE for recreation and culture was 41% higher over the same period (Figure 5.3).
- Illion Spend Analytics data shows that consumer spending in restaurants, cafes and pubs was at normal levels between March and late May, hovering between 96% and 102% of January 2020 spending.⁵²

International borders remained closed. Interstate arrivals continued to be inhibited.⁵³

⁴⁹ COVID Live, NSW Cases, [2023](#).

⁵⁰ Case study: The Northern Beaches outbreak”, [2023](#)

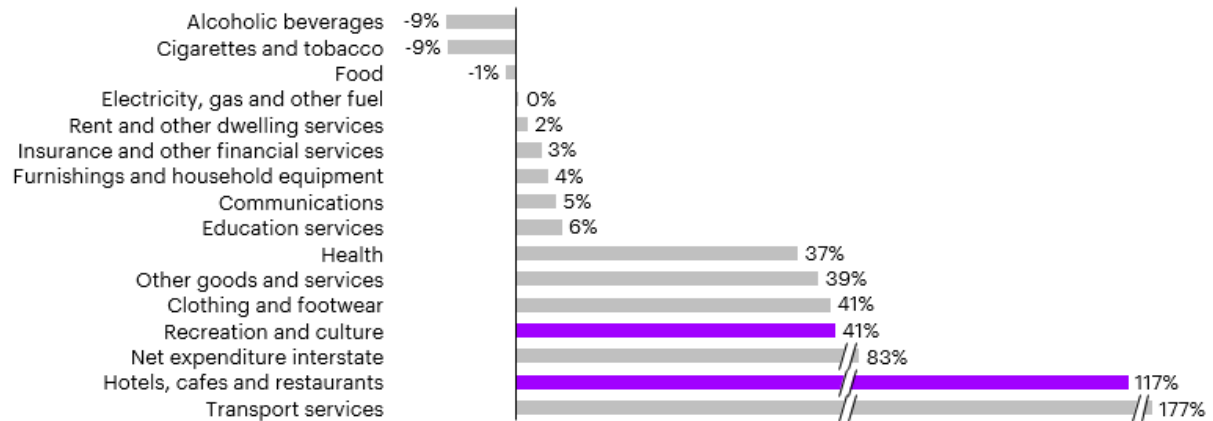
⁵¹ For example, Public Health (COVID-19 Gathering Restrictions) Order [2021](#), 29 March 2021.

⁵² Accenture analysis of Illion Spend Analytics data

⁵³ Destination NSW, “Monthly Domestic Overnight Visitation to NSW”, February 2021

Figure 5.3: NSW household final consumption expenditure in 2021 relative to 2020

% change in household final consumption expenditure, chain volume measures, seasonally adjusted, quarter ending 30 June 2021 vs quarter ending 30 June 2020

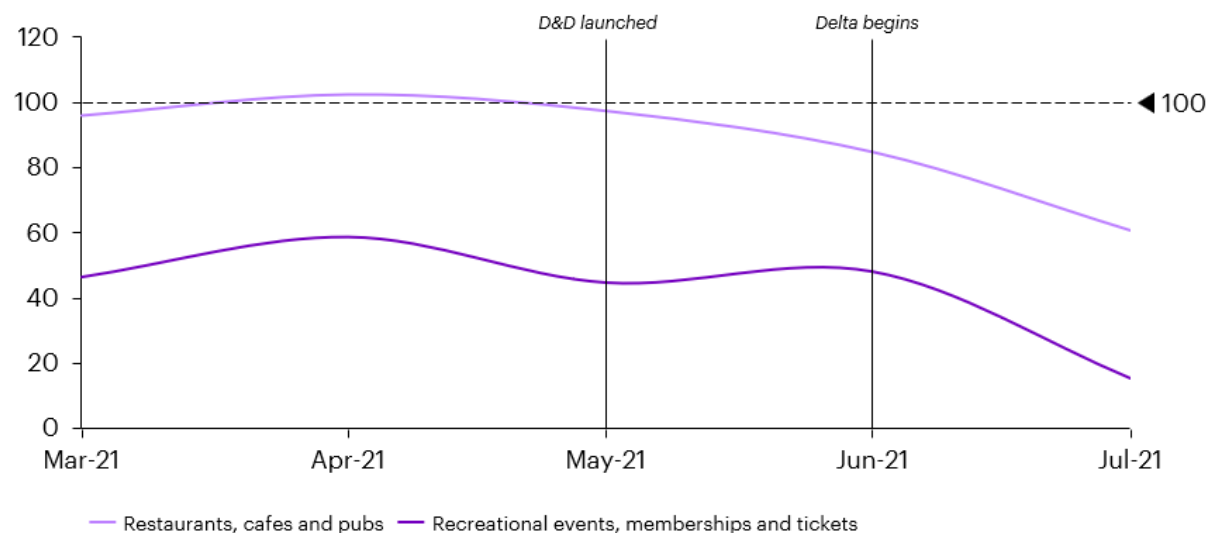


Source: ABS, 'Australian National Accounts: National Income, Expenditure and Product - Table 26', 2023

By contrast, spending at Discover businesses remained depressed from the launch of the D&D program until the beginning of the Delta outbreak (Figure 5.4). Illion data shows that spending at recreation businesses experienced a temporary recovery between February and April 2021.⁵⁴ But spending again declined from 59% to 44% of pre-pandemic levels in May 2021. This occurred prior to the onset of the Delta outbreak, partly due to seasonality (i.e. greater spending during the Easter and school holiday period). There may also have been increased caution amongst residents as the Delta variant of COVID-19 was spreading quickly around the world. Google data on NSW community mobility shows that statewide foot traffic began to decline in May after returning to near pre-pandemic levels in April (Figure 5.5).⁵⁵

Figure 5.4: Consumer spending at restaurants, cafes and pubs and recreation businesses – March 2021 to June 2021

Average consumer spend (\$) in NSW from March 2021 to June 2021 (indexed to January 2020)



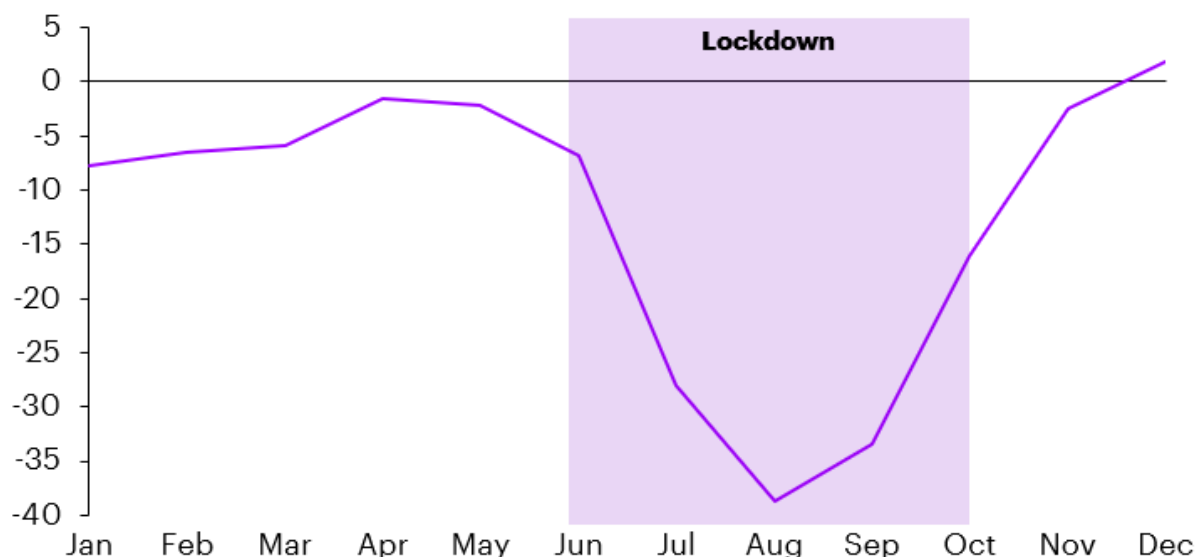
Source: illion Spend Analytics data

⁵⁴ Accenture analysis of illion Spend Analytics data

⁵⁵ Google, "COVID-19 Community Mobility Report - NSW", 2022

Figure 5.5: NSW foot traffic in 2021

%, monthly average of daily foot traffic, baseline = median daily footfall volume for 3 January to 6 February 2020



Source: Google, "COVID-19 Community Mobility Report – NSW", 2022

Overall, the relevance of the D&D program policy intent was mixed during the period from its launch until the onset of the Delta wave.

- Consumer spending in restaurants, cafes and pubs was close to its pre-pandemic level at the time of launch. Given the information available at this time, it was not clear that these businesses required support at this time.
- Consumer spending at recreation businesses remained well below pre-pandemic levels despite a moderate recovery between February and April 2021. Support for these businesses was warranted.

Finding:

The relevance of the D&D voucher program's policy intent between February and June 2021 was mixed. Consumer spending on restaurants, cafes and pubs was at 98% of pre-pandemic levels when the program was launched in February 2021. Spending on recreation businesses had not recovered. It was at 35% of pre-pandemic levels in February 2021. Supporting recreation businesses was more relevant for creating a "strong, resilient and diverse economy".

The program continued to be aligned with broader government priorities of incentivising COVID-safe practices.

Delta onset and program redesign – June to October 2021

The first alteration to the D&D program occurred prior to the outbreak of the Delta variant of the COVID-19 virus. On 9 June the government announced an extension of D&D voucher expiry dates from 30 June to 31 July 2021. The decision was based on expected program underspend, the desire to improve uptake, and to enable the scheme to cover the upcoming winter school holidays.⁵⁶ This was announced on 9 June.⁵⁷ This was a reasonable decision given that economic recovery was ongoing. In May 2022, spending

⁵⁶ NSW Government, 'Dine & Discover NSW vouchers – Internal Policy Guidelines', 2022

⁵⁷ NSW Small Business Commissioner, 'Dine and Discover Extended to 31 July', [2021](#)

on restaurants, cafes and pubs was around pre-pandemic levels. However, spending on recreation businesses remained depressed, at 59% of its pre-pandemic level.⁵⁸

The first cases of the Delta variant of the COVID-19 virus were reported in NSW on 16 June 2021. The NSW Government focused on dual public health aims at this time:

- contain and decrease COVID-19 infections, hospitalisations and deaths
- incentivise vaccination and increase the proportion of residents who are fully vaccinated.⁵⁹

To contain the spread of COVID-19 infections, the NSW Government introduced new Public Health Orders. On 26 June 2021, the NSW Government announced a 2-week stay at home order for residents of Greater Sydney, Blue Mountains, Central Coast and Wollongong and introduced mandatory mask wearing in most circumstances. A different regime of restrictions was implemented in all other parts of NSW, some of which inhibited the normal operation of the businesses targeted by D&D. These were:

- mandatory mask wearing in all indoor non-residential settings
- drinking while standing at indoor venues prohibited
- dancing prohibited except at weddings
- one person per four squares metre rule reintroduced at all indoor and outdoor venues
- outdoor, seated, ticketed events limited to 50 percent capacity.

On 27 June, the Greater Sydney lockdown was extended until at least 28 August 2021.⁶⁰

On 29 June, the following changes to the D&D program were announced:

- the expiry date of unused vouchers was extended from 31 July to 31 August 2021
- Dine businesses were permitted to accept Dine vouchers for delivery takeaway.⁶¹

On 8 July, the Government announced the removal of the exclusion of takeaway businesses from the program.⁶²

The NSW Government made these changes to the D&D policy guidelines to adapt to changing economic and public health circumstances, which affected the relevance of the policy intent and outcomes.

The original policy intent of incentivising consumer spending and supporting businesses by encouraging in-person spending was no longer relevant to the circumstances. More broadly, public health conditions became the central policy focus and concern. In the circumstances, programs aimed at stimulating consumer spending and supporting businesses were less relevant. The Government was focused on addressing public health concerns.

Consumer spending was depressed during the stay-at-home orders. Spending on restaurants, cafes and pubs and recreation businesses fell further. The policy intent of stimulating consumer spending and supporting affected businesses was valid in these circumstances. However, it was not a government priority.

This notwithstanding, the amended expiry dates as well as the decision to allow all Dine businesses to provide delivery takeaway enabled D&D to continue to support businesses to some extent by:

- increasing the number of eligible businesses
- enabling consumers to redeem their Dine vouchers without breaching public health orders.

⁵⁸ Accenture analysis of iillion Spend Analytics data

⁵⁹ NSW Government, 'Certainty for the community as restrictions adjusted and vaccines ramped up', [2021](#)

⁶⁰ NSW Government, 'Public Health (COVID-19 Temporary Movement and Gathering Restrictions) Order 2021, [2021](#), NSW Government, 'Public Health (COVID-19 Mandatory Face Coverings) Order (No 3) [2021](#), Timothy Swanston, "Greater Sydney's two-week lockdown -this is what you need to know about the new restrictions in the capital and around NSW", *ABC News*, [2021](#)

⁶¹ NSW Government, 'Dine & Discover NSW vouchers – Internal Policy Guidelines', 2022

⁶² NSW Treasury, 'Approval of amendment to policy guidelines on the Dine & Discover Voucher Scheme', 8 July 2021

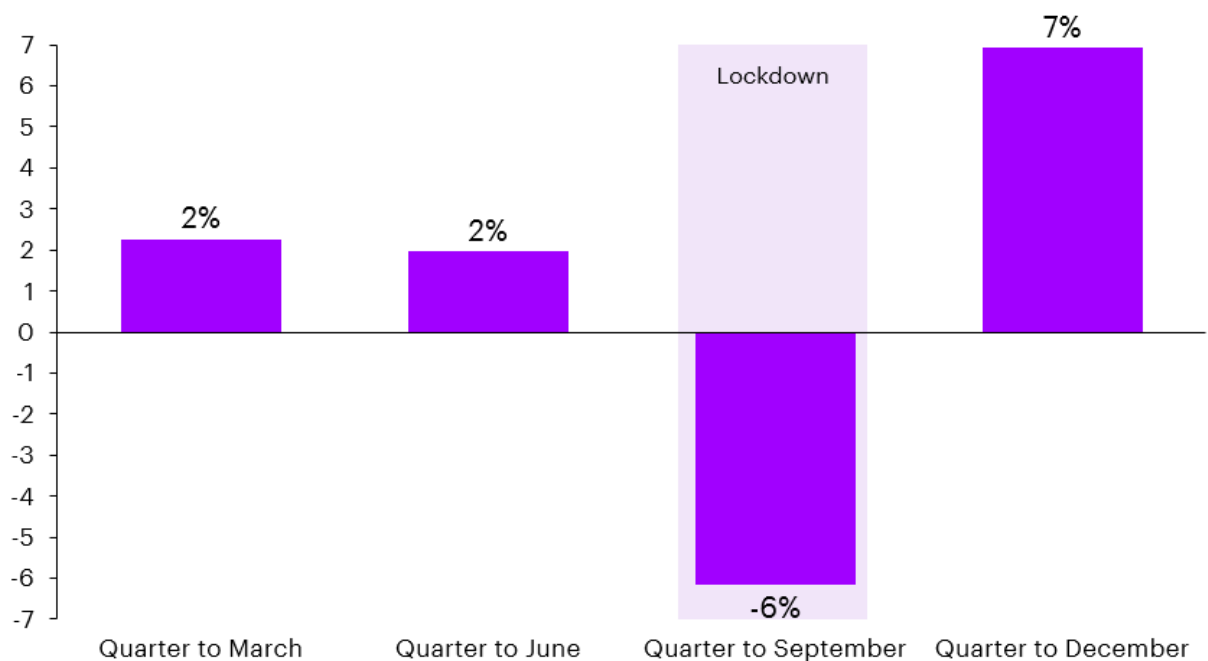
While the expansion of eligibility to takeaway businesses was justified, it was not relevant to the policy intent. This is because consumer spending in this category was high for the duration of the pandemic. On average, consumer spending at takeaway businesses in the 6 months prior to the 2021 lockdown was 105% of January 2020 levels. During the lockdown, it averaged 100% of January 2020 levels (Figure 5.7). As such, neither consumer spending nor the businesses in this sector required government support.

Chapter 6 (Implementation) details the unintended side-effects that arose from the government’s response to changing circumstances.

The Greater Sydney lockdown and statewide restrictions caused a sharp contraction in state economic activity (Figure 5.6).

Figure 5.6: NSW economic contraction during 2021 Delta lockdown period

NSW State Final Demand, % change on previous quarter



Source: ABS, 'Australian National Accounts: State Accounts - Table 2', 2023

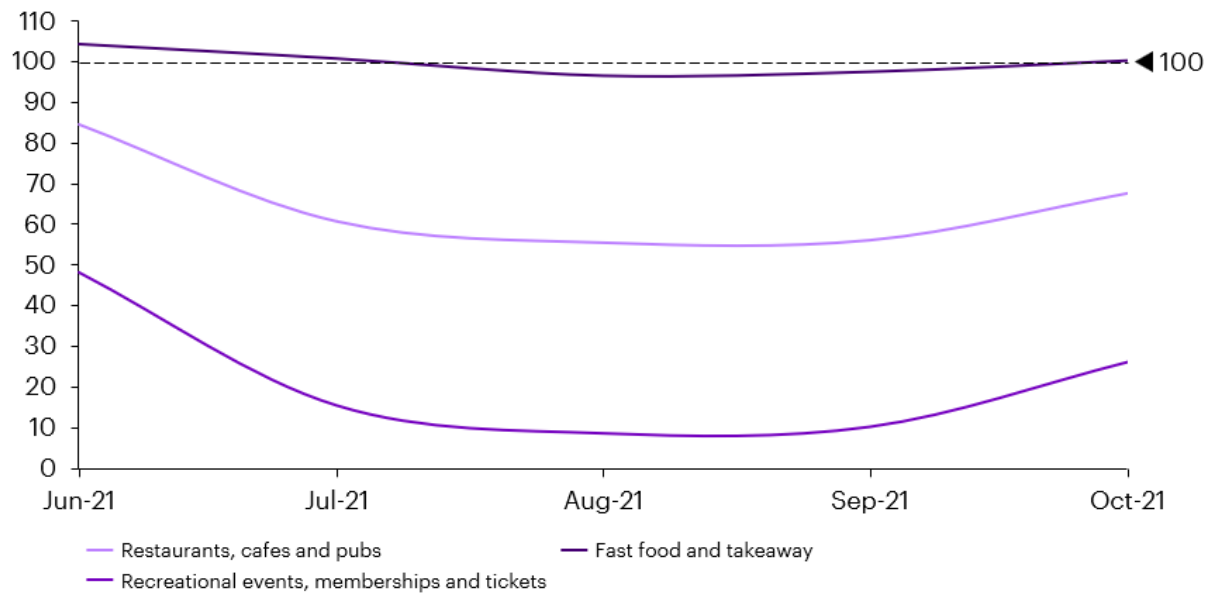
The largest impacts were on industries that rely on in-person interactions or the ability to leave home. Illion data shows that in the three months to October 2021:

- spending at restaurants, cafes and pubs fell 34%
- spending at recreation businesses fell by 79%.⁶³

⁶³ Accenture analysis of illion Spend Analytics data

Figure 5.7: Average consumer spending at restaurants, cafes and pubs, recreation businesses and fast food and takeaway businesses – Delta onset and program redesign

\$, indexed to January 2020



Source: illion Spend Analytics Data

Finding:

The original policy mechanism of incentivising consumer spending and supporting businesses by encouraging in-person spending was no longer relevant to the circumstances. More broadly, public health conditions became the central policy focus and concern. In the circumstances, programs aimed at stimulating consumer spending and supporting businesses were not a government priority. However, consumer spending was depressed, including on hotels, cafes, restaurants and recreation businesses.

Finding:

The D&D program was adapted at the start of the Delta outbreak with the addition of takeaway. This was appropriate to ensure alignment with the NSW Government’s public health priorities.

However, takeaway businesses were not adversely affected by the pandemic. While public health restrictions were in place following the Delta outbreak, consumer spending on takeaway businesses was above 100% of January 2020 levels.

D&D extension and additional vouchers – October 2021 to end of June 2022

The extension of the D&D program until 30 June 2022 was announced on 13 August 2021.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ NSW Government, ‘Dine & Discover NSW’, 2021. Record obtained via ‘Wayback Machine Internet Archive’ for url: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/dine-discover-nsw>; 7 News, ‘NSW Dine and Discover program extended to end of July 2022 as state endures lockdown’, 13 August 2021

Reported COVID-19 cases in NSW peaked at 1,509 in September 2021. By early October, they had dropped below 700.⁶⁵

On 8 October 2021, NSW Health announced that 70.3% of residents were fully vaccinated against COVID-19.⁶⁶ The NSW Government announced that restrictions would be eased for fully vaccinated residents, in accordance with the statewide Roadmap to Recovery – Reopening NSW.⁶⁷

The NSW Government continued to have dual aims of managing case numbers and incentivising vaccination. However, the emphasis shifted to encouraging vaccination and living with the virus.

On 13 October, the NSW Government announced that it would grant one additional Dine voucher and one additional Discover voucher to each NSW resident, expiring 30 June 2022. The program was expanded to “restore confidence for consumers” and to “support NSW residents to get ‘out and about’”.⁶⁸ This formed part of the NSW Government’s COVID-19 Economic Recovery Strategy.

At the time this change was made, the near-to-medium term economic outlook was uncertain. Policymakers could not predict if a new COVID-19 variant would force additional lockdowns.

However, evidence from previous lockdowns in NSW and other jurisdictions had shown that the end of a lockdown releases pent-up demand which drives recovery in economic activity.⁶⁹

Following the easing of restrictions from October 2021, there was an economic rebound:

- in the quarter to 31 December 2021, household consumption expenditure increased by 11.5%
- NSW state final demand rose by 7% in the same quarter⁷⁰
- consumer spending at restaurants, cafes and pubs trended upwards and reached 79% of pre-pandemic levels in January 2022 (Figure 5.8)
- consumer spending on fast food and takeaway businesses spend was at 110% of pre-pandemic levels in January 2022 (Figure 5.8)
- consumer spending at recreation businesses also began to recover more quickly, reaching 74% of pre-pandemic levels in January 2022 (Figure 5.8).

This occurred despite the emergence of the COVID-19 Omicron variant. The first case of Omicron in Australia was detected in NSW on 4 December 2021.⁷¹

⁶⁵ NSW Government, ‘NSW COVID-19 cases data’, [2023](#)

⁶⁶ NSW Health, ‘COVID-19 (Coronavirus) statistics’, [2021](#)

⁶⁷ NSW Government, ‘The Roadmap to Recovery – Reopening NSW’, [2021](#)

⁶⁸ NSW Government, ‘COVID-19 Economic Recovery Strategy’, [2021](#)

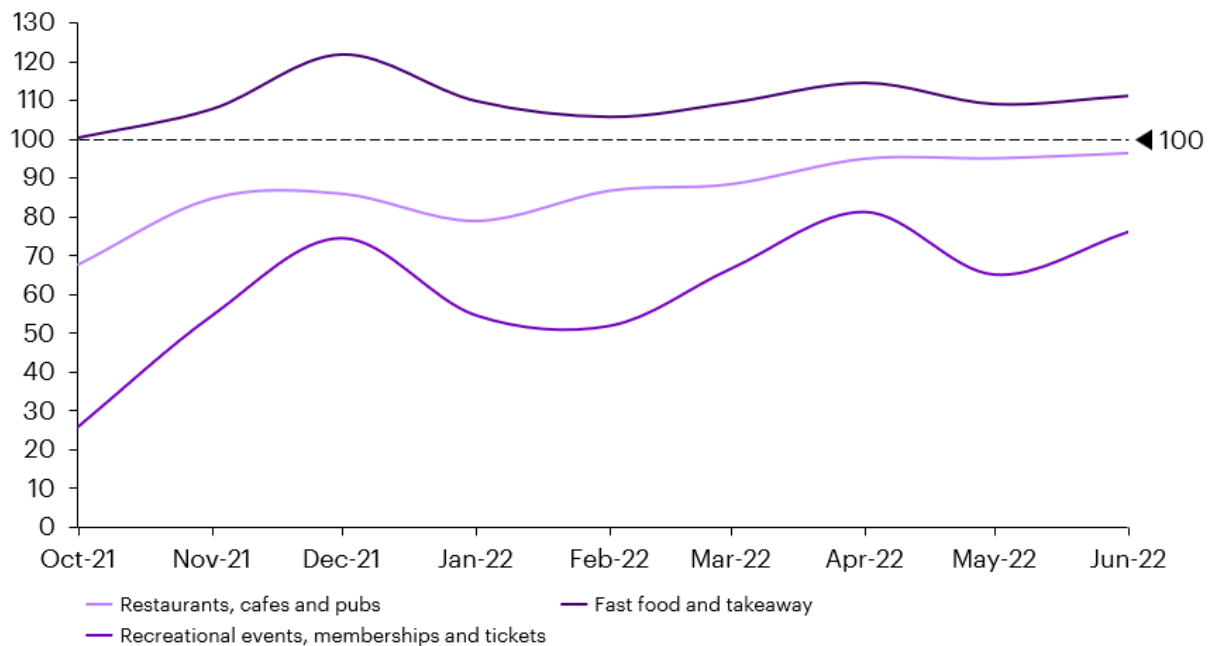
⁶⁹ Consultation with NSW Government stakeholders

⁷⁰ ABS, Australian National Accounts: National Income, Expenditure and Product, [2023](#)

⁷¹ Chang *et al.*, ‘Persistence of the Omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2 in Australia: The impact of fluctuating social distancing’, *PLOS Global Public Health*, [2023](#)

Figure 5.8: Average consumer spend at restaurants, cafes and pubs, recreation businesses, and fast food and takeaway businesses – October 2021 to June 2022

\$, indexed to January 2020



Source: illion Spend Analytics data

The extension of the expiry dates of existing vouchers combined with the addition of two extra vouchers meant 54% of the total spend of the program was deployed between 17 October 2021 and 30 June 2022.⁷² During this period, consumer spending on restaurants, cafes and pubs and recreation businesses was growing.

In addition, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) exceeded the 3% upper limit of the Reserve Bank of Australia’s inflation target from October.⁷³ As a result, the additional support for businesses included in the D&D program was not necessary, and the policy intent became increasingly inconsistent with other economic objectives.

This was recognised by NSW Treasury at the time, which advised the government that there was less need for the additional vouchers in 2021.⁷⁴

⁷² D&D program redemption data provided by Service NSW

⁷³ ABS, ‘Consumer Price Index, Australia’, 2023

⁷⁴ Consultation with NSW Government stakeholders

Finding:

An extension of the D&D program in October 2021 was not relevant given the economic circumstances at the time.

Aggregate demand was recovering across NSW. Restaurants, cafes and pubs in particular did not require further stimulus:

- spending on fast food and takeaway businesses was at 100% of the pre-pandemic level
- consumer spending on restaurants and cafes was recovering, at 68% of the pre-pandemic level.

The policy intent remained relevant for recreation businesses, where consumer spending was at 10% of pre-pandemic levels.

Recommendation:

In line with NSW Government evaluation guidelines, a program should be evaluated, and the evaluation findings should be communicated, before extending it. The evaluation should assess the extent to which the program will remain relevant for the duration of the extension period. Economic circumstances and public health restrictions changed quickly during the COVID-19 pandemic. This affected the feasibility and appropriateness of undertaking standard evaluation procedures at the time.

5.2 Stay

5.2.1 Was the Stay program's policy intent and outcomes relevant and appropriate to creating a strong, resilient and diverse economy?

The Stay and Rediscover program was first announced to the public on 25 March 2021.⁷⁵ The program originally intended to allocate 200,000 \$100 vouchers to NSW residents for use in the Sydney CBD. Prior to launch, this was amended to one \$50 voucher available to all NSW residents. The purpose of this was to encourage consumers to spend on accommodation businesses in the CBD. International borders were closed at this time, and interstate visitor numbers were limited.⁷⁶

The program was piloted in December 2021 in the City of Sydney LGA.⁷⁷ It was subsequently rolled out from 21 February 2022 and was available to all NSW residents by 2 March.⁷⁸

Supporting accommodation providers in the CBD

When the Stay program was first announced, economic indicators suggest that demand in the broader economy was recovering from the impacts of the COVID-19 restrictions imposed in 2020.

- NSW household final consumption expenditure increased by 1.2% (seasonally adjusted) in the quarter to 31 March 2021⁷⁹
- consumer confidence in March 2021 was close to the ten-year high that had been reached in December 2020.⁸⁰

However, low visitor rates, predominantly due to restrictions on travel and border closures, suggest that accommodation businesses were struggling:

- In the year ending 31 December 2020, NSW recorded a considerable drop in visitor numbers due to border closures. It received 669,300 short-term international visitor arrivals (compared to 3.48 million in the previous year).⁸¹
- In the year ending 31 March 2021 as shown by Figure 5.9,
 - NSW overnight domestic travel fell by 33% compared to the year ending 31 March 2020
 - Overnight domestic travel in Sydney fell by 60%
 - NSW domestic overnight visitor spend declined 36%.⁸²

⁷⁵ Gladys Berejiklian, Dominic Perrottet, Stuart Ayres, 'NSW Pumps-Up the Volume With Package to Support Accommodation, Live Music Events', [2021](#)

⁷⁶ Destination NSW, 'Monthly Domestic Overnight Visitation to NSW', February 2021

⁷⁷ NSW Government, 'Extended Stay and Rediscover Voucher Program Policy Guidelines', 2021

⁷⁸ Parliament of NSW, 'Questions and Answers No. 144', 24 February [2022](#), p.6565

⁷⁹ ABS, 'Australian National Accounts', [2023](#)

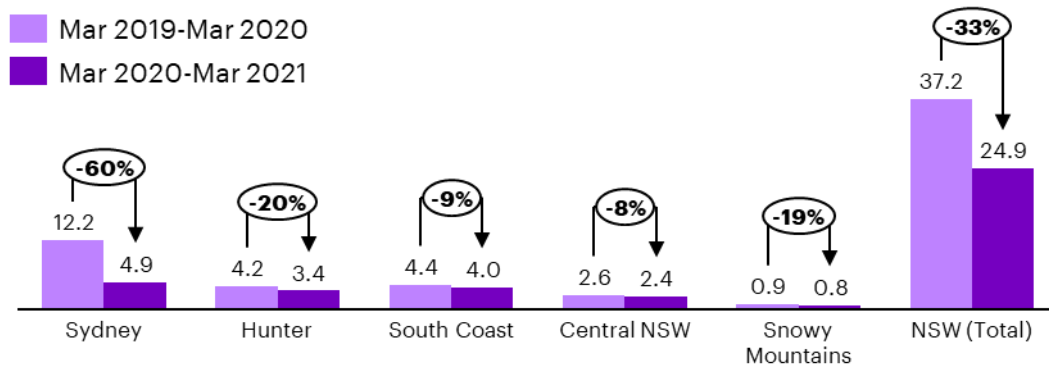
⁸⁰ Westpac-Melbourne Institute Index of Consumer Sentiment, 10 March 2021

⁸¹ ABS, Overseas Arrivals and Departures, Australia, [13.5 Short-term visitor arrivals, Australia - state/territory of stay - 2009-10 and 2019-20; 13.5 Short-term visitor arrivals, Australia — State/Territory of Stay — 2010-11 and 2020-21.](#)

⁸² Destination NSW, 'Domestic Overnight Travel to NSW: Key Statistics - YE March 2021', [2021](#)

Figure 5.9: Change in number of overnight visits to NSW regions

Visitors (millions)

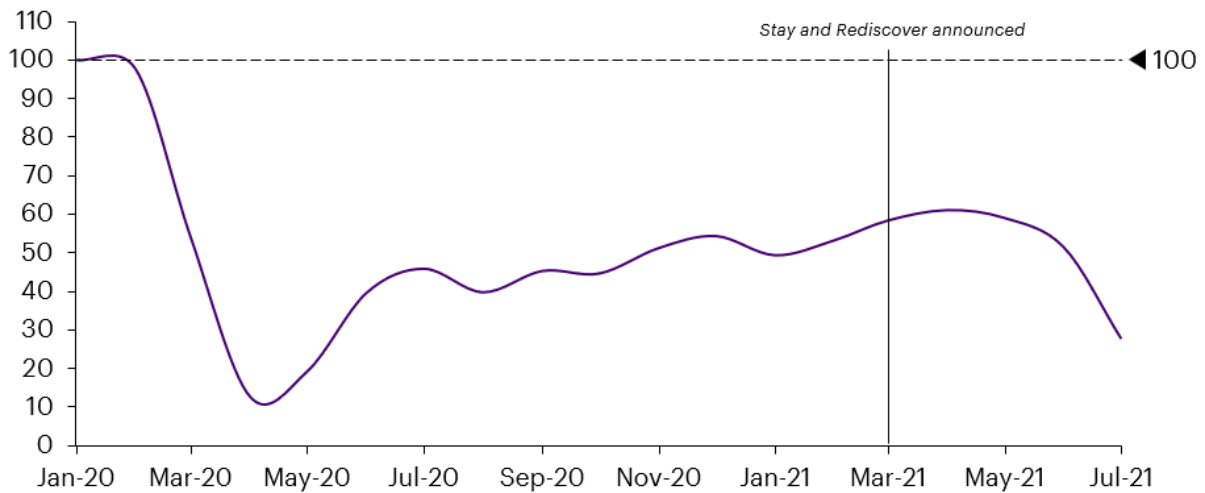


Source: Destination NSW, 'Domestic Overnight' Travel to NSW: Key Statistics - YE March 2021, 2021

Whilst not directly correlated, this had a flow-on effect on spending at accommodation businesses. At the time the Stay program was announced, demand for accommodation remained depressed. Illion data shows spending by Australian residents on accommodation businesses in NSW was approximately 42% below its pre-pandemic (January 2020) level (Figure 5.10).

Figure 5.10: Average consumer spend at accommodation businesses - Stay and Rediscover program inception

\$, January 2020 to June 2021 (indexed to January 2020)



Source: illion Spend Analytics data

Finding:

When the Stay program was first conceived, spending on accommodation businesses was at 58% of the pre-pandemic level. Overnight domestic travel in Sydney fell by 60% in the year to 31 March 2021. The policy intent to support accommodation providers in the CBD was relevant.

There was also a case for supporting accommodation providers in regional NSW. Domestic overnight visitor numbers in regional NSW fell by 20% in the year to 31 March 2021.

The Stay program was also aligned with broader government priorities, including getting residents out and about in a COVID-safe manner.

Recommendation:

Accommodation businesses across NSW were affected by public health restrictions and changes in consumer behaviour following the onset of COVID-19. The original policy intent of Stay and Rediscover restricted support to eligible accommodation businesses in the Sydney CBD. Future programs should consider the equity implications of eligibility criteria based on geography.

The first iteration of the Stay program was discontinued due to the outbreak of the Delta variant in June 2021, and associated public health orders.⁸³

Supporting accommodation providers across NSW

As part of its Economic Recovery Strategy released in October 2021, the NSW Government announced the revised Stay program.⁸⁴ The Stay program's policy intent was to help **support accommodation providers** in NSW impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic (see Voucher program logic). There was also a secondary goal of encouraging spending more broadly (Box 1).

The NSW Government also provided more direct support to tourism businesses through the D&D program. The Discover vouchers could be used at transport providers, tour operators, recreation services providers and travel agents. The Stay program supplemented this tourism sector support.

The Stay program was conceived in the wake of the Delta outbreak of COVID-19 and subsequent public health restrictions. Economic conditions in NSW had worsened in the quarter to 30 September 2021:

- NSW state final demand fell 6.2% (seasonally adjusted)
- NSW household consumption expenditure fell 10.8% (seasonally adjusted).⁸⁵

When the Stay program was announced, the State was reopening in a COVID-safe manner. The NSW Government was again seeking to encourage residents to get out and about in a COVID-safe manner. Double-vaccinated residents were able to:

- travel within Greater Sydney and Regional NSW
- attend hospitality, retail stores and gyms, subject to social distancing rules (1 person per 4 square metres).

While restrictions on travel had eased, demand for accommodation had not recovered:

⁸³ Consultation with NSW Government stakeholders.

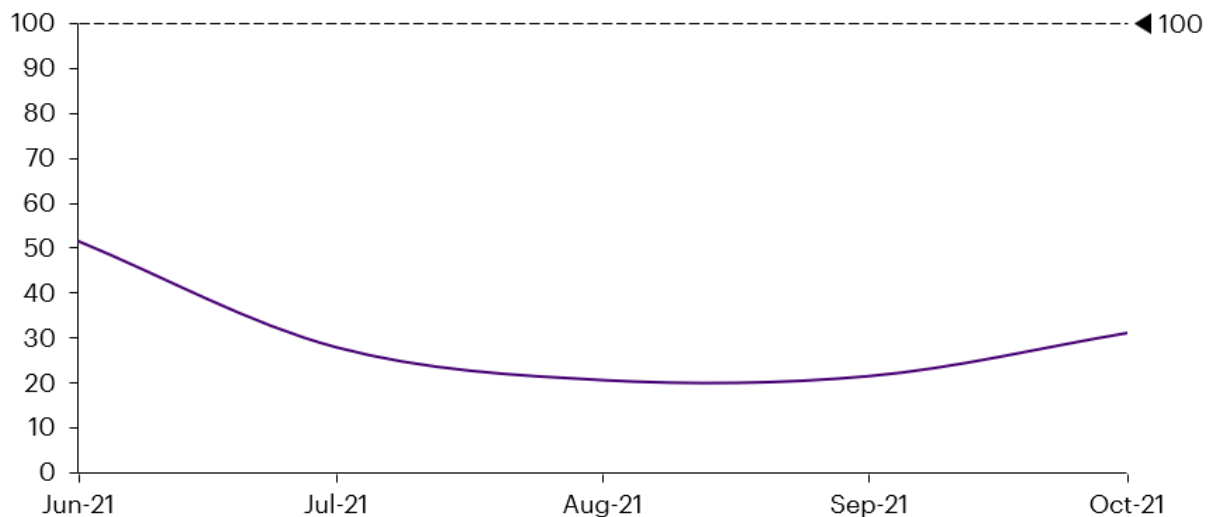
⁸⁴ NSW Government, 2021, [COVID-19 Economic Recovery Strategy](#)

⁸⁵ ABS, 'Australian National Accounts', [2023](#)

- in the month of September 2021, NSW received 349,000 domestic overnight visitors, down 82% on September 2020⁸⁶
- in the quarter to 30 September 2021, occupancy rates in Sydney Centre and regional NSW were down 9% and 36%, respectively, compared to the same quarter in 2020⁸⁷
- consumer spending at accommodation businesses fell by 40% between June and October 2021 (Figure 5.11)
- consumer spending at accommodation businesses was at 31% of its pre-pandemic (January 2020) level in October 2021.⁸⁸

Figure 5.11: Average consumer spend at accommodation businesses – Delta outbreak to the announcement of the revised Stay program

\$, June to October 2021, indexed to January 2020



Source: illion Spend Analytics data

Finding:

When the revised Stay program was announced in October 2021, spending on accommodation businesses had fallen to 31% of the pre-pandemic level. Domestic overnight visitors in the month of September 2021 had fallen by 82% compared to September 2020. The policy intent to support accommodation providers across NSW was relevant.

Box 1: A multiplier effect in the tourism sector

The Stay program policy guidelines suggest that there was a secondary goal: “[t]he purpose... is to incentivise discretionary travel across NSW, where there may be a multiplier effect”.⁸⁹

When people take trips, they are likely to spend more than they would have otherwise. The additional spending can occur:

⁸⁶ Destination NSW, ‘Monthly Domestic Overnight Visitation to NSW September 2021’, [2021](#).

⁸⁷ Destination NSW, ‘NSW Tourist Accommodation Snapshot’, [2021](#). Sydney Centre includes Sydney CBD, Barangaroo, The Rocks, Haymarket, Ultimo, Chippendale, Pyrmont, Surry Hills, Woolloomooloo/Potts Point and Waterloo.

⁸⁸ Accenture analysis of illion Spend Analytics data

⁸⁹ NSW Treasury, ‘Extended Stay and Rediscover Voucher Program Policy Guidelines’, [2022](#)

- a. in their local area, where travelers seek information, book their trip and buy supplies or equipment
- b. while on the trip to their destination, where they may spend money on fuel, tolls, food, accommodation for stopovers
- c. at the destination, where tourists may spend on accommodation, gastronomy, groceries, activities, souvenirs, services and more.⁹⁰

Travellers spend more on overnight trips than on day trips. Over the last fifteen years, Australian residents spent an average of \$73 more on an overnight visit than a day trip in NSW.⁹¹ The additional spending is mainly attributed to accommodation costs.⁹²

In this context, the NSW Government chose to target accommodation businesses through the Stay program. This was a sound strategy to encourage people to take overnight trips and leverage on behavioural trends associated with greater spending while on holiday. In this way, the Stay program likely benefited businesses in sectors beyond the accommodation sector.

This secondary goal was relevant given economic conditions at the time the Stay program was announced. Border closures and public health restrictions disproportionately impacted the visitor economy in NSW. In financial year 2021-22:

- total tourism gross state product (both direct and indirect) was worth \$20.1 billion to the NSW economy (up 2.8% on 2020-21 and down 47% on 2018-19)
- total tourism gross value added was worth \$17.6 billion to the NSW economy (up 3.1% on 2020-21 and down 48% on 2018-19)
- total tourism filled jobs (both direct and indirect) was 174,500 in NSW (down 2.4% on 2020-21 and down 45% on 2018-19).⁹³

Finding:

The secondary policy goal of the Stay program to encourage discretionary travel across NSW, in order to incentivise additional spending in other industries, was relevant. The Stay program encouraged residents to go on overnight trips, where they were likely to spend money in local economies.

The secondary policy goal was relevant to the State Outcome of creating a “strong, resilient and diverse economy”.

5.2.2 Did the Stay program remain relevant throughout its lifetime?

Stay program establishment phase – October 2021 to February 2022

Between when the Stay program was announced (October 2021) and commenced (February 2022), economic conditions in NSW were improving. In the quarter ending 31 December 2021:

- NSW household consumption expenditure increased by 11.5% in seasonally adjusted terms
- NSW state final demand rose 6.9% on a seasonally adjusted basis.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Marius Mayer, Luisa Vogt, Economic effects of tourism and its influencing factors, De Gruyter Oldenbourg, Volume 8, Issue 2, 2016, Pages 169-198, DOI 10.1515/tw-2016-0017.

⁹¹ Tourism Research Australia, Overnight trips, Nights, Daytrips and Spend in Australia by residents by destination state or region for year ending June 2008 to year ending June 2023.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Tourism Research Australia, State Tourism Satellite Account, [2021-22](#).

⁹⁴ ABS, 'Australian National Accounts: National Income, Expenditure and Product – Table 26', [2023](#)

Public health restrictions were being eased as the NSW Government focused on emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic in a COVID-safe way, encouraging vaccination and living with the virus.

International borders were also open to all vaccinated travelers from 21 February.

Occupancy rates for accommodation in NSW began to rise from October 2021 after a downfall during the winter months following the Delta outbreak. Occupancy in regional NSW began to exceed that of Sydney as a result of increased intrastate travel after restrictions eased. In the quarter ending 31 December 2021:

- occupancy rates in regional NSW rose from 20.8% to 49.2%. This was still 17% below the quarter ending 31 December 2020
- occupancy rates in Sydney Centre saw a more modest rise from 21.6% to 33%. This was still 9% lower than the quarter ending 31 December 2020.

Overall accommodation performance saw a dip due to the outbreak of the Omicron variant of COVID-19 in January 2022.⁹⁵ However domestic overnight visitation to NSW in January 2022 was approximately 6% higher than in January 2021.⁹⁶

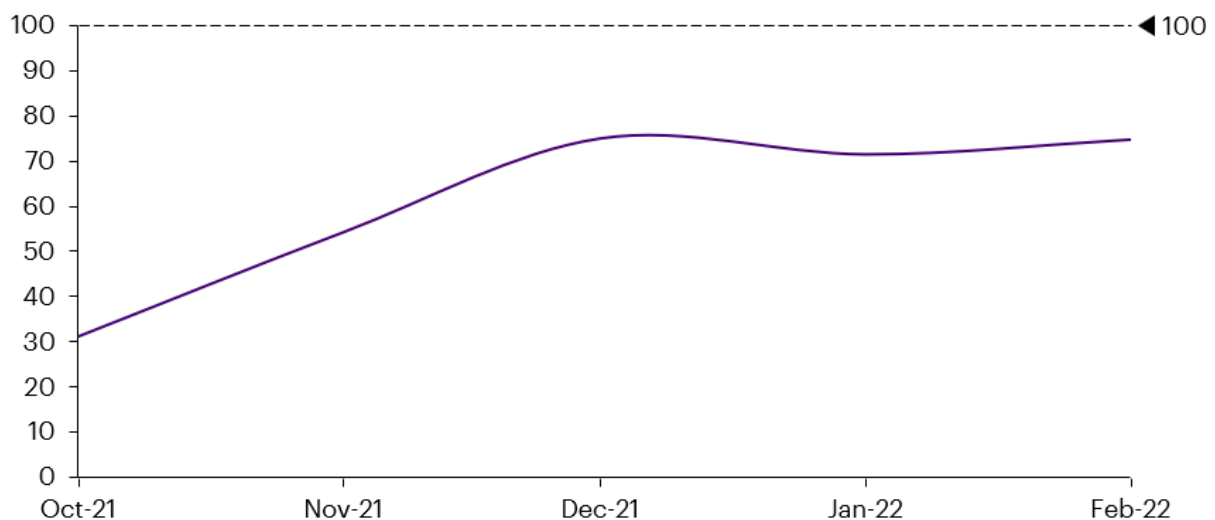
In February 2022, domestic overnight visitation was 2% lower than in February 2021. Greater Sydney received 19% more overnight visitors than in February 2021, while regional NSW had 9% less visitors.⁹⁷

Consumer spending on accommodation businesses increased by 130% between October 2021 and February 2022, approaching pre-pandemic levels (Figure 5.12). The summer holiday period boosted consumer spending on accommodation businesses. However, there was a temporary slowdown in spending in January 2022 due to the outbreak of the Omicron variant of COVID-19.

At this time, the near-to-medium term economic outlook was uncertain. Policymakers could not predict if a new COVID-19 variant would force additional lockdowns.

Figure 5.12: Average consumer spend at accommodation businesses during Stay design phase

\$, indexed to January 2020



Source: illion Spend Analytics data

⁹⁵ Destination NSW, 'NSW Tourist Accommodation Snapshot – March Qtr 2022', [2021](#)

⁹⁶ Destination NSW, 'Monthly Domestic Overnight Visitation to NSW February 2022', [2022](#).

⁹⁷ Destination NSW, 'Monthly Domestic Overnight Visitation to NSW February 2022', [2022](#).

Finding:

The policy intent to support accommodation providers in NSW was less relevant by the time the Stay program launched. Consumer spending on accommodation businesses was recovering, reaching 75% of the pre-pandemic level. Domestic overnight visitation to NSW was approximately 6% higher in January 2022 than January 2021. International borders reopened as the Stay program commenced.

Stay program rollout – February to October 2022

The Stay program operated from February 2022 until 9 October 2022 when vouchers expired. From early 2022, the NSW Government continued easing public health restrictions while encouraging COVID-safe practices. This resulted in higher COVID-19 case numbers.⁹⁸

From April 2022, unvaccinated international travelers arriving in NSW were no longer required to undertake hotel quarantine.⁹⁹

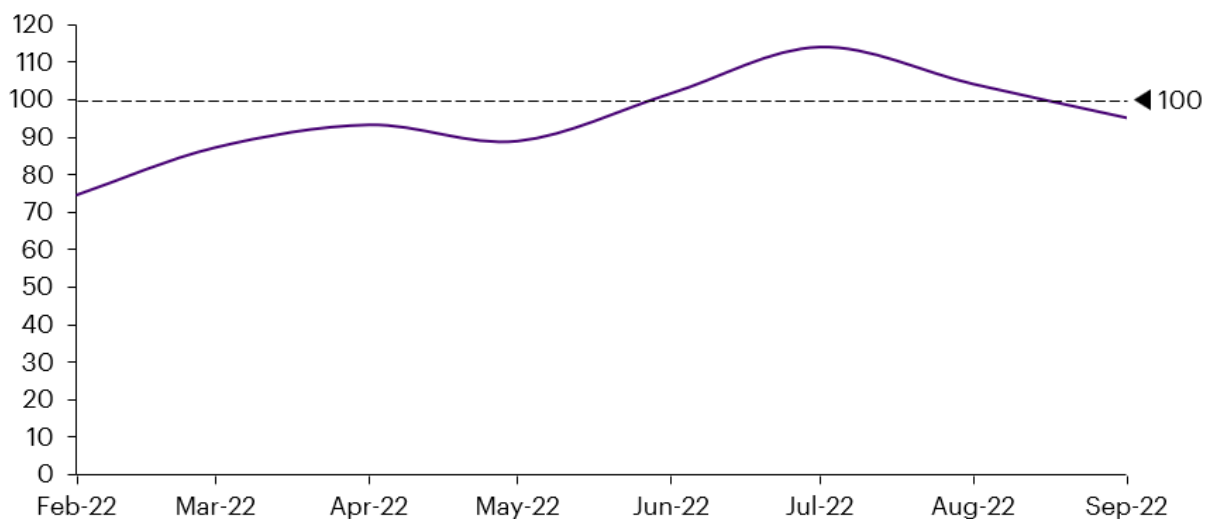
Economic conditions were improving in NSW:

- NSW State final demand rose by 3% on a seasonally adjusted basis in the June 2022 quarter¹⁰⁰
- household consumption expenditure rose by 2.5% in the June 2022 quarter in seasonally adjusted terms.¹⁰¹

Consumer spending on accommodation businesses continued to rise during the Stay program rollout. It reached its pre-pandemic level (January 2020) in June 2022. In July 2022, spending in accommodation businesses was 14% higher than January 2020.

Figure 5.13: Average consumer spend at accommodation businesses – Stay program rollout

\$, indexed to January 2020



Source: illion Spend Analytics data

When the program launched, accommodation businesses were experiencing higher occupancy and visitation. In the quarter to 31 March 2022:

⁹⁸ NSW recorded over 25,000 new daily cases of COVID-19 on 1 April 2022.

⁹⁹ NSW Health, 'Public health orders relating to gathering, movement and safety: roadmap for easing restrictions', [2022](#)

¹⁰⁰ ABS, 'Australian National Accounts: National Income, Expenditure and Product – Table 26', [2023](#)

¹⁰¹ ABS, 'Australian National Accounts', [2023](#)

- occupancy rates in regional NSW increased by 14.1% to 63.3%
- occupancy rates in the Sydney Centre increased by 8.8% to 41.8%.

This is largely attributed to the summer holiday period.

In April 2022 (being Easter and school holidays), NSW had the highest number of domestic overnight visitors since May 2019 (pre-pandemic).¹⁰²

International visitors had also returned to NSW. In the year to March 2022, international visitors increased by 600% compared to the year to March 2021. These visitors spent a total of \$1.2 billion dollars in NSW.¹⁰³

Occupancy rates in NSW continued to recover while the Stay program was live. In the quarter to 30 June 2022:

- occupancy rates in NSW overall increased by 14% on the previous quarter to 65.8%. This was 11% higher than the same quarter in 2021.
- occupancy rates in Sydney reached 64.8%
- occupancy rates in regional NSW rose just 1% on the previous quarter to 64.3%.¹⁰⁴

School holiday periods in April, July and October 2022 saw a rise in domestic overnight visitation. The number of overnight visitors to NSW in October 2022 was 216% higher than in October 2021 when public health restrictions were beginning to ease, and 22% higher than October 2020.¹⁰⁵

Finding:

The accommodation sector was recovering during the Stay program rollout. NSW had the highest number of domestic overnight visitors in April 2022 since May 2019. Occupancy in NSW rose by 14% in the quarter to 30 June 2022. Spending on accommodation businesses reached 114% of its pre-pandemic level in July 2022. The policy intent to support accommodation businesses statewide was no longer relevant.

¹⁰² Destination NSW, Monthly Domestic Overnight Visitation to NSW April 2022, [2022](#).

¹⁰³ Destination NSW, "International Travel to NSW Visitor Profile – Year ended March 2022", March 2022.

¹⁰⁴ Destination NSW, [NSW Tourist Accommodation Snapshots](#).

¹⁰⁵ Destination NSW, Monthly Domestic Overnight Visitation to NSW October 2022, [2022](#)

5.3 Parents

5.3.1 Was the Parents program's policy intent and outcomes relevant and appropriate to creating a strong, resilient and diverse economy?

The Parents voucher program was announced on 21 October 2021 and went live to users on 6 February 2022.¹⁰⁶ The policy intent was “to reward and thank eligible households for their efforts to support learning from home in 2021” (see Voucher program logic).

The NSW Government was also aiming to “encourage households to get out and about and help support accommodation and Discover businesses in NSW impacted by COVID-19”.¹⁰⁷

The Parents program was conceived in the wake of the Delta outbreak of COVID-19 during winter 2021. It was announced as part of the NSW Government's Economic Recovery Strategy.¹⁰⁸ At this time the State was reopening in a COVID-safe manner.

Economic conditions in NSW had worsened in the quarter to 30 September 2021:

- NSW state final demand fell 6.2% (seasonally adjusted)
- NSW household consumption expenditure fell 10.8% (seasonally adjusted).¹⁰⁹

The sectors included in the Parents program were those targeted by the Discover vouchers (arts, recreation and tourism) and the Stay voucher program (accommodation). As discussed, businesses in these sectors had been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic:

- in the quarter to 30 September 2021, occupancy rates fell 36% in regional NSW and 9% in Sydney compared to the same quarter in 2020¹¹⁰
- from June to October 2021:
 - spending on recreation businesses fell by 46%, to 26% of the pre-pandemic level (Figure 5.14)
 - spending on accommodation businesses fell by 40%, to 31% of the pre-pandemic level (Figure 5.14).

However, when the Parents program was announced consumer spending in the relevant sectors was starting to recover based on illion data.

¹⁰⁶ NSW Government, 'Recovery Voucher Program Steering Committee Meeting #11', 9 February 2022

¹⁰⁷ NSW Government, Parents NSW Voucher Program Guidelines, 2022

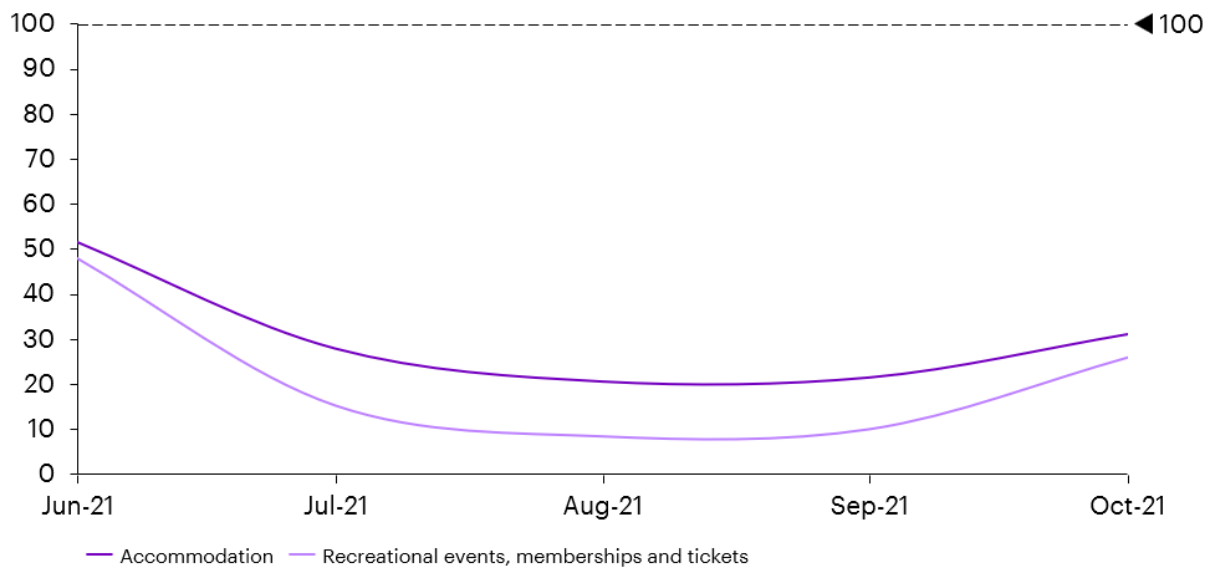
¹⁰⁸ NSW Government, 2021, [COVID-19 Economic Recovery Strategy](#)

¹⁰⁹ ABS, 'Australian National Accounts', 2023

¹¹⁰ Destination NSW, 'Monthly Domestic Overnight Visitation to NSW September 2021', [2021](#).

Figure 5.14: Average consumer spend at accommodation and recreation businesses – Parents program inception

\$, June to October 2021, indexed to January 2020



Source: illion Spend Analytics data

These sectors were already receiving support via the D&D and Stay programs. The NSW Government had also announced that every resident could receive an additional Discover voucher. The additional voucher was not relevant given the economic circumstances at the time.

Finding:

The businesses targeted by the Parents program had been negatively impacted by the pandemic and consumer spending remained below the pre-pandemic level. Spending on accommodation and recreation businesses was beginning to recover when the Parents program was announced.

Domestic overnight visitation to NSW fell due to the Delta outbreak. NSW received the lowest number of domestic overnight visitors in September 2021 since before the pandemic. However, domestic overnight visitation was three times higher in October 2021.

NSW reached double vaccination targets and restrictions were being eased, in the lead up to the summer period. Spending, and domestic overnight visitation, could be expected to continue rising at this time.

It was not relevant to support arts, recreation and tourism businesses and accommodation businesses beyond the support provided by the Stay and D&D programs.

However, the program was aligned with broader government priorities of encouraging residents to get vaccinated.

Irrespective of the case for further stimulus, the policy intent of the Parents program was not relevant to the State Outcome of creating a “strong, resilient and diverse economy”. The tension between the policy intent and state outcome is reflected in feedback from consumer focus groups. Some parents highlighted their confusion around whether the intent was to reward parents or stimulate the economy.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Accenture focus group, Parents, January 2023

Even if it were accepted that thanking cohorts who were severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic was relevant to the State Outcome, it is not clear on what basis parents, rather than some other group (e.g., medical professionals) were selected for this purpose.

Finding:

The Parents program policy intent was not relevant to creating a “strong, resilient and diverse economy”.

There are more appropriate methods by which the NSW Government could support families affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic created pressures for parents and carers of school-aged children. From 12 July 2021 to 18 October 2021, in line with stay-at-home orders, attendance in schools fell to 50%. The majority of school children engaged in online learning during this time.¹¹² This meant that parents and carers were required to support their children’s schooling. They also had to balance learning from home with other responsibilities and challenges.

A survey of 200 parents or carers conducted by Macquarie University found that around 84% of parents found the experience of home schooling their children to be stressful, primarily due to juggling their own work, as well as the pressures of social isolation and their child’s lack of engagement and motivation. The study also reported that parents or carers were spending an average of 14.1 hours per week supporting their children’s schooling during this period.¹¹³

Research has highlighted the negative impact on the mental health of Australian adolescents.¹¹⁴ Research has also found higher levels of stress and mental ill-health experienced by certain sub-groups of the population, including women, who are more likely to be in caring roles, as well as parents of preschool aged children.¹¹⁵ This research emphasises the need for governments to ensure adequate mental health support is available.

Finding:

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted families and parents. There was a case for supporting these groups in a relevant and targeted manner. Support can be provided several ways. Policies that ensure adequate infrastructure and services to support mental health and recovery of people impacted would directly address this objective.

Recommendation:

Carefully consider a program’s policy intent and the appropriate means of delivering on it.

5.3.1.1 Did the Parents program remain relevant throughout its lifetime?

Parents program establishment phase – October 2021 to February 2022

As described in earlier sections, between when the Parents program was announced (October 2021) and commenced (February 2022), economic conditions in NSW appeared to be improving. The State was

¹¹² National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance, ‘COVID-19 in schools – the experience in NSW: 18 October 2021 to 17 December 2021’, [2022](#).

¹¹³ Jordan Baker, ‘The ‘impossible’ juggle: Parents spent 14 hours a week on home learning’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, [2021](#).

¹¹⁴ For example, see Li, *et al.*, ‘The impact of COVID-19 on the lives and mental health of Australian adolescents’, *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, [2022](#), 31.

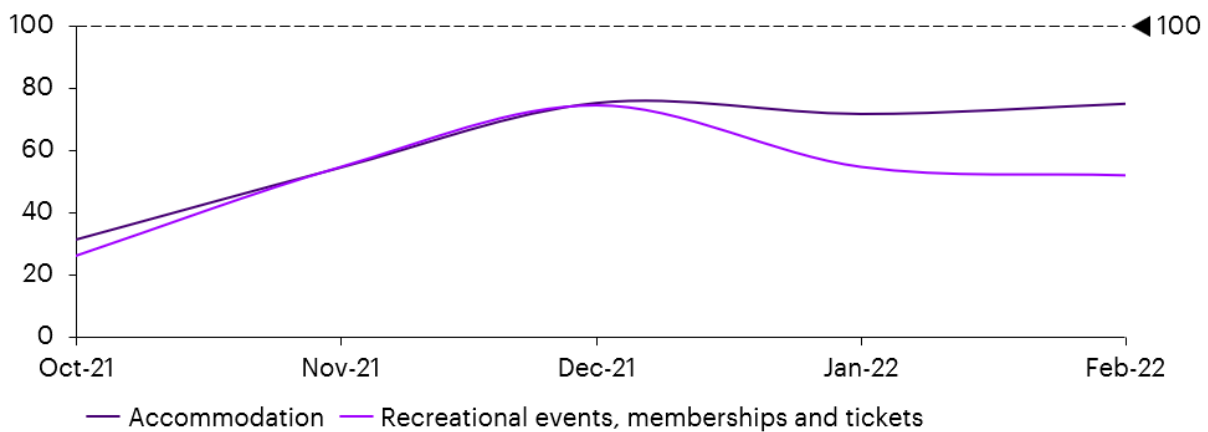
¹¹⁵ Matthias Pierce *et al.*, ‘Mental Health before and during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Longitudinal Probability Sample Survey of the UK Population’, *The Lancet Psychiatry* 7 (10): 883–92.

emerging from restrictions imposed by Public Health Orders as the population was increasingly getting vaccinated against COVID-19.

This period coincided with summer and school holidays in NSW. Between October and February, spending on recreation businesses recovered from 15% to 42% of pre-pandemic spending. Spending on accommodation businesses recovered from 23% to 74% of pre-pandemic spending.¹¹⁶ There was a temporary slowdown in spending in January 2022 due to the outbreak of the Omicron variant of COVID-19.

Figure 5.15: Average consumer spend at accommodation and recreation businesses – Parents program establishment phase

\$, indexed to January 2020



Source: Illion Spend Analytics data

Accommodation occupancy rates and domestic overnight visitation were also recovering (see Stay program establishment phase – October 2021 to February 2022).

For Discover businesses, this recovery was in part supported by the D&D program already in operation including the additional Discover voucher.

However, the sectors targeted by the Parents program appeared to be on a path to recovery and may have done so without the intervention beyond D&D and Stay.

Finding:

The policy goals targeted by the Parents program was of limited relevance during its establishment phase. Consumer spending on accommodation businesses and, to a lesser extent, recreation businesses was recovering between October 2021 and February 2022 before the program was fully launched. In February 2022, spending on accommodation businesses was at 75% of pre-pandemic levels and spending on recreation businesses was at 55% of pre-pandemic levels. The businesses included in the Parents program did not require further support beyond the already operational D&D program and the Stay program which launched in February 2022.

Parents program rollout – February 2022 to October 2022

As described in earlier sections (Stay and D&D), from when the Parents program was launched in February 2022 until its expiry in October 2022, economic conditions continued improving. The NSW

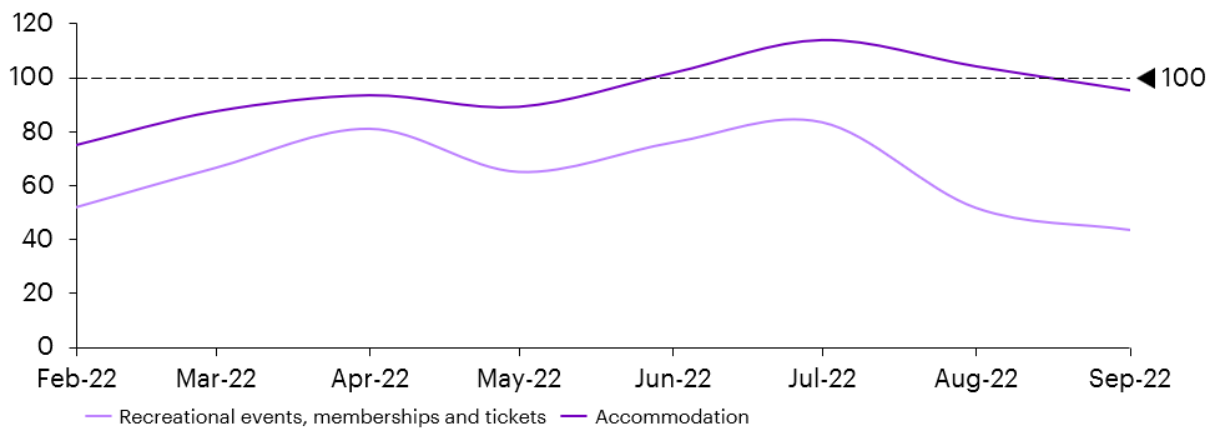
¹¹⁶ Accenture analysis of Illion Spend Analytics data

Government was easing public health restrictions. However, there was still uncertainty as to new variants emerging and the public health environment facing the NSW Government.

Nonetheless, while the Parents program was operational, spending on recreation and accommodation businesses continued to rise. In July 2022, coinciding with the winter school holiday period, spending on recreation businesses reached 76% of its pre-pandemic level. Spending on accommodation businesses reached 114% of its pre-pandemic level.

Figure 5.16: Average consumer spend at accommodation and recreation businesses – Parents program rollout

\$, indexed to January 2020



Source: illion Spend Analytics data

Occupancy rates and domestic overnight visitation to NSW continued to recover while the Parents program was rolled out, as set out in Stay program rollout – February to October 2022.

This recovery can be partly attributed to the operation of the D&D and Stay programs. The implementation of the additional Parents voucher program targeting overlapping sectors was not relevant given the economic circumstances.

Finding:

While the Parents program was underway from February to October 2022, spending on recreation businesses and on accommodation businesses continued to rise towards pre-pandemic levels. By July 2022, spending on recreation was at 76% of its pre-pandemic (January 2020) level and spending on accommodation business had exceeded January 2020 levels. The D&D program and the Stay program were operating at the same time.

The policy goals targeted by the Parents program continued to have limited relevance.

5.4 Was the design of the D&D, Stay, and Parents programs appropriate to achieve their policy intent and outcomes?

Policies and programs affect behaviour. The mechanism a policy or program uses, and the specifics of its design, affects its ability to achieve its policy intent.

The main policy goal of the programs was stimulating consumer spending. The D&D and Stay programs also had the policy intent of supporting businesses that had been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Vouchers are a means of stimulating demand, with the goal of increasing business revenue.

Specific design features of the programs – including how they were targeted and their marginal reimbursement rate structure – affect incentives. They also impact on the extent to which the programs achieved their policy intent.

5.4.1 Was it appropriate to target stimulus at consumers?

The voucher programs were all targeted at stimulating spending. They had varying stated policy intents (see section [Executive Summary 1.3](#)). D&D intended to stimulate the economy by increasing consumer spending, thereby supporting businesses. Stay intended to support businesses. Parents intended to thank Parents.

Policy mechanisms that could stimulate consumer spending include:

- **Directly.** Governments can stimulate consumer spending directly through cash gifts, vouchers, or rebates.
- **Indirectly.** Governments can stimulate consumer spending indirectly through lower taxes or interest rates.

Policy mechanisms that could support businesses that had been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic include:

- **Direct financial support.** Governments can provide direct financial support to businesses by increasing revenues, cash or decreasing costs (such as grants, tax waivers or rebates on fees and charges, or concessional charges)
- **Direct in-kind support.** Governments can provide in-kind support to businesses that does not involve direct cash or financial aid (providing free COVID-19 tests or protective equipment, business advice, coaching and training programs).
- **Indirect financial support.** Governments can indirectly support businesses by stimulating demand (promotional activity, consumer grants, vouchers for use in targeted sectors) or depressing costs (streamlining regulatory processes, providing loan guarantees and tax incentives).

Direct financial support (in the form of a grant or a transfer) is the most efficient transfer mechanism. It would have supported affected businesses directly and equitably. However, direct financial support may affect a 'strong, resilient and diverse economy', for example:

- supporting otherwise uncompetitive businesses is an ineffective use of government resources
- it can dampen competition in the sectors involved
- it does not address the longer-term challenges which arise from recessions, falling consumer confidence, and changes in consumer behaviour due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The NSW Government chose to provide indirect financial support by stimulating demand. This was consistent with the policy intent of stimulating the economy by increasing consumer spending. It less directly supports a policy goal to support affected businesses. It is difficult to predict how many businesses benefit, and by how much. However, stimulating demand is more aligned with a ‘strong, resilient and diverse economy’:

- it has a muted effect on creative destruction, because competitive pressures are still in force
- it does not interfere with how businesses compete, and maintains competitive pressure
- stimulating demand can counteract recessions.¹¹⁷

The choice of policy mechanism should be considered in the context of:

- other policies that are in place
- the circumstances in which the policy is being considered
- how efficiently and effectively the mechanism will achieve the policy intent
- any unintended consequences, positive or negative, of the policy mechanism.

As has been discussed, the businesses targeted by the D&D and Stay programs were disproportionately impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the decline in consumer spending caused by public health restrictions. The choice to provide indirect support by stimulating demand directly mitigated this, whereas direct support to businesses would not have done so. In addition, stimulating consumer demand was an explicit part of the D&D policy intent.

At the time, other State and Commonwealth Government policies were in place that provided direct financial support to businesses. At various points, policymakers’ secondary aim was to signal to residents that it was safe to return to public venues after lockdowns. Given these circumstances, it was reasonable to stimulate consumer demand rather than provide additional direct support.

Consumer stimulus was not relevant to the policy intent of the Parents program. Moreover, the case for additional support to businesses as provided by the Parents program was dubious. Notwithstanding this, if there had been such a need, targeting the stimulus at consumers would have been an appropriate design choice for the reasons outlined above.

Finding:

The economic contraction in the sectors addressed by the D&D, Stay, and Parents programs was driven by low consumer demand. Direct support measures were already in place to mitigate the impact of this on businesses. Given this, it was reasonable to provide additional indirect support by stimulating consumer demand.

This was also aligned with broader government priorities, including getting out and about and encouraging COVID-safe practices.

5.4.2 Were vouchers an appropriate mechanism for stimulating consumer spending?

Policy mechanisms that could stimulate consumer spending include:

- **vouchers** – cash equivalents to fund spending, in full or in part, at an eligible business
- **rebates** – reimbursement, in full or in part, for spending at an eligible business
- **cash transfers** – direct cash transfer from the NSW Government to residents.

¹¹⁷ AS Blinder, ‘Keynesian Economics’, [2007](#)

To achieve the policy intent, the stimulus mechanism had to:

- **Be targeted.** Policy mechanisms that can direct spending to a particular industry are thus more likely to achieve the policy intent.
- **Maximise marginal propensity to consume (MPC).** In the context of a consumer stimulus program, MPC is a measure of how much consumer spending is generated for every dollar of stimulus dispersed. An MPC of one would mean that consumers spend exactly the value of the stimulus. An MPC greater than one would mean that consumers spend more than the value of the stimulus. Given the policy intent of stimulating consumer spending, the chosen policy mechanism had to generate a greater MPC than alternatives.

Vouchers are the most likely mechanism to stimulate consumer spending and support affected businesses.

Table 5.1: Summary of appropriateness of available policy mechanisms for achieving the stated policy intent

Policy	Targeted?	Maximise MPC?
Vouchers	Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spending can be limited to eligible businesses 	Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents do not get any benefit unless they choose to spend • Residents have an incentive to spend at least the value of the voucher • Residents are not out of pocket unless they choose to spend more than the value of a voucher • May invoke the 'zero price effect', and encourage additional purchases¹¹⁸
Rebates	Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spending can be limited to eligible businesses 	No <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents do not get any benefit unless they choose to spend • Residents have an incentive to spend at least the value of the rebate • Residents are out of pocket until they receive the rebate • Less likely to invoke the zero price effect
Cash transfers	No <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spending cannot be directed to targeted businesses 	No <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumers have differing MPCs and many choose to save cash transfers

Finding:

Vouchers were the most appropriate vehicle for stimulating consumer spending in a way that achieved the policy intent of all three programs.

5.4.3 Were the vouchers designed appropriately?

In designing the voucher programs, the NSW Government faced the following decisions:

- Which businesses should be targeted?
- Which consumers should be targeted?
- What should the value of the vouchers be?

¹¹⁸ The zero-price effect refers to the increase in the intrinsic value of a good or service when the price is reduced to zero. One explanation of this is the affect heuristic, whereby options that have no cost trigger a more positive affective response. See: Shampanier, *et al.*, 2007

- How many vouchers should be issued?
- What should be the marginal rate of reimbursement (MRR) of the vouchers?

Targeting of businesses

The voucher programs were targeted at specific industries. The vouchers could only be redeemed in eligible businesses:

- D&D vouchers could be redeemed in eligible hospitality ('Dine'), tourism, arts and recreation ('Discover') businesses.
- Stay vouchers could be redeemed at eligible accommodation businesses.
- Parents vouchers could be redeemed at eligible tourism, arts and recreation ('Discover') and accommodation ('Stay') businesses.
-

Finding:

D&D and Stay vouchers were targeted in line with the policy intent. Targeting vouchers to specific industries means that businesses in these industries are most likely to receive support.

Targeting of consumers

The Parents voucher was targeted at households with at least one child enrolled in a school in NSW. This aligned with the policy intent of thanking parents for their role in learning from home. The D&D and Stay vouchers were made available to all adult residents of NSW. There were no eligibility criteria. This ensured that all NSW residents had an equal incentive to increase their spending in these businesses, with no explicit downside from the perspective of achieving the policy intent. This also aligned with the broader objective of incentivising people to get out and about in a COVID-safe manner.

Instead, the voucher programs could have been means tested to exclude higher income individuals. If this was done, the vouchers could have been a higher value, or more vouchers could have been provided to residents, within the same overall program budget. This would have impacted the effectiveness of the vouchers in terms of:

- registrations as a proportion of eligible people
- redemptions as a proportion of registered users
- additional spending in transactions where the vouchers were used (MPC).

For example, people with lower incomes tend to use vouchers more. However, they are less likely to spend beyond the voucher's value. People with higher incomes get more limited benefit from vouchers and vouchers are less likely to encourage a change in their behaviour.

If means testing had been applied to the vouchers, a higher proportion of vouchers would likely have been used for spending. However, as fewer vouchers would have been in circulation, this approach may have limited the intended stimulus effect.

There is a lack of evidence on the propensity to register for and redeem vouchers by income. Additionally, there is a lack of evidence on the effect of income on MPC within the context of a voucher-based stimulus program.

In addition, means testing would have been more complex to deliver, requiring more time to develop and implement the program. Means testing voucher recipients also creates risk around fraudulent activity and concerns among residents about sharing their personal data. Providing vouchers to all residents was a pragmatic approach as economic circumstances and government priorities necessitated a rapid delivery of stimulus.

Finding:

The appropriateness of the decision not to means test cannot be assessed due to a lack of evidence. However, this decision was pragmatic given the need to rapidly deliver the stimulus programs.

Recommendation:

Data collection for future voucher programs should include information on user income to inform evaluation and policy design.

Voucher value

The Stay and Parents vouchers were valued at \$50 each. The D&D vouchers were valued at \$25 each. The value of vouchers affects their impact on purchasing behaviour. Voucher values which represent a higher proportion of an overall purchase price are more likely to change purchasing behaviour.

- D&D vouchers had a lower dollar value. However, they were worth 63% of the average purchase price for Dine businesses and 57% of the average purchase price for Discover businesses.¹¹⁹
- Stay vouchers had a higher dollar value than D&D. However, they represented just 23% of the average purchase price for Stay businesses.¹²⁰
- Parents vouchers could be used separately or combined. As a result, they were worth between 126% and 630% of the average purchase price for Dine businesses. They were worth between 114% and 572% at Discover businesses, and between 32% and 112% at Stay businesses.¹²¹

The value of the vouchers impacted redemption rates and therefore the effectiveness of the programs. D&D and Parents achieved strong redemption rates. However, 59% of registered users did not redeem their Stay vouchers (Figure 5.17). The most common reason for this was that the voucher value was insufficient (Figure 5.18).¹²² Focus group participants and interviews with consumers and businesses have corroborated this finding.¹²³

¹¹⁹ Accenture analysis of iillion Spend Analytics data. Average Dine purchase price was \$39.60. Average Discover purchase price was \$43.67.

¹²⁰ Destination NSW (2022) Note: the NSW state average daily rate is \$222. Rates in central Sydney are \$257 versus \$228 in regional NSW.

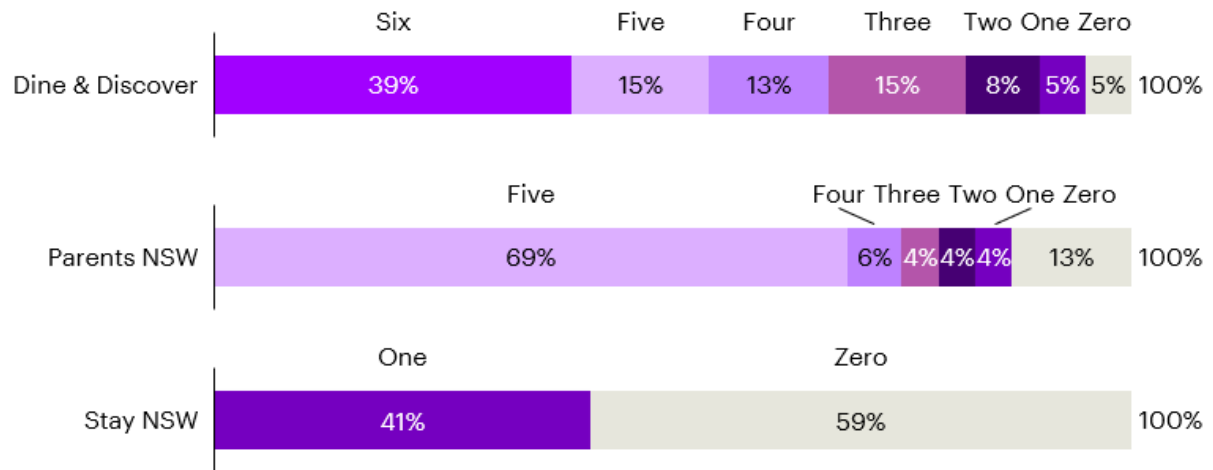
¹²¹ *Ibid.* Based on State average daily rate.

¹²² Accenture survey of NSW residents (N=275), January 2023

¹²³ Accenture consultations with focus groups and business groups

Figure 5.17: Number of vouchers redeemed by voucher type

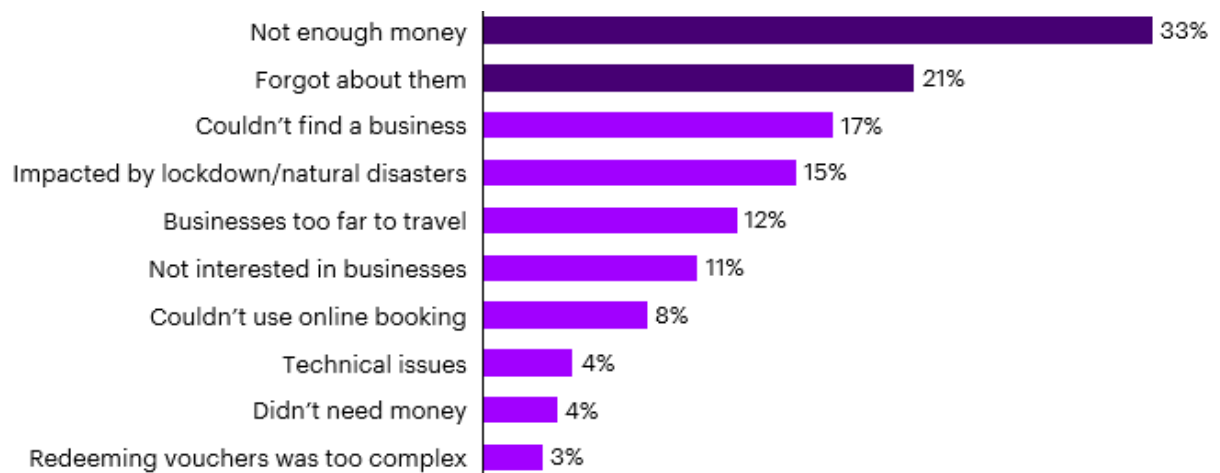
% of registered users by # of vouchers redeemed by voucher type



Source: Service NSW data

Figure 5.18: Reasons consumers did not redeem Stay vouchers

% of survey respondents who registered for but did not redeem their Stay NSW voucher



Source: Accenture survey of NSW residents (N=275), Jan. 2023

Finding:

The value of D&D and Parents vouchers appeared to be more effective in influencing consumer behaviour than the value of the Stay vouchers.

Recommendation:

Determine the value of vouchers in the context of the standard cost of the goods or services being targeted. Vouchers with a low face value relative to the typical purchase price are likely to achieve lower registration and redemption rates. Vouchers with a higher face value relative to the typical purchase price may result in lower out-of-pocket spending. Consideration of voucher value should take into account the potential multiplier effect on consumer spending.

Number of vouchers

The value of D&D vouchers was split across multiple separate vouchers. This strategy has the effect of encouraging people to get out and about, in line with NSW Government priorities at the time. Customers could only redeem one D&D voucher per business per day. Customers were not permitted to combine D&D vouchers in the same purchase. As a result, they had to make repeat visits to targeted businesses in order to get the full value of the voucher program. Data shows that 90% of registered users used more than one D&D voucher (Figure 5.17).

The Stay and Parents programs did not follow the same logic. The five Parents vouchers could be used separately or combined in a single purchase. This was a response to NSW Government internal research that showed flexibility was important to encourage uptake.¹²⁴ 69% of those who registered for the Parents program redeemed all five vouchers. The ability to pool multiple Parents vouchers was an incentive to use all five.¹²⁵

By contrast, residents were eligible for just one Stay voucher. Stay vouchers could be combined among family or friends to put towards a single accommodation booking. This did not encourage registration (only 35% of eligible residents registered) or redemption (at 41%).

Finding:

Providing multiple D&D vouchers was appropriate to achieving the policy intent as consumers were encouraged to make separate transactions in order to get the full value.

Dividing the Parents program across five separate vouchers, and allowing pooling of vouchers, encouraged uptake and redemption among eligible residents. However, it may have affected the extent of additional out-of-pocket spending.

Given the low value of the Stay voucher, providing one Stay voucher did not encourage uptake among NSW residents.

Recommendation:

Determine the number of vouchers provided and flexibility of voucher use in the context of the specific sectors being targeted having regard to consumer behaviour and spending patterns.

Marginal rate of reimbursement

The marginal rate of reimbursement (MRR) of a voucher is the proportion of spending which a voucher-holder recoups. MRR structures for a voucher include:

¹²⁴ Consultation with NSW Government stakeholders.

¹²⁵ Consultation with focus groups, January 2023.

- cliff (100% - 0%): the voucher holder pays nothing out of pocket up to the value of the voucher, and then pays any value over the value of the voucher
- taper (100% - X%): the voucher holder pays nothing out of pocket up to a fixed amount. They then pay either a fixed or increasing proportion of any additional spending
- constant (X%): the voucher holder pays a fixed (non 100%) proportion of any eligible purchase, up to a cap.

D&D, Stay and Parents vouchers were structured with a cliff (100%-0%) MRR. Vouchers paid for 100% of the value of a purchase up to a fixed cap. Voucher-holders were then required to pay the full value of any spending over the cap.

This is a common structure followed by several voucher programs.¹²⁶ Benefits include:

- cliff vouchers are more readily explained and understood, which encourages registration
- vouchers in this format may be easier to technically implement
- residents who would not otherwise spend may be enticed to do so due to ‘zero price’ effects.

However, ‘cliff’ MRR formats are not preferred in academic literature.¹²⁷ Vouchers are a form of reverse-taxation. As in taxation, it is not optimal to have sharp cut-offs, as this distorts decision-making, particularly at the margin. Consumers are incentivised to spend exactly the value of the voucher because:

- residents cannot roll-over any unused value, so spending less than the value of the voucher is sub-optimal, even if that is a resident’s true preference
- residents do not receive any reimbursement for spending above the value of the voucher. This means that there is no recognition of the positive externality that their spending generates above this point, and thus much less incentive to spend.

This increases the likely dead-weight loss associated with the program, as the value of the voucher will be greater than some consumers’ actual desire to spend on that good or service.

Further, voucher users have less incentive to spend more than the value of the voucher under a cliff format than in other formats. As a result, the MRR structure affects the suitability of the voucher for achieving the policy intent. Table 5.2 provides a stylised comparison between a voucher with a \$25 ‘cliff’ MRR and voucher with a 50% ‘constant’ MRR. It shows that the two provide an equivalent benefit to the user at a purchase value of \$25. After this, the user receives a greater incentive to increase the value of their purchase from the constant MRR voucher.

Table 5.2: Stylised comparison of a \$25 ‘cliff’ MRR voucher vs a 50% ‘constant’ MRR voucher

Cliff			Constant		
Purchase value	Benefit (\$)	Benefit (%)	Purchase value	Benefit (\$)	Benefit (%)
\$25	\$25	100%	\$25	\$13	50%
\$50	\$25	50%	\$50	\$25	50%
\$75	\$25	33%	\$75	\$38	50%
\$100	\$25	25%	\$100	\$50	50%

¹²⁶ For example, the NSW Government’s [Creative Kids](#) voucher program, the Victorian Government’s [Get Active Kids](#) voucher program and New Zealand’s [Explore Tāmaki Makaurau Voucher Programme](#).

¹²⁷ David F. Bradford and Daniel N. Shaviro, ‘The economics of vouchers’, *NBER Working Paper Series*, 1999

Finding:

The cliff marginal rate of reimbursement structure was aligned with other voucher programs. It was an appropriate structure given resident familiarity and experience with implementation.

This structure may have affected resident incentives, the programs' ability to achieve their policy intent, the effectiveness, and the efficiency of the programs.

Recommendation:

Examine different options for the marginal rate of reimbursement structure of future voucher programs, having regard to the policy intent and specific context in which the program is being designed.

6 Implementation

6.1.1 Were there appropriate governance arrangements and processes to design, establish and implement the program?

6.1.1.1 Processes to design the voucher programs

The NSW Government faced a quickly evolving health, social and economic crisis throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. This informed and expedited the NSW Government's decisions around policy design, in particular the decision to quickly proceed with a voucher program for the purpose of stimulating the NSW economy.

When the Dine & Discover (D&D) program and first iteration of the Stay program was conceived, the NSW Government implemented governance arrangements.¹²⁸ A Business Advisory Committee (BAC) and Risk Advisory Committee (RAC) were convened to provide advice and support on the programs' design. The final Stay program and Parents programs did not have a BAC or RAC to assist with their design. The NSW Government intended to lean on lessons learned from the D&D program to inform the Stay and Parents programs (see Voucher program logic).

The BAC provided advice on business participation in the program. It facilitated collaboration among business and government representatives. The BAC was made up of representatives from the following organisations:

- Australian Hotels Association NSW
- Broken Hill Council
- Business NSW
- City of Sydney
- Clubs NSW
- Council of Small Business Organisations Australia
- Create NSW
- Department of Customer Service
- Destination NSW
- Independent Bars Association
- Liquor & Gaming NSW
- Local Government NSW
- Merlin Entertainment
- Merivale
- NSW Department of Planning and Environment
- NSW Small Business Commission
- NSW Treasury
- Office of Local Government
- Office of Sport NSW
- Place Management
- Planning NSW
- Property NSW
- Regional NSW
- Regional NSW – Local Land Services
- Resilience NSW
- Restaurant & Catering Association
- Service NSW
- Venues NSW.¹²⁹

The RAC provided oversight and expertise in the process of identifying and managing risk. It was comprised of selected executives of NSW Treasury, the Department of Customer Service (including from Service NSW) and their representative staff.

The BAC and RAC discontinued regular meetings when the D&D program was launched. According to meeting minutes:

- the last BAC was held on 31 March 2021

¹²⁸ Consultation with NSW Government stakeholders

¹²⁹ NSW Government, COVID Stimulus Package – Business Advisory Committee Update, 30 November 2020.

- the last RAC was scheduled to be held on 10 March 2021, but was cancelled and rescheduled for 17 March 2021. It was again cancelled and rescheduled for 31 March 2021, but this meeting was also cancelled. There were no subsequent RAC meetings scheduled.

A Program Steering Committee was convened. The members of the Program Steering Committee were executive representatives of:

- NSW Treasury
- the Department of Finance
- the Small Business Commissioner
- the NSW Department of Customer Service (Service NSW).

It met on a weekly or fortnightly basis throughout the design and implementation of the voucher programs. NSW Treasury also had an internal Steering Committee comprised of Treasury executives and staff. The Internal Steering Committee discussed issues and decisions on policy positions before they were taken to the Program Steering Committee or the Treasurer.

Regular updates were provided to the Minister for Digital and Customer Service and the Treasurer from November 2020 when the D&D program was being designed.

The voucher programs were subject to less rigorous modelling and analysis than would typically be expected for an initiative of this scale (see 6.1.1.2). This was appropriate given the desire for expediency in the circumstances. For D&D, NSW Treasury did analysis on costings and estimated uptake of the voucher programs to develop a proposed value for the vouchers. It also had regard to advice from the BAC, user research, focus groups, and the programs' policy intent. It was concluded that \$25 was a typical spend on a meal. The NSW Government later considered that \$25 Discover vouchers may not have offered residents a sufficient discount to encourage voucher redemption. This informed the Parents voucher design in terms of value and pooling.

Finding:

The rapidly evolving circumstances meant standard processes for designing a program were streamlined. The NSW Government perceived a need to roll the programs out quickly in order to encourage consumers to get out and about and spending in a COVID-safe manner. This was appropriate to the circumstances.

In the context of a rapidly evolving health and economic crisis, the NSW Government's governance bodies employed appropriate processes in designing the voucher programs. They considered:

- the experience of international and interstate COVID-19 stimulus policies
- prior experience, knowledge and infrastructure.

The Program Steering Committee considered COVID-19 consumer stimulus programs implemented in other regions when designing the programs. These are outlined in Box 2.

Box 2: COVID-19 stimulus programs that informed the design of the voucher programs¹³⁰

- UK:¹³¹ the UK Government's Eat Out to Help Out Scheme offered consumers a 50% discount on food or non-alcoholic drinks eaten-in at participating businesses nationwide, up to a maximum discount of £10 per person (equivalent to approximately AUD\$18).¹³² It applied Monday to Wednesday between 3 and 31 August 2020. Businesses then claimed a reimbursement from the government for the discount.¹³³
- Taiwan: the Triple Stimulus Voucher program announced in 2020 was designed to support businesses affected by the pandemic, by selling NT\$3,000 (AUD\$145) worth of vouchers to consumers for NT\$1,000 (AUD\$48).¹³⁴ The vouchers could be used at most businesses nationwide.¹³⁵
- State of Victoria: accommodation rebate scheme providing households with a \$200 reimbursement when they spent at least \$400 on paid accommodation, tours and experiences in Victoria (2-night minimum stay in accommodation).¹³⁶

The NSW Government considered policy mechanisms for providing economic stimulus, including rebates and direct grants to businesses.¹³⁷ The NSW Government chose a voucher mechanism for the D&D program because:

- it had experience designing and administering voucher programs (for example, the Active Kids and Creative Kids programs). The know-how and technology solutions already existed. NSW Government thus had confidence that a voucher program could be rolled out.
- internal NSW Government experts (including the behavioural insights teams and macroeconomics team) supported a voucher program.¹³⁸

The NSW Government again chose to use vouchers as the policy mechanism for the Stay and Parents program because:

- the D&D program had been successful
- the infrastructure to deliver the vouchers was set up
- consumers and businesses were familiar with the processes to register for and redeem vouchers.

Finding:

The NSW Government considered and relied upon on relevant information and experience to develop the program. This included previous NSW Government experience in designing and administering voucher programs, and international uses of voucher programs to stimulate consumer spending during COVID-19.

¹³⁰ Consultation with Service NSW stakeholders.

¹³¹ NSW Government, COVID Stimulus Package – Steering Committee Meeting #5, 16 November 2020.

¹³² Based on monthly average exchange rate for August 2020 of GDP 1 = AUD 1.82.

¹³³ UK Government, 'Guidance: Get a discount with the Eat Out to Help Out Scheme', [2020](#).

¹³⁴ Based on monthly average exchange rate for July 2020 of NT 1 = AUD 0.484.

¹³⁵ Department of Information Services, Executive Yuan, 'Executive Yuan announces triple stimulus voucher program', [2020](#).

¹³⁶ Victorian Government, 'Victorian and Senior Travel Vouchers', [2022](#).

¹³⁷ Consultation with NSW Government stakeholders

¹³⁸ Consultation with NSW Government stakeholders

6.1.1.2 Processes to establish the voucher programs

Governance bodies established when the D&D program was conceived continued to provide oversight in establishing the program. The Program Steering Committee, BAC and RAC met on a weekly or fortnightly basis. Regular progress updates were provided to the Minister for Digital and Customer Service and the Treasurer.

However, the voucher programs did not go through a standard business case process. Standard business case processes can take months. The NSW Government had a view that the economy was at a critical juncture. In this context, it viewed that it was necessary to roll out the programs quickly to bolster consumer confidence and spending. This was appropriate given the circumstances.

NSW Government processes stipulate that, ordinarily and unless otherwise agreed by the Premier, Deputy Premier and Treasurer, spending proposals by Ministers must go through the following steps to be approved:

- submit a business case to Treasury
- be considered by the Expenditure Review Committee (ERC)
- be submitted for final Cabinet approval.¹³⁹

Where an initiative's estimated total cost exceeds \$100 million, a Detailed Business Case is generally required.¹⁴⁰ The voucher programs all met the threshold for a long form Strategic and Detailed Business Case. However, given the circumstances, the programs were approved via a truncated process. The NSW Government:

- held a Project Kick-off for the D&D program on 25 September 2020
- drafted a service blueprint by 15 October 2020.¹⁴¹
-

Finding:

The NSW Government viewed that it was necessary to establish the D&D program quickly. The program was established through an expedited approval process. This was appropriate given the circumstances.

Finding:

Governance arrangements were appropriate, with advisory and oversight committees convened to help establish the programs.

¹³⁹ NSW Government, Department of Premier and Cabinet, 'C2014-04 Cabinet Standing Committee on Expenditure Revenue – Procedures and Operational Rules – 2014', [2014](#).

¹⁴⁰ NSW Government, Treasury, 'Policy and Guidelines: Submission of Business Cases', [2023](#).

¹⁴¹ NSW Government, COVID Stimulus Package – SteerCo Meeting #3 Pack 28.10.20.

6.1.1.3 Processes to implement the voucher programs

At the time the D&D program was launched, the BAC and RAC were discontinued. However, other governance arrangements were continued or established with teams dedicated to monitoring the operation of the D&D program and the two subsequent programs. Arrangements included:

- daily stand ups between Service NSW and Treasury to report on the progress of the programs and discuss issues that had been identified during implementation
- steering committees (internal and cross-governmental) to provide oversight and guidance, including determination and endorsement of key decisions¹⁴²
- a Project Control Group established in February 2022, when Stay and Parents launched, to provide operational governance and advice on delivery of the voucher program outputs and achievement of outcomes¹⁴³
- regular updates to the Minister for Digital and Customer Service and the Treasurer, including on progress of the programs, media coverage, issues escalated from other governance groups, and decisions requiring approval.

Changes were made to the voucher programs while they were operational. They included:

- expanding the list of eligible ANZSIC codes that proceeded to manual assessment to ensure that eligible businesses were not excluded on the basis of their ANZSIC code (e.g. wine cellars)
- allowing D&D vouchers to be used on any day of the week, rather than only on weekdays
- expanding the program to include delivery takeaway
- extending the D&D expiry dates at multiple points.

Changes to the voucher programs are discussed further in section 6.1.6.

Service NSW was responsible for deploying changes to the programs. It occasionally needed to balance requests for changes at short notice.¹⁴⁴ The process of implementing changes involved:

- engineering the product update
- changing the voucher terms and conditions
- communicating the change internally within Service NSW
- communicating the change externally, including by updating the website, social media posts and emailing businesses.¹⁴⁵

Service NSW sent out frequent communications to businesses advising them of policy changes. Internal NSW Government feedback suggests that communicating policy changes to businesses could be improved by integrating updates into the Service NSW Business app and Business Profile.¹⁴⁶

Decisions were made in response to rapidly evolving circumstances. Changes were considered by the Program Steering Committee before approval was sought from the NSW Treasurer. In some instances, approval processes for program changes were expedited.

The decision to provide two additional D&D vouchers to every NSW resident did not follow standard business case approval processes. The Program Steering Committee did not meet between 30 June and 28 October 2021. During this period, the capacity of Steering Committee members was absorbed by the government response to the Delta outbreak of COVID-19. NSW Treasury provided advice and participated in extensive internal discussions with Service NSW about options for additional voucher programs.

¹⁴² NSW Government, COVID Stimulus Package - Steering Committee Meeting #1 Pack 14.10.2020

¹⁴³ Voucher PCG meeting #1 22.2.22

¹⁴⁴ NSW Government, Dine & Discover: Post-Implementation Review, 22 August 2022.

¹⁴⁵ Consultation with NSW Government stakeholders.

¹⁴⁶ NSW Government, Dine & Discover: Post-Implementation Review, 22 August 2022; Consultation with NSW Government stakeholders.

Extending the D&D program with two additional vouchers was identified as a low risk and low implementation burden option for additional stimulus vouchers. This informed advice provided to the Treasurer, who announced the extension on 13 October 2021. There is limited discussion in program governance documentation of the decision.

The Program Steering Committee was reconvened on 28 October 2021. At this time, the Steering Committee concentrated on the Stay program.¹⁴⁷ This was appropriate because Stay was intended to launch prior to the Parents program. In addition, the design and implementation of the Parents program relied on the Stay and Discover voucher mechanisms.

Unless otherwise agreed, the Program Steering Committee met on a weekly basis until March 2022 and a fortnightly basis thereafter until the Stay and Parents programs ended.

The NSW Government conducted a Post-Implementation Review for the D&D program on 22 August 2022. The D&D review enabled documenting of what worked well, what didn't go well and areas to improve. NSW Government stakeholders were positive about the implementation of the D&D program overall. Key areas to improve included:

- better communication with businesses
- more clarity and consistency around terms and conditions
- setting realistic timeframes
- understanding the diversity of the NSW population and needs of minority groups
- deeper dive into risks and impacts of changes or extensions.¹⁴⁸

There was no Post-Implementation Review for the Stay or Parents programs. Feedback was gathered from the D&D program, as well as the programs' governance bodies, social media and formal feedback mechanisms.¹⁴⁹

Finding:

NSW Government processes to implement the voucher programs were adaptive and reactive to changing circumstances. In some instances, approval processes were expedited.

Recommendation:

Document key lessons, findings and processes for all voucher programs to inform future initiatives.

¹⁴⁷ NSW Government, Recovery Voucher Program Steering Committee packs, 28 October 2021 – 15 December 2021.

¹⁴⁸ NSW Government, Dine & Discover: Post-Implementation Review, 22 August 2022.

¹⁴⁹ Consultation with NSW Government stakeholders.

6.1.2 To what extent was the program implemented as intended? Was it implemented within intended timeframes and costs?

The NSW Government established a program logic for each of the voucher programs (see Voucher program logic). The program logics outline the intended inputs, activities and outputs for each program.

The programs were implemented as intended by the program logics (Table 6.1) in the context of time pressures and resource constraints.

Table 6.1: Voucher programs' implementation of inputs, activities and outputs¹⁵⁰

	Inputs		Activities	
All three voucher programs	Funding for vouchers and admin	✓	Product build incorporating customer feedback/pilot	✓
	Policy guidelines and T&C	✓	Development of privacy and data controls	✓
	Technology infrastructure	✓	Marketing and communications (inc. media releases)	✓
	Stakeholder consultation	✓	COVID-Safe comms	✓
	Implementation plan	✓	Customer registrations	✓
	Staff training	✓	Business registrations	✓
	Program team stood up	✓	SNSW frontline services assisting application process	✓
			Monitoring and reporting	✓
		Governance and continuous improvement	✓	
		Program compliance and fraud checks	✓	
Stay & Parents	Lessons learned from design and rollout of D&D	✓		

NSW Treasury developed policy guidelines for each voucher program, containing terms and conditions. These were updated as necessary as the NSW Government adapted to changing circumstances (see 6.1.6). The implementation plans developed for the programs were adapted in response to changing circumstances.

Stakeholders across NSW Government and external advisers were consulted throughout the design and implementation of the voucher programs. The RAC and BAC were convened to assist with the design of a voucher program (see 6.1.1).

Service NSW had the capability to stand up the technology required for D&D vouchers. Some technology infrastructure existed prior to the design of the voucher programs, for example due to the NSW Active Kids and Creative Kids programs. Existing infrastructure was a contributing factor for the choice of policy mechanism, particularly for the Stay and Parents programs. Security, Privacy and Fraud Control teams developed privacy and data controls.¹⁵¹ A training approach and timeline was developed.¹⁵²

The functionality of the voucher programs was implemented as intended. Service NSW product teams built the product. It was iterated based on consultation, learnings from pilots, and customer feedback. Service NSW implemented changes as policy guidelines shifted (see 6.1.6).

A compliance framework was developed, and Service NSW teams carried out program compliance and fraud checks (see 6.1.5).

The D&D program had a dedicated marketing campaign to promote the scheme. 'Dine & Discover NSW' had its own visual identity with standalone logos and promotional videos.

The NSW Government rolled out revised brand guidelines in 2022 whereby standalone logos or badges could not be created for individual programs. It was therefore not able to replicate the D&D program

¹⁵⁰ NSW Government governance documents; program data; consultation with NSW Government stakeholders.

¹⁵¹ NSW Government, COVID Stimulus Package Steering Committee Meeting #1, 14 October 2020.

¹⁵² NSW Government, Recovery Voucher Program Steering Committee #4, 4 November 2020

marketing approach for the Stay and Parents programs. Stay and Parents were promoted as part of a broader NSW Government Cost of Living campaign.¹⁵³

Service NSW also used frontline teams to assist with applications (see 6.1.5). Frontline teams provide assistance via phone or face-to-face interactions across regional, remote, and metropolitan NSW.¹⁵⁴

Program governance, monitoring and reporting was conducted through ongoing governance arrangements (see 6.1.1).

The NSW Government designed and promoted the voucher programs to encourage COVID-safe practices, for example:

- requiring businesses to have a COVID-safety plan in order to participate
- requiring customers to check in via QR code or leave personal contact details for contact tracing purposes
- marketing and communications informing people about COVID-safe practices and requirements
- including requirement to comply with Public Health Orders in the terms and conditions.

Finding:

The voucher programs were implemented as intended. The NSW Government rolled out the voucher programs' technology successfully. It adhered to the inputs and activities as intended by the voucher program logics.

Finding:

The NSW Government worked collaboratively to design the voucher programs. NSW Treasury and Service NSW worked together closely to design and implement the voucher programs.

Edge cases are specific situations or problems that may require special handling. The Project Control Group was tasked with addressing edge cases. Edge cases and developing evidence criteria for manually assessing parents' applications was an ongoing implementation issue for the Parents program. Issues that arose due to the specific build of the Parents program included:

- difficulty registering for the vouchers if a resident's child was not on the same Medicare card or if a resident did not have a Medicare card
- families living at a shared address were not able to apply for the Parents vouchers
- businesses redeeming vouchers for \$25 instead of \$50.¹⁵⁵

The Project Control Group developed solutions for edge cases over the course of the Parents program, including for families living at a single address who were eligible but had been unable to apply for the Parents vouchers.¹⁵⁶

Compliance issues also arose that were contrary to how the programs' were intended to operate. These are discussed in section 6.1.5. Some compliance issues were identified towards the end of the programs. For example, at the close of the voucher programs, 40 businesses had been identified by Service NSW as being non-compliant out of a total of 63 cases across the voucher programs. This was primarily due to

¹⁵³ Consultation with Service NSW.

¹⁵⁴ Service NSW, [Service NSW Information Guide](#), 8 November 2023.

¹⁵⁵ NSW Government, Parents Stay Delivery Reports, February 2022, May 2022 and August 2022; Consultation with NSW Government stakeholders.

¹⁵⁶ NSW Government, Parents Stay Delivery Reports, February 2022, May 2022 and August 2022.

redeeming vouchers for gift cards. Service NSW contacted these businesses and ensured they removed all information on their website in relation to this breach of voucher terms and conditions.¹⁵⁷

Service NSW set up a compliance working group to investigate and evaluate the programs after they closed.¹⁵⁸ Compliance is further discussed in section 6.1.5.

Finding:

Service NSW implemented the Parents program expeditiously and under capacity constraints. Parents vouchers had different eligibility criteria which affected the product build. Edge cases created implementation issues for the Parents voucher program.

A Project Control Group was established when Stay and Parents programs were launched to help assess and address implementation issues.

Timelines

The D&D program was originally intended to be piloted in December 2020 and launched statewide on 28 January 2021.¹⁵⁹

The pilot was postponed until January 2021 based on feedback that businesses were entering a busy period following the easing of 2020 public health restrictions and did not have capacity to engage in a voucher pilot program. Postponing the pilot also allowed Service NSW more time to conduct the D&D program build and load testing. The pilot occurred in January 2021. The D&D program was launched in February 2021. Concerns for system load (whereby many residents try to register at once) necessitated a staggered rollout approach.¹⁶⁰

The D&D program ended on 30 June 2022, the NSW Government having extended it three times over the course of the program. As such, the D&D program was not implemented within originally intended timeframes. However, this was appropriate given the evolving economic and public health circumstances.

The Parents program was launched on 6 February 2022, ahead of the March 2022 launch date announced in the NSW COVID-19 Economic Recovery Strategy.¹⁶¹ No pilot program was conducted prior to the launch of the Parents program. The Parents program ended as intended, on 9 October 2022.

The NSW Government initially planned to pilot the Stay program from 10 December. This was delayed a few days due to industrial action.¹⁶² The Stay program was piloted from 13 December 2021. The Stay program was launched on 21 February 2022, earlier than the initial 4 March estimated launch date. All residents could register by 2 March 2022. Stay vouchers were valid until 9 October 2022, six days later than originally intended to align with the expiry of Parents vouchers.¹⁶³

The programs were implemented within or close to intended timeframes.

Budgets

The programs were implemented within intended budgets.

The NSW Government intended to collect the following costs data for each program:

¹⁵⁷ NSW Government, Parents Stay Delivery Report, October 2022; NSW Government, Voucher Programs Steering Committee, 28 September 2022.

¹⁵⁸ NSW Government, Parents Stay Delivery Reports, August 2022 and October 2022.

¹⁵⁹ NSW Government, COVID Stimulus Package Steering Committee Meeting #4, 4 November 2020.

¹⁶⁰ Consultation with NSW Government stakeholders; NSW Government, COVID Stimulus Package Steering Committee Meeting #4, 4 November 2020; NSW Government, COVID Stimulus Package Steering Committee Meeting #7, 3 December 2020.

¹⁶¹ NSW Government, 2021, [COVID-19 Economic Recovery Strategy](#)

¹⁶² NSW Government, Recovery Voucher Program Steering Committee #8, 19 January 2022.

¹⁶³ NSW Government, Recovery Voucher Program Steering Committee #6, 9 December 2021; Recovery Voucher Program Steering Committee #10, 4 February 2022.

- voucher costs: the value of the vouchers themselves
- implementation costs: project build costs such as building the digital product, setting up the website, project coordination
- operational costs such as contact centre calls, digital applications, and service centre applications.

When the evaluation commenced, the NSW Government could not provide operational costs for the Stay and Parents programs. Operational costs for the Stay and Parents programs came out of a shared ongoing COVID-19 budget. Service NSW was unable to clearly identify the specific operational costs associated with these programs.¹⁶⁴ Several months later, NSW Treasury conducted an audit in partnership with Service NSW in which operational costs for the Stay and Parents programs were quantified (see 8.2.1).

The D&D program had a committed budget of \$500 million at inception.¹⁶⁵ The program was costed based on an assumption that 80% of the NSW adult population registered for the vouchers and 100% redeemed their vouchers. This was to ensure there wouldn't be a ceiling on the number of vouchers that could be issued.¹⁶⁶ The D&D program budget was expanded when two additional vouchers were offered. The NSW Government committed an additional \$250 million for the extension.¹⁶⁷ Actual costs incurred for the D&D program totaled \$605.8 million. This includes \$587 million in vouchers redeemed in addition to \$8.1 million in implementation costs and \$10.7 million in operational costs (see 8.2.1).

The Stay program had a committed budget of \$250 million.¹⁶⁸ The Stay program cost the government close to \$52 million, including \$47 million in vouchers redeemed in addition to implementation and operational costs (see 8.2.1).

The Parents program had a committed budget of \$192 million.¹⁶⁹ The Parents program cost the government close to \$128 million including \$125 million in vouchers redeemed in addition to implementation and operational costs (see 8.2.1).

Project teams within government agencies often work across multiple projects. It can therefore be difficult to disaggregate costs such as staff hours and administration costs. However, efforts should be made to ensure costs can be accurately identified for large scale programs.

Finding:

The programs were implemented within or close to intended timeframes and within committed budgets. Timeframes shifted for reasons including NSW Government capacity constraints and evolving health and economic circumstances.

Recommendation:

Efforts should be made to ensure relevant costs can be identified for large scale initiatives, to enable accurate and timely reporting, monitoring and evaluation.

¹⁶⁴ Email from Service NSW, 28 April 2023.

¹⁶⁵ NSW Government, Recovery Voucher Program Steering Committee #4, 4 November 2020.

¹⁶⁶ Consultation with NSW Government stakeholders.

¹⁶⁷ NSW Government, 2021, [COVID-19 Economic Recovery Strategy](#)

¹⁶⁸ NSW Government, 2021, [COVID-19 Economic Recovery Strategy](#)

¹⁶⁹ NSW Government, 2021, [COVID-19 Economic Recovery Strategy](#)

6.1.3 To what extent was an appropriate data collection and evaluation framework established and implemented?

NSW Government evaluation guidelines advise that best practice is to plan for monitoring and evaluation at the design stage of an initiative. A monitoring and evaluation framework should incorporate a monitoring and data collection plan to track:

- implementation (inputs, activities and outputs)
- impacts (outcomes and benefits)
- information relevant to assumptions and risks.¹⁷⁰

The voucher programs were designed and implemented in the context of evolving conditions.

While no formal evaluation framework was established during the design of the programs, the NSW Government agreed and documented success indicators for the voucher programs during their design. Data was collected against these indicators to track progress and outcomes of the voucher programs throughout their lifetimes.

The data collection and evaluation processes were appropriate given the circumstances. Data and evaluation was conducted as intended throughout the lifetime of the programs.

Future programs may benefit from the technical frameworks established for the voucher programs. Building on this could allow more robust evaluation in the future, by:

- incorporating unidentifiable demographic and other data about businesses and residents who register for and redeem vouchers
- creating linked business-resident redemption data to allow analysis of whether and to what extent people used their vouchers outside of their LGA of residence
- building in any necessary changes to terms of use and the way data is stored to ensure that de-identified transaction-level data can be shared with an independent evaluator, to support more robust analysis
- ensuring that data is collected and accessible in the right format to enable difference-in-difference, event study or other modelling.

NSW Government could also consider developing a preferred approach for modelling the effectiveness of voucher programs in a program evaluation context. This could be included in TPG23-08.

Finding:

There was ongoing data collection and monitoring throughout each of the voucher programs. This assisted decision-making and facilitated evaluation.

There were some gaps and access issues in relation to data collected and no formal evaluation framework was established.

Given the circumstances, the level of monitoring was appropriate.

¹⁷⁰ NSW Treasury Policy and Guidelines: Evaluation TPG22-22, p.2, 15.

Recommendation:

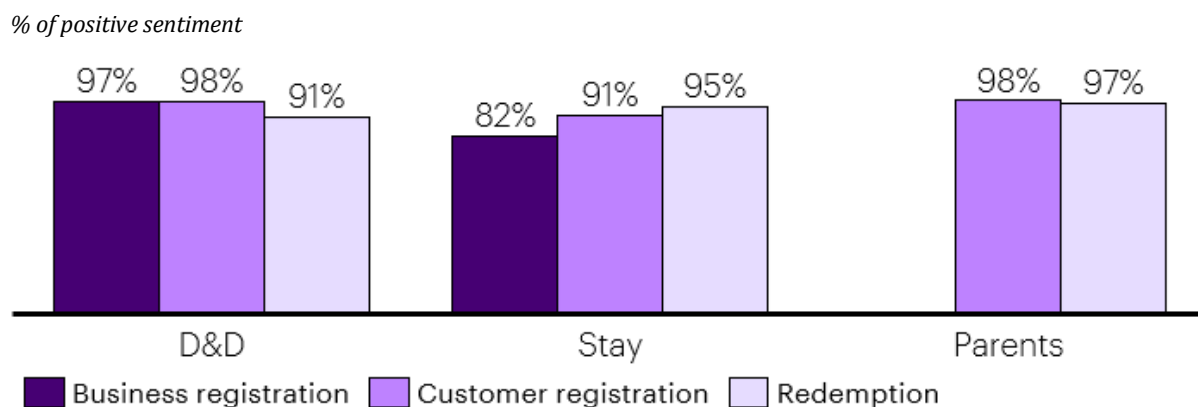
When setting up data collection frameworks, be mindful of the potential need to share disaggregated program data to facilitate evaluation.

Privacy issues that might prohibit the collection or sharing of relevant program data for evaluation should be considered early. Where possible, this should be addressed in the monitoring and evaluation plan created during the program's design.

6.1.4 What is the degree of business and consumer satisfaction with the program’s delivery?

Service NSW collected statistics on business and customer sentiment regarding the registration and redemption process for the vouchers. This data broadly showed that participating businesses and consumers were highly satisfied with the programs’ delivery.

Figure 6.1: Service NSW business and customer sentiment data



Note: Business registration sentiment was not collected for Parents as their registration for this program was attached to their registration for D&D or Stay.

Source: Service NSW correspondence with Accenture, 12 December 2022

The consumer survey conducted by the evaluator produced similar results on registration. 89% of D&D, 87% of Stay, and 86% of Parents program users either agreed or strongly agreed that the voucher registration was easy.

However, results differed on customer satisfaction with redemption. 83% of D&D and 53% of Stay users agreed that it was easy to redeem the vouchers. This question was not asked of Parents users as the redemption process was the same. Separate to ease of redemption, residents were asked if they found it easy to find a business at which to redeem their vouchers. 76% of Dine and 75% of Parents users agreed that it was easy to find a business to redeem their voucher.¹⁷¹ This was compared to 52% of Discover and 53% of Stay of users. The Parents voucher was a combination of Discover and Stay vouchers. Unobserved differences between the eligible cohorts of the Parents, Stay, and Discover vouchers may explain the differing perceptions about the ease of finding a business to redeem at.

Customer registration and redemption is discussed further in section 7.1.

Consumers were generally satisfied with the voucher programs. They:

- praised the functionality of the Service NSW app and the assistance provided by Service NSW staff
- valued the convenience and usability of the voucher programs (the D&D program was seen as simpler than the Stay and Parents programs)
- considered that the vouchers were an effective mechanism to encourage consumer spending and get people out and about.¹⁷²

Some consumers were more inclined to use their vouchers on takeaway or activities with limited interaction with others to avoid exposure to COVID-19.¹⁷³

Four consumer representative groups and three consumer focus groups were consulted (see 4.1). Consumer focus groups were comprised of 5-6 participants each. Insights from these groups are not

¹⁷¹ Accenture survey of NSW residents (N = 633 for D&D and Stay, N = 275 for Parents)

¹⁷² Consultation with consumer and business representative groups and consumer focus groups.

¹⁷³ Consultation with consumer representative groups and consumer focus groups.

taken to be representative of the overall experience of consumers given the small sample size. They provide anecdotal examples of the experiences of some customers. Consumer focus groups and representative groups highlighted that there were barriers to voucher usage. Based on program registration and redemption data, these barriers did not apply to all residents and were generally not insurmountable. Barriers included:

- COVID-19 concerns and a lack of confidence to go out, which the voucher programs aimed to support
- out of pocket spending associated with voucher use, particularly for residents who had lost income due to the pandemic
- lack of clarity around conditions of use
- language barriers for culturally and linguistically diverse residents
- digital barriers for senior residents or people with low digital literacy
- difficulties for people with disability, including in finding appropriate accommodation options.

The NSW Government took steps to address some of these barriers (see 6.1.5).

Consumers suggested that in delivering future voucher programs, the NSW Government should consider:

- a range of communication channels for alerts, as some residents do not check their email or Service NSW app
- ensuring programs are accessible for residents with disability (some of whom found it difficult to find accessible businesses), as well as elderly and culturally and linguistically diverse residents (see 6.1.5)
- partnering with inclusive businesses to improve voucher uptake
- more flexibility to pool vouchers (for D&D)
- ensuring voucher values are sufficient to encourage spending (for Stay).¹⁷⁴

Businesses were similarly satisfied with the voucher programs' delivery. Businesses:

- valued the support provided to small businesses who had been impacted by the pandemic
- were impressed by Service NSW's delivery of the programs including the app's ease of use
- appreciated the personalised assistance offered to businesses if required
- noted the psychological impact of the vouchers beyond their monetary value, by encouraging people to get out and about.¹⁷⁵

Some large businesses participating in the voucher programs reported initial difficulties registering multiple locations under one business. This was time-consuming. However, this was resolved early in the D&D program implementation. Service NSW staff personally assisted businesses in need of support early in the voucher programs' implementation.¹⁷⁶ The NSW Government has since taken steps to resolve this challenge for the subsequent Back to School NSW voucher program. Businesses can now upload a file with all of their locations in one application.¹⁷⁷

Businesses suggested that the NSW Government should have given more consideration to the Stay program. They noted insufficient voucher value and inadequate communication of the Stay program terms and conditions.¹⁷⁸

Finding:

¹⁷⁴ Consultation with consumer representative groups and consumer focus groups.

¹⁷⁵ Consultation with business representative groups conducted over February – March 2023.

¹⁷⁶ Consultation with Merrivale, 22 February 23; Consultation with Hoyts, 24 February 2023.

¹⁷⁷ Consultation with NSW Government stakeholders.

¹⁷⁸ Consultation with Merrivale, 22 February 2023.

Consultation and feedback received from businesses and consumers who participated in the voucher programs indicated a high level of satisfaction with the programs' delivery. Some issues were reported with registration and redemption, but these were mostly mitigated early in the program's implementation.

6.1.5 Were risks identified and managed? Were there any unintended side-effects (positive or negative) of implementing the program?

6.1.5.1 Risk identification and management

The following section of the report has been redacted to protect confidential government fraud and compliance procedures and processes. Information includes financial reporting processes, compliance procedures and fraud detection frameworks.

Finding:

The NSW Government sought to measure non-compliance of businesses participating in the D&D program through mystery shopping exercises. Of those audited, many businesses were found to be non-compliant. 48% were accepting vouchers for takeaway and 15% were not adhering to QR code requirements. Limited action was taken to remediate this beyond warning letters.

Recommendation:

Dedicate resources to detecting and addressing non-compliance. Where compliance issues are identified, carefully consider the need for program changes, communications (broad or targeted) to program users, and stronger action to remediate.

Recommendation:

Ensure terms and conditions are clearly communicated to program users. Where possible, communicate to the public the measures that will be taken to detect, investigate and action non-compliance by all program users.

6.1.5.2 Unintended side effects of the voucher programs

Programs create flow-on effects and externalities. Some of these may not be anticipated or intended. Side effects can be positive or negative.

Conflicts with public health orders

At the onset of the Delta outbreak, the risks relating to public health materialised. The NSW Government imposed restrictions on movement and activity on 26 June 2021. D&D vouchers could only be redeemed for in-person activities.

Consumers and businesses had to choose to either:

- not use (or accept) vouchers (and thus not receive their benefit)
- accept vouchers for take-away, in breach of the vouchers' terms of use, or
- violate Public Health Orders to benefit from vouchers.

The NSW Government identified the unintended side-effect and took action to mitigate. On 6 July 2021, the NSW Government amended the D&D vouchers' terms of use and scope, to allow vouchers to be redeemed:

- for takeaway purchases

- at takeaway businesses.

This meant that residents and businesses could still benefit from Dine vouchers without violating Public Health Orders or the vouchers' terms of use.

Many Discover businesses could not easily pivot to remote service. Discover redemptions fell 89% between 13 June to 11 July.¹⁷⁹

Finding:

A consequence of the original design of the D&D program was that it incentivised consumers and businesses to dine out in a way that was contrary to NSW Health advice following the Delta outbreak. This was a known potential consequence of the D&D program as outbreaks of COVID-19 could not be foreseen.

The NSW Government identified the incentive problem and reacted by changing the program's scope.

Equity and access

To benefit from vouchers, residents needed:

- to be able to register for vouchers
- access to businesses accepting vouchers
- the financial capacity to pay for any gap between the voucher value and the cost of purchase.

Not all residents had these. People living in remote areas, people with disability, people aged 65+, and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities were all less likely to register for the voucher programs (see 7.1).

Feedback from consumer groups highlighted challenges with equity and access (see 6.1.4). These led to unintended consequences whereby some individuals and businesses benefited more than others:

- language barriers and digital barriers impacted some residents' ability to register for vouchers
- some residents reported that it was challenging to find businesses at which to redeem vouchers (this was more prevalent for people in regional or remote areas and for people with disability)
- some residents were not confident to go out due to COVID-19 concerns, contrary to the voucher programs' goal to support getting people out and about
- some residents did not have the financial capacity to pay for any gap between the voucher value and cost of purchase.

There were some strategies in place to assist individuals with less digital literacy or who speak English as a second language in registering for and redeeming the vouchers. The NSW Government:

- enabled residents to register for vouchers through non-digital means, including by telephone and over the counter at Service NSW service centres, without requiring an email address
- provided automatic translation of materials through the Service NSW website, and access to translators in Service NSW service centres and over the phone
- enabled residents to redeem their vouchers using paper vouchers or voucher codes sent to their phone via SMS.

Finding:

An unintended consequence of the implementation of the programs was that it created more benefit for individuals or businesses with higher levels of digital literacy. Some action was taken to remediate, including making vouchers available to residents through non-digital formats.

Individuals living in regional or remote areas may have less ready access to businesses accepting vouchers. This could be because there are fewer eligible businesses in regional and remote areas. Residents may also need to travel greater distances to reach them.

The risk of inequitable access to the voucher programs was high in First Nations communities for reasons including lack of digital literacy and access, remoteness and language barriers. Service NSW took steps to address this risk to some extent. This included an engagement strategy that specifically targeted First Nations peoples. In addition to helping residents access non-digital vouchers, Service NSW ran mini pilots in some indigenous communities.¹⁸⁰

Finding:

An unintended consequence of the design of the programs was that it created more benefit for individuals and businesses in metropolitan areas.

Recommendation:

In designing policy interventions, policymakers should be cognisant of how accessibility, awareness and take-up in different demographic groups may be affected by mechanism design. Consider tailoring mechanism design, such as incentives and support structures for regional or remote areas, to account for geographical differences and ensure equitable outcomes.

The value of Stay vouchers limited the equity of the program for residents on different income levels. The value of the voucher was 23% of the average cost of a one night of accommodation in NSW. This meant that residents could only benefit if they could afford to cover the out of pocket costs of the Stay.

Finding:

The value of the Stay vouchers may have affected ability to redeem. Individuals with higher disposable incomes are more likely to be able to afford to pay the difference between the voucher value and the purchase value. This has equity implications.

The following section of the report has been redacted to protect confidential government fraud and compliance procedures and processes. Information includes financial reporting processes, compliance procedures and fraud detection frameworks.

6.1.6 To what extent was the program adapted to account for changing circumstances through its lifetime?

The voucher programs were announced and implemented in the context of COVID-19. Public health and economic circumstances were changing daily.

The NSW Government adapted the programs before and during their operation, in response to:

- changing circumstances
- feedback from stakeholders and users.¹⁸¹

Programs were adapted at several points, with amendments made to:

- when vouchers could be redeemed
- the expiry date of vouchers
- how many vouchers were issued to each eligible resident
- industries and business types that were able to register to accept vouchers.

The NSW Government agreed success metrics for each of the voucher programs prior to their implementation. The success metrics were not updated throughout the life of the programs as circumstances evolved.

6.1.6.1 Accounting for changing circumstances

The NSW Government adapted the D&D program to account for changing circumstances.

Table 6.2: Summary of changes made to account for changing circumstances

Change in circumstances	Was the program adapted?	How was the program adapted?	When?
NSW Health advice that due to low case numbers there was no longer a health concern about crowding on weekends or public holidays, and therefore the restrictions can be lifted	Yes	Change of provisions such that D&D vouchers can be used any day of the week including weekends and public holidays	25 March 2021
NSW Government made aware of a likely scheme underspend	Yes	Extension of D&D to 31 July 2021 to encourage uptake and allow the scheme to be used over the winter holiday period	31 May 2021
First case of Delta variant of COVID-19 detected in NSW, marking the onset of the Delta outbreak	Yes	Stay program launch paused. Business registrations closed.	June 2021
Public Health Orders imposed in NSW and associated restrictions on customers/businesses being able to redeem/accept Dine vouchers	Yes	Extension of Dine vouchers expiry to 31 August 2021. Allow Dine businesses to provide delivery takeaway during the period of public health restrictions.	28 June 2021
Public Health Orders imposed in NSW and associated restrictions	Yes	Extension of Discover vouchers expiry to 31 August 2021	28 June 2021

¹⁸¹ Consultation with NSW Government stakeholders.

on customers/businesses being able to redeem/accept Discover vouchers			
Significantly changed circumstances as a result of public health restrictions in place in NSW from June 2021 onwards	Yes	Extension of D&D to 30 June 2022	20 August 2021
NSW develops Economic Recovery Strategy with an objective of encouraging NSW residents to get out and spend money to stimulate the economic recovery	Yes	Two additional vouchers to all NSW residents (one Dine and one Discover). All vouchers available until 30 June 2022.	3 December 2021
NSW Health updated public health restrictions to remove the mandatory requirement for businesses to have a COVID safety plan	Yes	Removed requirement for participating businesses to have a COVID safety plan. Businesses comply with current Public Health Orders and latest COVID safety guidelines for their industry.	15 December 2021

The voucher programs were adapted when circumstances changed to ensure the policy intent and/or design remained relevant (see chapter 5).

The governance arrangements and policy mechanism facilitated this adaptability. Regular Steering Committee, RAC, and BAC meetings:

- ensured that new risks or opportunities were identified and responses approved in a timely manner
- coordinated the execution of program changes across multiple departments and teams.

The choice to deliver stimulus using a digital voucher on the Service NSW app gave the Government control over program delivery. This approach allowed for:

- **direct organisational control:** the NSW Government could make rapid adjustments when necessary, ensuring flexibility and responsiveness in program management.
- **program customisation:** the digital delivery platform enabled the NSW Government to finely tune how the vouchers functioned and how they could be used. Accordingly, necessary changes could be made in response to evolving circumstances.

Finding:

The NSW Government demonstrated its ability to adapt to changing COVID-19 conditions to ensure the voucher programs remained relevant and effective.

6.1.6.2 Accounting for feedback

The NSW Government collected feedback from residents primarily through:

- a dedicated feedback section on the Service NSW website and app
- a prompt for real-time feedback through the app at the time the customer redeemed their voucher
- emails to Service NSW

- feedback to the Treasurer, the Minister for Digital and Customer Service and local Members of Parliament.

Feedback was reviewed daily. Service NSW collated this feedback. Customer feedback was analysed for similar comments in order to identify trends or widespread issues.¹⁸² Feedback metrics on customer sentiment (actual vs target) was presented to the Steering Committee and Project Control Group. More detailed feedback was raised with these governance groups and actioned as required.¹⁸³

Service NSW teams received feedback from businesses through the Business Advisory Committee and through their direct engagement. Businesses could also use a formal feedback mechanism administered through the Service NSW platform.

The NSW Government adapted the implementation of the programs to account for feedback where practicable. For example, by:

- updating the list of ANZSIC codes that qualified as eligible businesses in the voucher programs, such as local government administration and wineries
- directly assisting businesses finding it difficult or having technical problems with registration
- clarifying the definition of a 'dine-in' meal to address confusion among businesses, particularly those in food courts
- developing solutions for customer edge cases over the course of the Parents program (see 6.1.2).¹⁸⁴

Finding:

The NSW Government demonstrated its ability to monitor and adapt to ongoing feedback to ensure the voucher programs remained relevant and effective.

¹⁸² Consultation with NSW Government stakeholders. For example, see NSW Government, Voucher Project Control Group (PCG) Meeting #5, 20 April 2022.

¹⁸³ For example, see NSW Government, Steering Committee Meeting #19, 11 May 2022.

¹⁸⁴ Consultation with NSW Government stakeholders; NSW Government D&D Policy Guidelines

7 Effectiveness

7.1 Reach and access

The voucher program operated as a two-sided market. Residents and businesses both needed to participate in the program for it to be effective. To achieve this, the program needed to have high reach and accessibility among both groups.

Reach and access can be measured by:

- awareness – to what extent did residents/businesses know the program was available to them?
- registration – to what extent did residents/businesses register for the program?
- redemption – to what extent did registered residents/businesses use their vouchers?

In this context, the evaluation addresses the following evaluation questions:

- To what extent did the program reach intended audiences, both businesses and individuals?
To what extent did audiences access the program?
- To what extent did reach and access vary between groups with different geographic, demographic and socioeconomic characteristics?

7.1.1 Residents

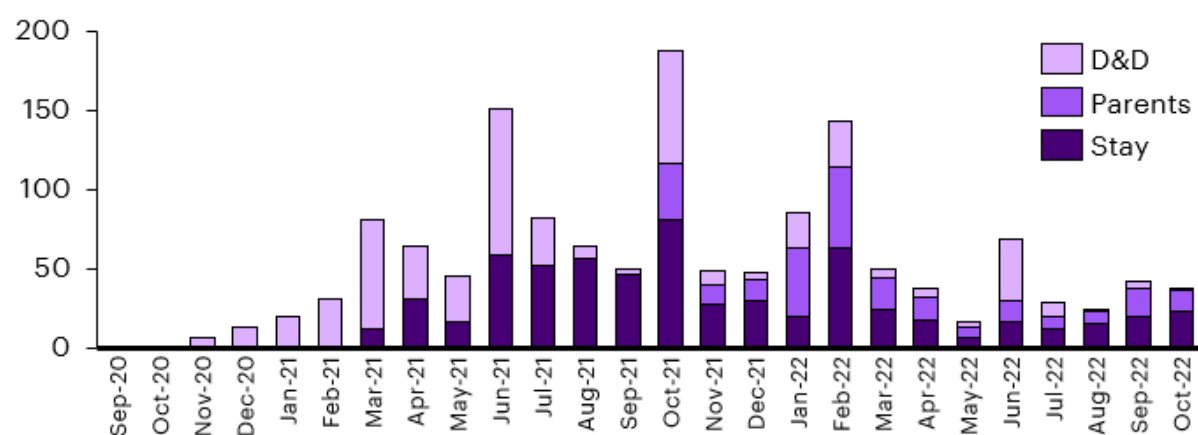
D&D and Stay vouchers were intended for all adult residents. Parents vouchers were targeted to parents of school-aged children.

The voucher programs were marketed through newspapers, radio, television and social media. Service NSW developed a 'My Business Profile Toolkit' to help businesses understand the program and guide their staff on how to redeem vouchers.¹⁸⁵

The Stay program received the most print media coverage, being mentioned in 44% of all print news publications that mentioned at least one of the programs. The D&D program was mentioned in 38% of print news stories despite running longer than Stay. The Parents program received the least coverage (mentioned in 18% of print news stories in which the voucher programs appear) (Figure 7.1). While these figures allow for comparison between the programs, they do not indicate how prevalent the voucher programs were in news publications more generally.

Figure 7.1: Media mentions of the D&D, Stay, and Parents programs over time

Number of media publications mentioning the programs, monthly



Source: Factiva

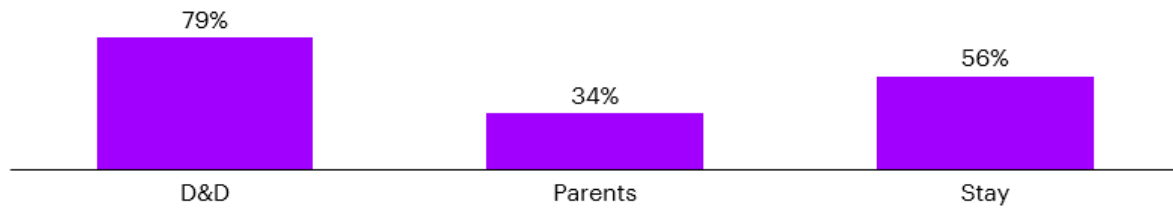
Despite this, residents were most likely to report being aware of the D&D program (Figure 7.2).

The D&D program had a dedicated marketing campaign. Stay and Parents programs were marketed as part the Cost of Living Savings Finder campaign. The campaign aimed to raise awareness of over 70 rebates and vouchers that the NSW Government was offering at the time (and included D&D). While the Stay program received more media attention relative to the other programs, the lack of a dedicated marketing campaign may have contributed to lower awareness. This may also have impacted the Parents program, which did not have its own marketing campaign nor as much media attention.

¹⁸⁵ NSW Government, COVID Stimulus Package Steering Committee Meeting #12, 5 February 2021

Figure 7.2: Awareness of programs

% of surveyed NSW residents aware of the program



Source: Cost of Living: Campaign Evaluation Dip 5 [Gen Pop], NSW Customer Service, Dec 2022

The relative ease of accessing and using the D&D vouchers compared to Parents and Stay likely contributed to its higher level of awareness. The D&D program also ran for longer and awareness likely rose via word-of-mouth. Customer registration data over the life of the D&D program indicates that awareness was high when the program was launched and at its end. Registration was highest in March 2021 at 1.9 million residents. 1.5 million residents registered for the D&D program in April 2021. Thereafter the number of residents who registered per month fell particularly once the Delta outbreak started. Only 19,000 residents registered in September 2021. From October 2021, when D&D was extended with two more vouchers, registrations began to rise gradually (97,000 residents registered in December 2021). Over 100,000 residents registered in June 2022 at the program's end.¹⁸⁶

The cost in time and money of using the D&D voucher was lower than for Stay. This is because redeeming a Stay voucher required a person to accept a higher out of pocket cost, and to set aside time to travel. Registration data indicates that awareness of the Stay program was highest when the program launched. Over 633,000 residents registered for Stay vouchers in February 2022. Registrations spiked in September 2022 just before the program's end.¹⁸⁷

Survey data indicates that awareness of the Parents program was higher among parents than the general population. Only 34% of NSW residents were aware of the Parents program. However, these results do not account for whether the respondents surveyed were part of the eligible parent population. People with school-aged children are more likely to be aware of programs that are targeted at them relative to residents who are not targeted by the program. Alternative survey results suggest that of those surveyed, almost all (94%) of respondents who had school-aged children were aware of this program.¹⁸⁸

Finding:

Awareness of the D&D program was high among NSW residents, particularly at the start and end of the D&D program. The NSW Government rolled out a dedicated marketing campaign for the D&D program.

Awareness was relatively low for the Stay program according to survey data. The Stay program did not have a dedicated marketing campaign but received more media attention relative to the other programs. A dedicated marketing campaign may have contributed to higher awareness the Stay program.

People with school-aged children were more likely to be aware of the Parents program. Among the general population, awareness of the Parents program was low.

Each program defined a target registration and redemption rate as part of the Key Performance Indicators for Success.

¹⁸⁶ Service NSW program data.

¹⁸⁷ Service NSW program data.

¹⁸⁸ Accenture survey of NSW residents, January 2023. N = 264.

Table 7.1: Targeted versus achieved resident registration and redemption rates

Program	Target eligible resident registration	Actual resident registration	Target redemption (of registered)	Actual resident redemption
D&D	65%	85%	75% use at least 3 vouchers	83%
Stay	65%	35%	75%	59%
Parents	65%	54%	75% use at least 3 vouchers	80%

Source: Program policy guidelines; SNSW correspondence, 'Final success metrics', 15 December 2022

7.1.1.1 Dine & Discover (D&D)

The D&D program exceeded its registration and redemption targets at the State level.

The factors which led to this outcome were:

- **High awareness among residents:** 79% of NSW residents were aware that the program was available to them.
- **High relative value of the vouchers:** Dine vouchers were worth 63% of the average purchase price and Discover vouchers were worth 57% of the average purchase price).¹⁸⁹
- **Access to participating businesses:** the share of residents that agreed there were many businesses in their local area where they could spend their voucher was 76% for Dine and 52% for Discover.¹⁹⁰

While targets were met in aggregate, the redemption rate for Discover was lower than Dine and did not meet the 65% target. Based on a consumer survey of 1,017 NSW residents, the combined D&D redemption rate was 71% for all issued vouchers. However, the redemption rate for Discover vouchers was 60% compared to 83% for Dine vouchers. The main reason for this was that 34% of Discover users could not access an appropriate business. By contrast, just 18% of Dine users had the same problem.¹⁹¹

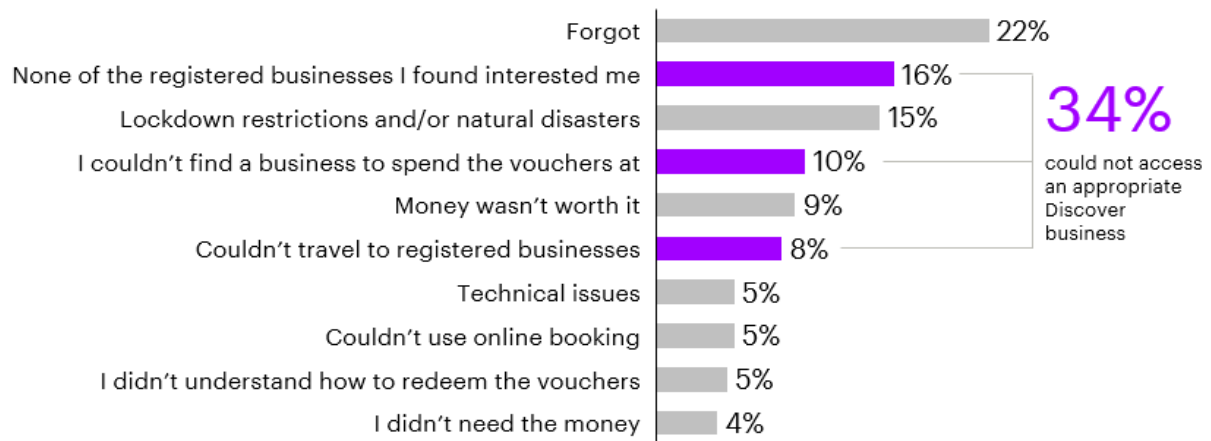
¹⁸⁹ Accenture analysis of iLLION Spend Analytics data. Average Dine purchase price was \$39.60. Average Discover purchase price was \$43.67.

¹⁹⁰ Accenture survey of NSW residents, Jan 2023

¹⁹¹ Accenture survey of NSW residents, Jan 2023. See Appendix B for a detailed breakdown of survey sample demographics.

Figure 7.3: Reasons people did not redeem their Discover vouchers

% of survey respondents who didn't redeem all three Discover vouchers



Source: Accenture survey of NSW residents, Jan 2023 (N = 935)

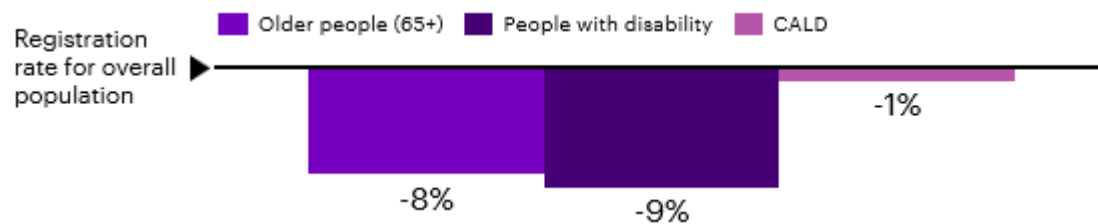
The degree of reach and access varied with geographic and demographic factors.

Customer registration rates were higher in metropolitan LGAs (90%). In regional and remote areas, registration was 86% and 80%, respectively.¹⁹²

Survey results showed that some demographic groups registered at a lower rate than the general population (Figure 7.4).

Figure 7.4: Difference from overall D&D registration rate by demographic group

% of eligible residents who registered for the program



Source: SNSW voucher registration data; Accenture survey of NSW residents (see appendix for sample size of demographic groups)

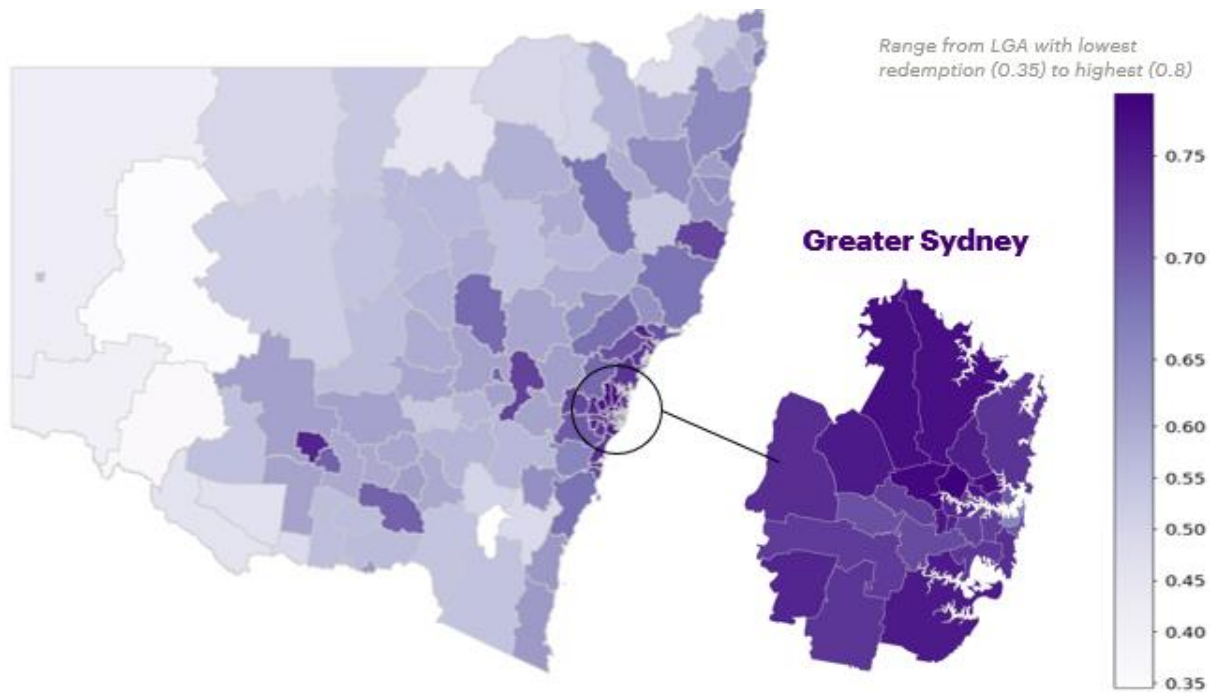
The redemption rates of D&D vouchers also varied by geography. Figure 7.5 shows the spatial distribution of D&D redemption rates across NSW. Redemptions were highest in metropolitan LGAs where the average redemption rate was 73%. Redemptions were lower in regional (65%) and lowest in remote (60%) LGAs. There was a greater regional disparity in redemption rates for Discover vouchers than for Dine vouchers. While Dine redemption in remote areas was 8% lower than in metropolitan areas, remote Discover redemptions were 19% lower.¹⁹³

¹⁹² SNSW program registration data

¹⁹³ Note: ABS remoteness area classifications 'outer regional', 'remote', and 'very remote' have been combined and are referred to as 'remote' or 'rural' throughout.

Figure 7.5: D&D redemption rate by consumer LGA

% of issued vouchers that were redeemed by residents that reside in that LGA

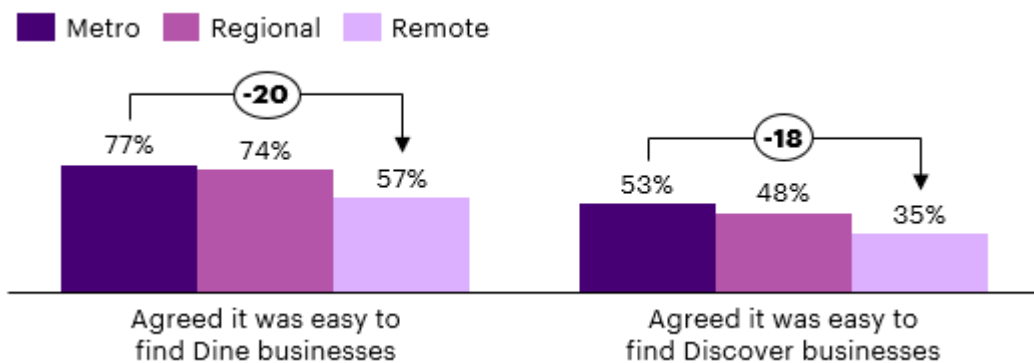


Source: SNSW voucher redemption data

This was primarily because residents in regional and remote LGAs had less access to registered D&D businesses. Fewer residents in these areas agreed that it was “easy to find a business” to redeem their vouchers at (Figure 7.6). In metropolitan LGAs, there was an average of 312 registered D&D businesses. On average, regional LGAs had access to 80 registered businesses. In remote areas, the average number of D&D businesses was 23.¹⁹⁴ This partially explains the lower statewide redemption rate of Discover vouchers in comparison to Dine. ABS data about participation in and attendance at selected cultural and creative activities indicates that generally people living in greater capital cities are more likely to attend a cultural venue or event (65%) when compared with people living in other regions of Australia (61%).¹⁹⁵

Figure 7.6: Agreement that it was "easy to find a business" by location and voucher type

% of survey respondents who used D&D vouchers by location



Source: Accenture survey of NSW residents (N = 935)

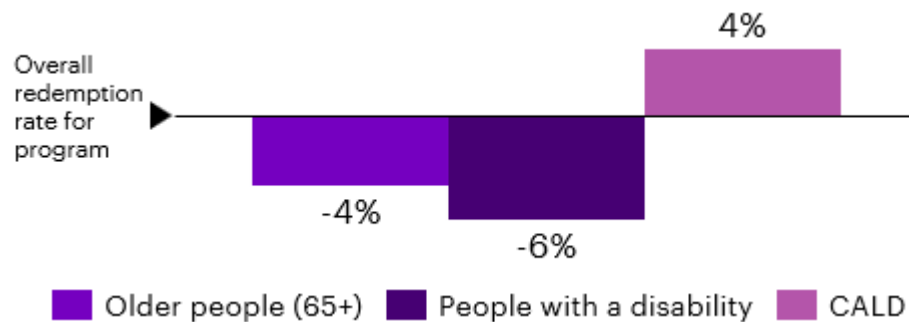
¹⁹⁴ SNSW business registration data

¹⁹⁵ ABS, Cultural and creative activities, 2021-22, [Table 14](#).

The redemption of the D&D vouchers varied by demographic group. Older people and people living with a disability redeemed their vouchers at a lower rate than the general population, but CALD communities redeemed their vouchers at a higher rate.

Figure 7.7: Difference from overall D&D redemption rate by demographic group

% of survey respondents who used D&D vouchers by location



Source: Accenture survey of NSW residents (N = 935)

The evaluation was limited in the extent to which it could determine how socioeconomic factors affected reach and access. Individual-level data is required but this was not available (see 4.1.2). Research indicates that income may be associated with voucher redemption for those in lower income brackets. Some consumers, particularly those who had lost income throughout the pandemic, did not have the financial capacity to pay for any gap between the voucher value and purchase price.¹⁹⁶ This impacted redemption. NSW residents living below the poverty line were 7% less likely to redeem D&D vouchers than low-income residents.¹⁹⁷ Wealthy individuals may also have had less incentive to register for or redeem their vouchers simply because they did not have the need for it. Program data confirms that wealthy LGAs such as Woollahra and Mosman had the highest proportion of unredeemed vouchers. However, in aggregate there is no observed relationship between redemption rates and median personal annual income at the LGA level (see Appendix C).

Finding:

The D&D program exceeded its registration and redemption targets set by the NSW Government.

The degree of reach and access varied with geographic and demographic factors. D&D registration and redemption was higher in metropolitan areas than regional and remote areas. Older people and people with a disability were less likely to register for and redeem D&D vouchers. While culturally and linguistically diverse residents were less likely to register for the D&D program, they redeemed their vouchers at a higher rate.

¹⁹⁶ Accenture consultations with consumer groups

¹⁹⁷ NCOSS, "Tough Times, Hard Choices: Struggling households and the rising cost-of-living crisis in NSW", 2022

7.1.1.2 Stay

The Stay program failed to meet its registration and redemption targets. The targeted registration rate was 65% of eligible users. The registration rate was 35%.

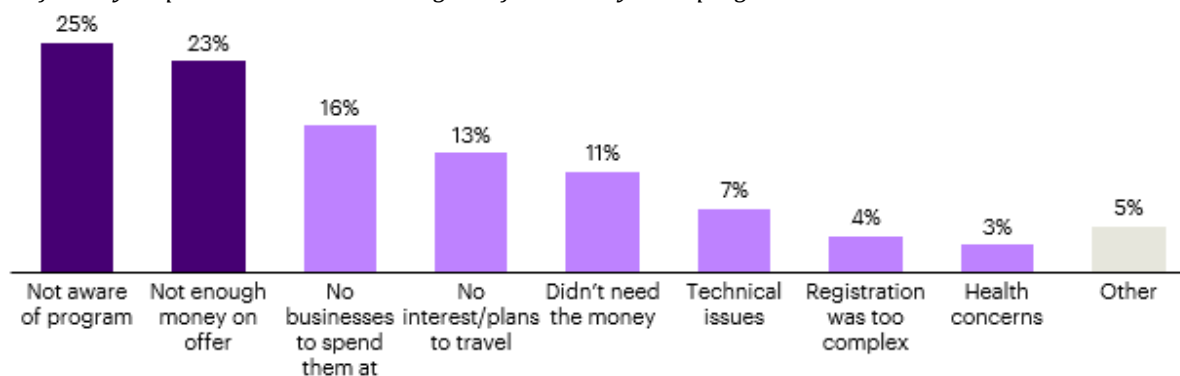
Survey results show that 25% of respondents who did not register for the Stay program reported that they were unaware of the program. This was the most common reason for not registering. This is despite the Stay program receiving more media attention as a proportion of publications that mentioned the voucher programs. A dedicated marketing campaign for the Stay program would likely have contributed to greater awareness (see 7.1.1).

The second largest reason was insufficient voucher value, reported by 23% of respondents (Figure 7.8). As discussed in 5.4.3, the value of the Stay voucher was 23% of the average cost of an overnight stay in NSW (based on the average cost of NSW accommodation being around \$222 per night).¹⁹⁸ This meant that customers had to accept a relatively high out of pocket cost to redeem their voucher. This may have been prohibitive for some users, leading to low registration.

Other respondents reported that there were no businesses at which to redeem their Stay voucher (16%), or they had no interest in or plans to travel (13%). This indicates that the Stay voucher was not aligned with the consumption preferences of many residents.

Figure 7.8: Reasons why residents did not register for the Stay program

% of survey respondents who did not register for the Stay NSW program



Source: Accenture survey of NSW residents (N=383)

Registration rates for the Stay program differed by demographic group. Older people and people with a disability registered at a lower rate than the general population (Figure 7.9). Consultations conducted during the evaluation suggested that there was a lack of accommodation options for people with disabilities.¹⁹⁹ Registration for CALD communities was similar to the general population. Evidence from consultations suggests that the vouchers were well marketed in CALD communities through translated material and community engagement.²⁰⁰

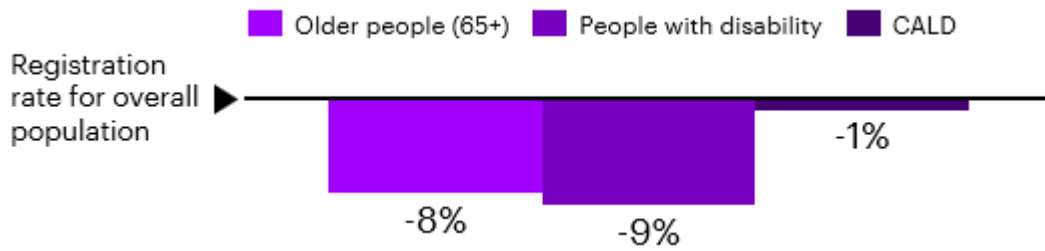
¹⁹⁸ Destination NSW (2022) Note: the NSW state average daily rate is \$222. Rates in central Sydney are \$257 versus \$228 in regional NSW.

¹⁹⁹ Accenture interviews with consumer and business representative groups

²⁰⁰ Accenture consultations with consumer and business representative groups

Figure 7.9: Difference from overall Stay registration rate by demographic group

% of NSW residents who registered for the Stay vouchers



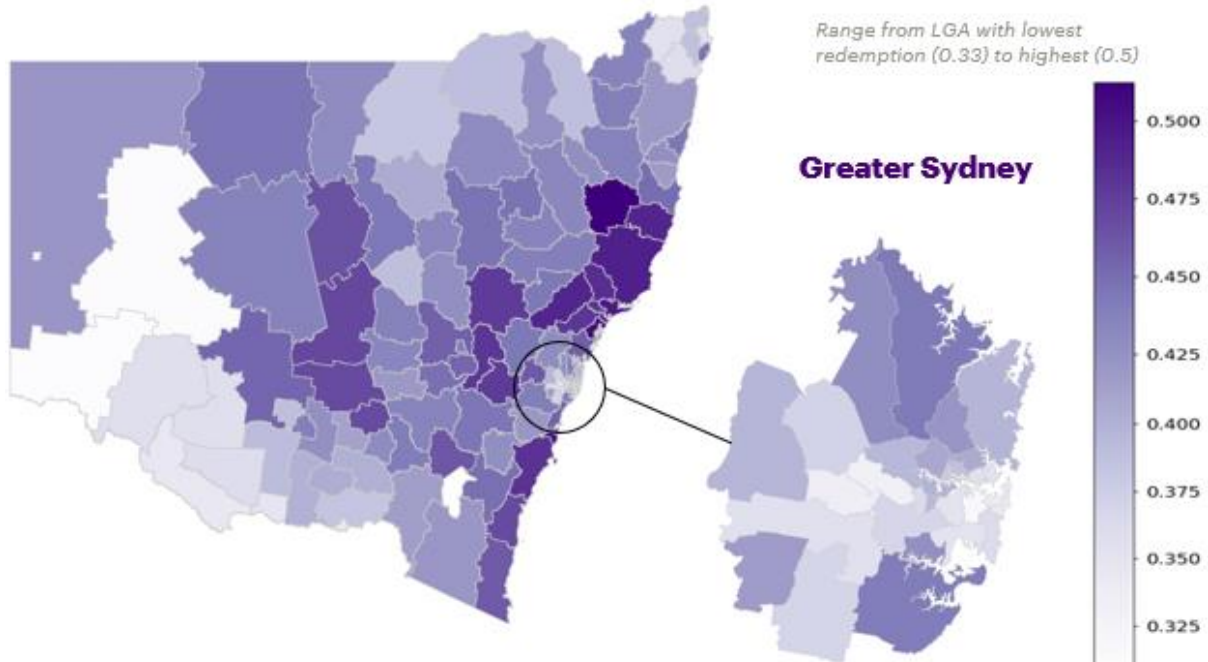
Source: Accenture survey of NSW residents (2023) (for 65+ N=208, for people with a disability N=121, for CALD N=113)

The redemption rate of Stay vouchers was more consistent across different areas of NSW than D&D (Figure 7.10). A person’s ability to redeem a Stay voucher was less dependent on the number of registered businesses in their LGA. This is because people are willing to travel outside their local area to use accommodation businesses. The redemption rate was 40% in metropolitan, 45% in regional, and 40% in remote LGAs.

Residents of the Central Coast and South Coast redeemed the highest share of Stay vouchers in proportion to vouchers issued. Some LGAs in the central west of the State such as Bathurst, Mid-West, and Oberon also had relatively high redemption rates for Stay. The LGA where residents had the highest redemption rate was Walcha. The lowest redemption rate was in Wentworth.

Figure 7.10: Stay NSW redemption rate by consumer LGA

% of issued vouchers that were redeemed by residents that reside in that LGA



Source: SNSW redemption data.

Like D&D, the lack of individual-level data limited the evaluation of the effect of socioeconomic factors on the reach and access of the Stay program. There was no observed relationship between Stay voucher redemption and median annual personal income at the LGA level (Appendix C).

Finding:

The Stay program failed to meet its registration and redemption targets. The key reason for this was a lack of awareness, followed by insufficient voucher value. This is despite the Stay vouchers receiving more media attention relative to the other vouchers. Some residents reported a lack of available businesses at which to redeem vouchers and/or no interest in travel.

Older people and people with a disability were less likely to register for Stay.

7.1.1.3 Parents

The Parents program did not meet its customer registration target of 65% of eligible residents. The actual registration rate was 54%.²⁰¹

Most parents surveyed were aware of the Parents program, noting the digital nature of the survey was likely to attract people who were more likely to register. Nonetheless, of the small sample of survey respondents who were eligible but did not register for Parents vouchers, the reasons were:

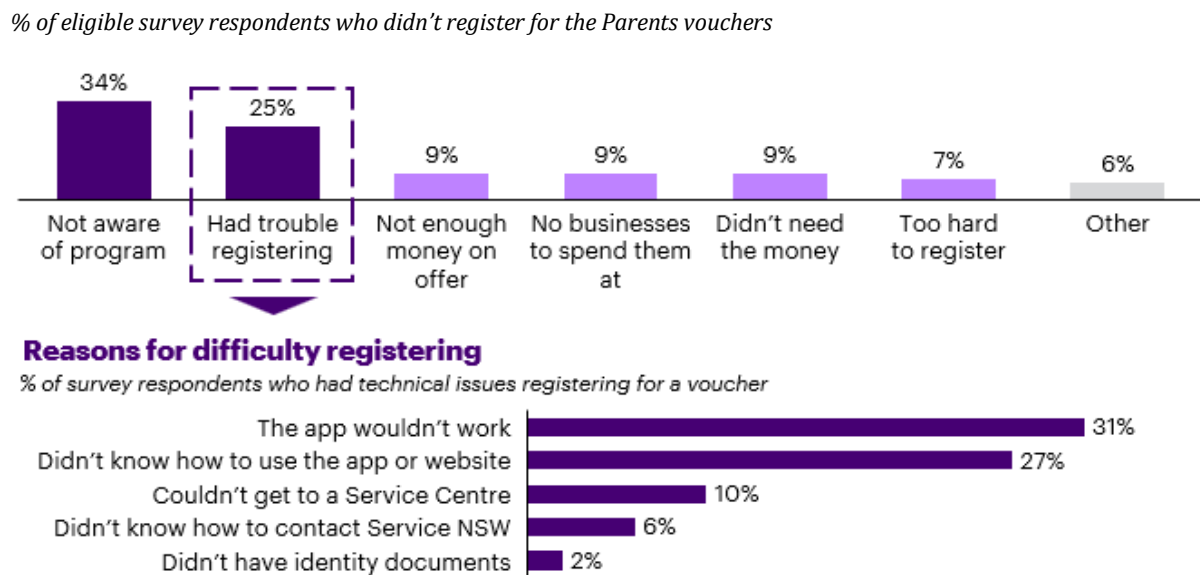
- not aware of the program
- difficulties registering for the program.

Other market research suggested that between 19% and 40% of people surveyed were aware of the Parents NSW voucher.²⁰² In relation to this alternate survey data, it is not clear what proportion of survey respondents were parents of school-aged children and therefore eligible for the program.

Service NSW analysis suggested that difficulties with registering included:

- difficulties with Medicare verification, or needing to enter Medicare details multiple times
- difficulties adding multiple children
- ID verifications
- difficulties registering when name includes an apostrophe.²⁰³

Figure 7.11: Primary reasons residents did not register for the Parents program



Source: Accenture survey of NSW residents (2023) (N=44 residents with school-aged children who did not register for Parents vouchers)

According to the survey, the likelihood of registering for parents' vouchers varied by demographic characteristics, including where parents lived, their age and whether they spoke English as a first language.²⁰⁴ The NSW Government did not collect demographic data on parents who registered for the vouchers.

²⁰¹ SNSW program registration data

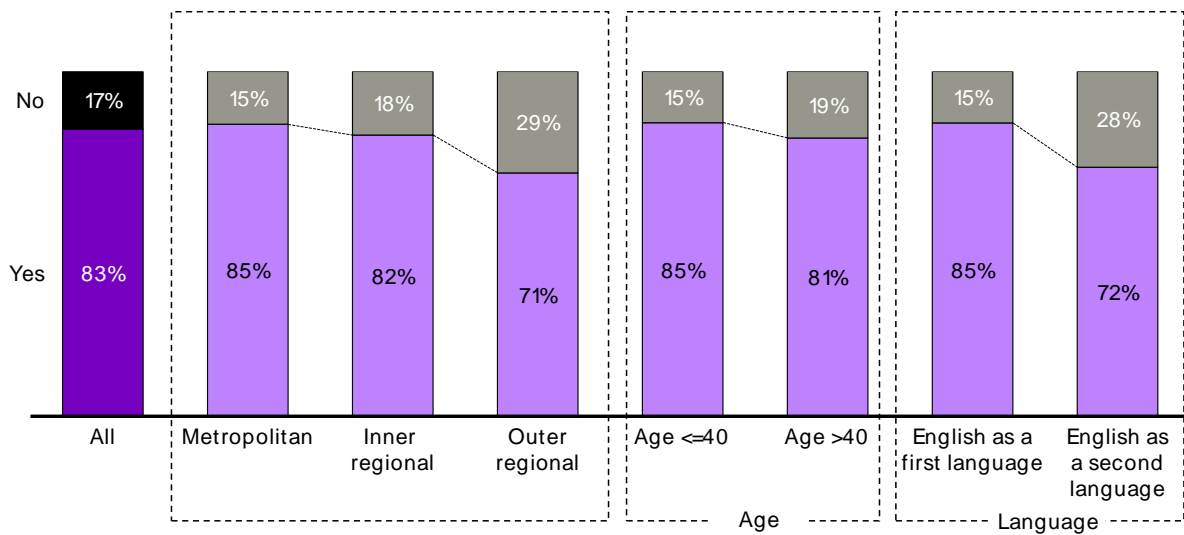
²⁰² Fiftyfive5, 'COVID-19 Business Campaign Research', July 2021

²⁰³ NSW Government Customer Service, 14 June 2022, DAC790 – ServiceNSW – Parents Vouchers Insights Report

²⁰⁴ Section 4.1.4 discusses limitations of the survey.

Figure 7.12: Registration for the Parents vouchers by demographic characteristics

% of survey respondents who registered for the Parents vouchers



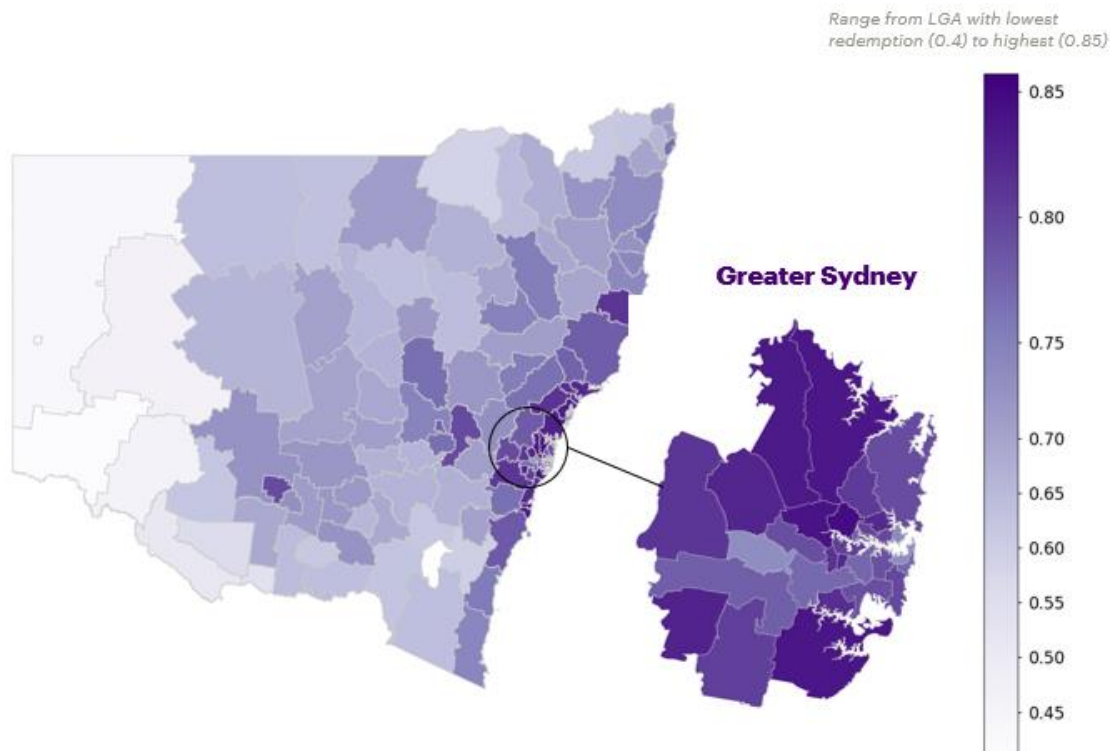
Source: Accenture survey of NSW residents (2023) (N=264 parents of school-aged children)

Parents who did register to use the vouchers were likely to redeem them. The redemption rate of Parents vouchers was 80%, compared to a target of 75%.

Redemption rates varied across the State (Figure 7.13).

Figure 7.13: Parents redemption rate by consumer LGA

% of issued vouchers that were redeemed by residents that reside in that LGA

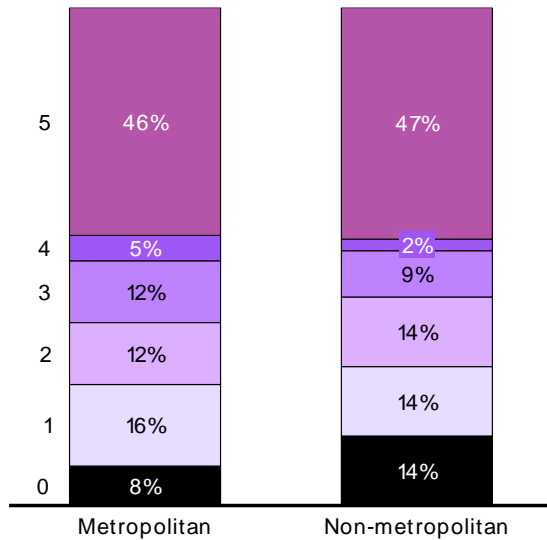


Source: SNSW redemption data

Parents living in major cities were more likely to redeem their vouchers than parents living in regional or remote areas. Survey results are consistent with this. Of those surveyed, parents living in non-metropolitan areas were more likely to report that they hadn't redeemed any vouchers (14%) compared to parents living in metropolitan areas (8%) (Figure).

Figure 7.14: Parents redemption rate by region

% of residents living in area who reported redeeming number of vouchers



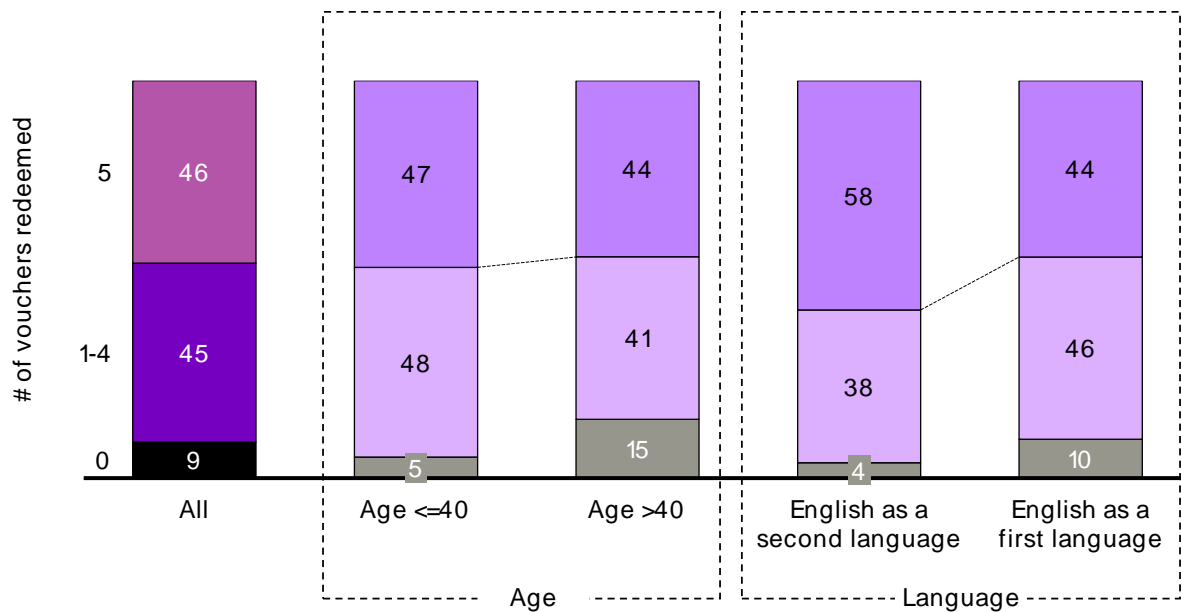
Source: Accenture survey of NSW residents (2023) (N=220 parents of school-aged children who reported having registered for the Parents vouchers)

Survey respondents who did redeem their vouchers were likely to redeem all of them. A similar proportion of parents reported that they redeemed all their vouchers in metropolitan (46%) and non-metropolitan (47%) areas (Figure).

Parents who were younger (40 years old or younger) and those who spoke English as a first language were more likely to report having redeemed any vouchers (Figure). They were also more likely to report that they had redeemed all vouchers.

Figure 7.15: Parents redemption rate by selected demographic characteristics

% of parents registered for vouchers who reported redeeming a given number of vouchers



Source: Accenture survey of NSW residents (2023) (N=220 parents of school-aged children who reported having registered for the Parents vouchers)

Like D&D and Stay, the lack of individual-level data limited the evaluation of the effect of socioeconomic factors on the reach and access. There was no clear relationship between Parents voucher redemption and median annual personal income at the LGA level (see Appendix C: Income versus program redemption rates).

Finding:

The Parents program did not meet its registration target but did meet its redemption target.

Most eligible survey respondents were aware of the program. Some residents had difficulty registering.

Parents living in major cities were more likely to redeem their vouchers than parents living in regional or remote areas. Parents who were younger (40 years old or younger) and those who spoke English as a first language were more likely to report having redeemed any vouchers.

Finding:

There is no clear relationship observed between voucher redemption and income at the LGA level.

Individual level data was not available to enable a detailed assessment of the effect of socioeconomic factors on reach and access.

7.1.2 Businesses

It is challenging to precisely quantify the number of businesses that were eligible for each program. According to Service NSW estimates based on data from the Australian Business Register, there were approximately 35,000 businesses eligible for D&D and 7,400 eligible for Stay.²⁰⁵ Based on these estimates, neither the D&D nor Stay program achieved their target registration rates.

Table 7.2: Targeted versus achieved business registration rates

Program	Target eligible business registration	Actual business registration
D&D	60%	48%
Stay	60%	31%
Parents	N/A	N/A

Quantifying eligible businesses is particularly difficult at the LGA level. Service NSW provided data on the number of business registrations aggregated by LGA of incorporation. The evaluation is not able to verify whether a business physically operates in the LGA in which it is incorporated. In addition, there is no reliable LGA-level data on the number of businesses which matched the inclusion criteria of the programs. ABS business statistics at the LGA level do not distinguish between accommodation and food services businesses. This makes it impossible to separately measure the registration rates of Dine, Discover, and Stay businesses. Instead, Service NSW business registration data is compared to ABS LGA-level 'accommodation and food services' businesses statistics to provide an indicative estimate of the registration rate for D&D (Figure).

Businesses were able to register for the voucher programs through the Service NSW Business Profile on the SNSW website. Registration was promoted to businesses through media and advertising, the development of a business toolkit, ongoing engagement with industry bodies and the availability of the Service NSW business concierge service to assist businesses.

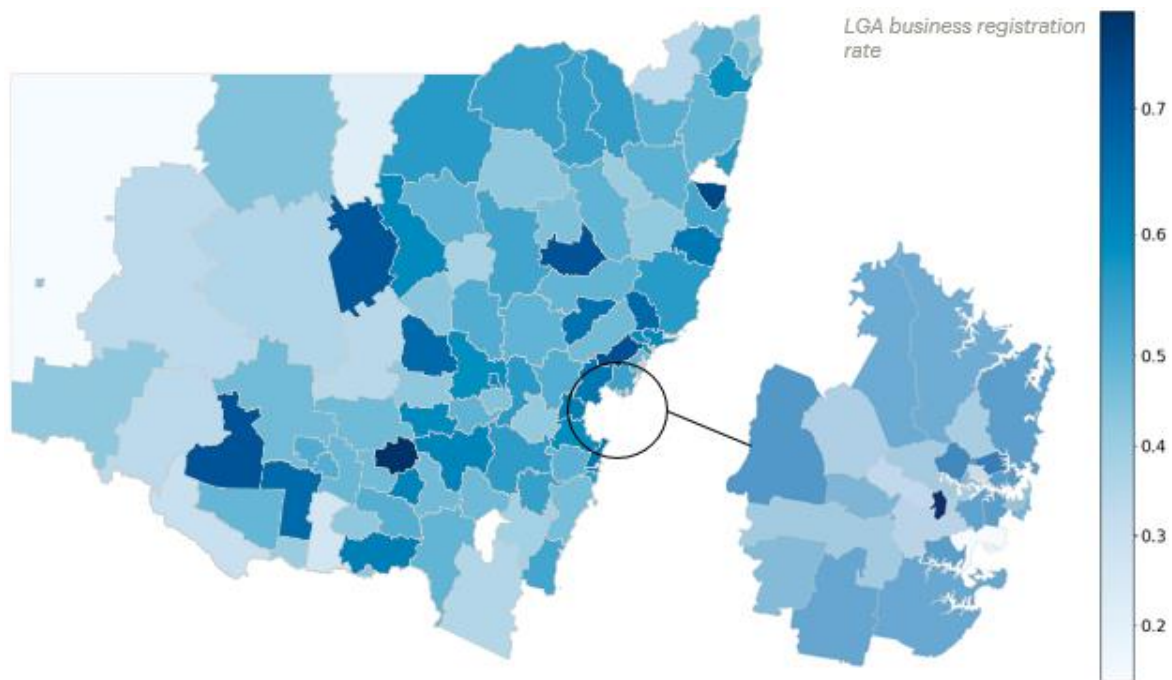
In consultations, some large businesses reported difficulties with the registration process. Specifically, larger businesses reported having to use employees' personal details to register and would have preferred a process where they could apply under a business log-in. Additionally, some businesses reported difficulties registering multiple locations under one business, describing the process as time-consuming and resource-heavy.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵ Australian Government, Australian Business Register, [ABR data](#). ABR data was filtered by eligible ANZSIC codes to approximately quantify eligible businesses.

²⁰⁶ Accenture interviews with business representative groups

Figure 7.16: Business registrations by LGA

% of estimated number of eligible businesses that registered for D&D



Note: Business registration rate is an estimate only. This is due to limited data on the number of businesses that were eligible for each program in each LGA. Estimates are based on the number of ABS 'accommodation and food services' businesses.

Source: SNSW program registration data

Noting the limitations in LGA business statistics, Service NSW program data indicates that business registration rates did not vary significantly by geographic region. There was no strong regional clustering (Figure). Metropolitan area LGAs had a business registration rate of 39%. Registration in regional areas was higher at 43%. Remote LGAs had the lowest registration rate at 33%.²⁰⁷

While this shows that business registration rates were relatively similar between geographical remoteness areas, it does not show that customer access to registered businesses was similar. Factors such as a customer's distance to registered businesses, the absolute number of registered businesses, and the variety of registered businesses may also have influenced customer accessibility and ability to redeem. In metropolitan LGAs, there was an average of 239 businesses registered for D&D. In regional areas, there was an average of 72, and in remote areas an average of 18.²⁰⁸

Finding:

The extent of reach and access to the voucher programs by businesses is difficult to examine with the data available. Some businesses reported having difficulties registering for the voucher program. Service NSW provided resources and assistance to help businesses register for the programs.

Overall, as a result of their reach and access, the voucher programs were also associated with a rise in MyServiceNSW registrations by both consumers and businesses (see 8.1.6). This expanding database can be leveraged for future programs. This, along with other benefits, are assessed in Efficiency.

²⁰⁷ SNSW program registration data; ABS, 'Counts of Australian Businesses, including Entries and Exits – June 2018 to June 2022', 2022

²⁰⁸ Accenture analysis of Service NSW program data and ABS LGA business count data, 2023.

7.2 Spending and revenue

7.2.1.1 To what extent did the program result in increased consumer spending?

The extent to which the voucher programs resulted in increased consumer spending relied largely on the vouchers encouraging people to get out and about, in line with the NSW Government's intent.

Google records footfall data for 'retail and recreation'. This demonstrates mobility trends for places such as restaurants, cafes, shopping centres, theme parks, museums, libraries and cinemas. It is indexed to the week commencing 3 February 2020, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the data is aggregated into 'retail and recreation', it is not possible to distinguish sectors targeted by the voucher programs.

In April 2020, mobility in retail and recreation places fell 42% from its pre-pandemic baseline level. Mobility recovered to the pre-pandemic level in December 2020. The Northern Beaches COVID-19 outbreak depressed mobility again.

Figure outlines mobility patterns for 'retail and recreation' patterns over the life of the three voucher programs. The data indicates some correlation between mobility patterns and the start and end of the voucher programs. While the programs may have coincided with shifts in mobility, other factors such as holiday periods and public health restrictions also contributed.

The D&D program appears to have influenced people to get out and about in 2021, when public health restrictions permitted.

- When the D&D program launched, mobility in retail and recreation was increasing. It rose from 7% below pre-pandemic levels in February 2021 to 2% below pre-pandemic levels in April 2021. This also coincides with Easter holidays.
- Mobility was relatively stable over April and May 2021 before the outbreak of the Delta variant of COVID-19. With tightened public health restrictions forcing residents to stay at home, mobility dropped to 28% and then 39% below pre-pandemic levels in July and August 2021, respectively.
- As NSW reached double vaccination targets and emerged from the Delta outbreak, mobility began to rise again. It exceeded the pre-pandemic level in December 2021, at the start of the summer holidays.
- The Omicron outbreak caused mobility to drop to 10% below pre-pandemic levels in January 2022.

The Parents (and Stay) programs launched in February 2022. There was limited change in mobility at this time. The Stay and Parents programs were not promoted as heavily as D&D.

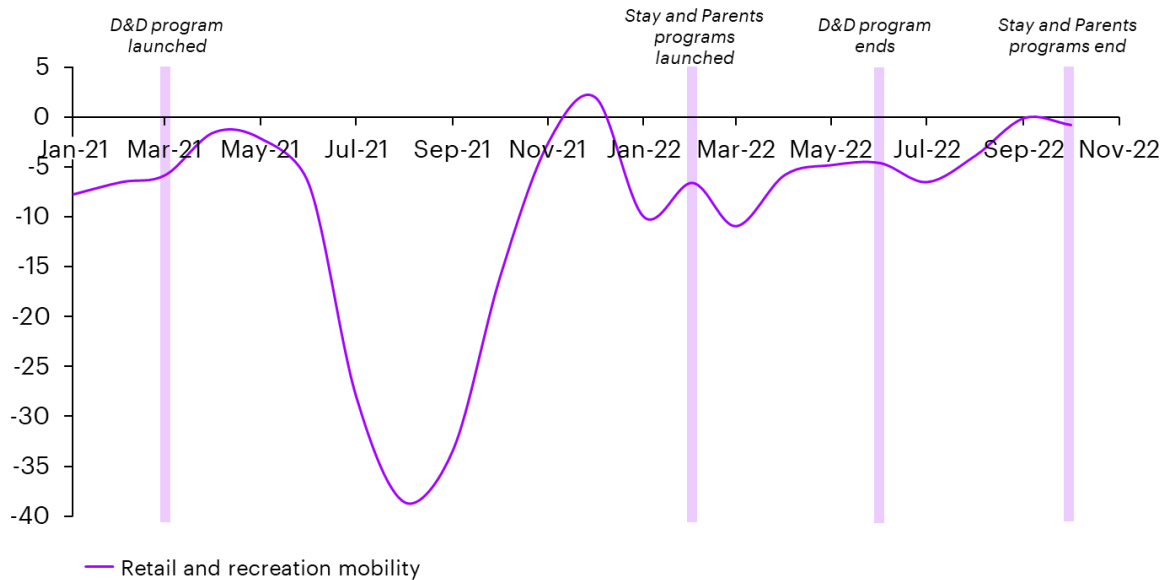
Mobility in retail and recreation places gradually rose during 2022. The exception was July, despite the winter school holiday period that fell in July. D&D vouchers expired on 30 June. This may indicate that D&D vouchers influenced mobility. However, as noted above, other factors influence mobility including poor weather. Rainfall was well above average in July 2022 with some parts of NSW experiencing several days of very heavy rain. Numerous locations set new daily July rainfall records, mostly in coastal areas from the Illawarra to the Mid North Coast, including around Sydney.²⁰⁹

Mobility in retail and recreation reached close to pre-pandemic levels in September 2022 shortly before the expiry of Parents and Stay vouchers on 9 October.

²⁰⁹ Australian Government, Bureau of Meteorology, 'Greater Sydney in 2022: wettest year on record for many areas, cooler than average', [2023](#).

Figure 7.17: NSW footfall traffic in retail and recreation

Footfall traffic in NSW retail and recreation places between January 2021 and November 2022



Source: Google, "COVID-19 Community Mobility Report – NSW", [2022](#)

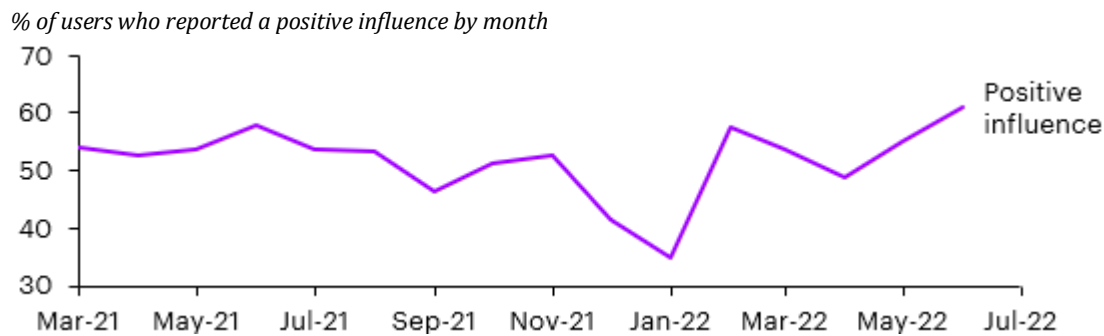
Finding:

Mobility data indicates some correlation between the voucher programs and getting people out and about. However, other factors contributed to mobility over the life of the voucher programs. It is unclear to what extent the voucher programs caused people to go out based on footfall traffic.

When the D&D program was launched, the public health environment was uncertain. Vaccination rates were low and some public health restrictions were in place. At this time, there was less confidence that it was safe to go out.

Service NSW ran an ongoing survey throughout the D&D program, capturing feedback from 53,000 residents at the time they redeemed a voucher. Residents were asked if the voucher influenced their decision to eat out or go out. Of those surveyed, 54% reported that the Dine or Discover voucher had a positive influence on their decision to go out. The influence was strongest towards the start and end of the D&D program (Figure).

Figure 7.18: Proportion of users who reported the D&D program positively influenced their decision to go out

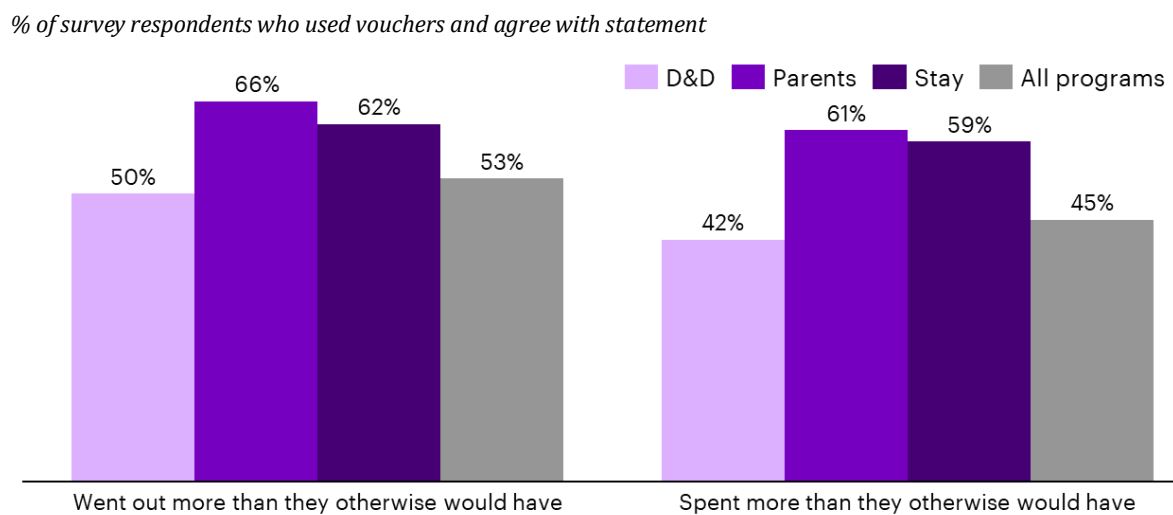


Source: SNSW survey data

An ex-post survey of over 1,000 NSW residents indicated that for people who registered for the voucher programs, the programs resulted in:²¹⁰

- residents getting out and about: 50% of residents who registered for D&D vouchers reported that the voucher programs caused them to go out more than they would have otherwise. This figure was higher for Parents voucher users (66%), followed by Stay voucher users (62%).
- residents spending more than they otherwise would have: 42% of residents who registered D&D vouchers reported spending more than they otherwise would have because of the vouchers. This was higher for those who registered for Stay vouchers (59%) and Parents vouchers (61%).

Figure 7.19: Impact of vouchers on consumers getting out and spending



Source: Accenture survey (D&D N=935, Stay N=634, Parents N=220)

Over the life of the D&D program, the vouchers influenced some residents to get out and about. Dine vouchers encouraged people to visit dining businesses when they wouldn't have eaten out otherwise. Some residents preferred activities with limited interaction, including using Dine vouchers for takeaway.²¹¹ Discover vouchers influenced some consumers to do activities they wouldn't have otherwise, but overall Discover vouchers were taken up relatively less.²¹²

²¹⁰ Survey sample was 1,017 NSW residents aged over 18. Of these, 935 registered for D&D vouchers, 634 registered for Stay vouchers, and 220 registered for Parents vouchers.

²¹¹ Consultation with consumer representative groups

²¹² Consultation with consumer representative groups, business representative groups and focus groups

The Stay and Parents programs influenced residents' decision to go out. However, many would have done so anyway.²¹³ By the time Stay and Parents launched, circumstances had changed. NSW had reached double vaccination targets and was emerging from the pandemic. In this context, it is unclear to what extent the voucher programs themselves contributed to getting people out and about.

There were differences between the behaviour of different cohorts of the population. There was concern among some parts of the NSW community about going out, even as the NSW Government was promoting the voucher programs. Asian cultures were seen as being particularly uncomfortable about going out. Elderly residents were cautious about going out.²¹⁴ The voucher programs were not as effective in influencing people over 65 to go out, compared to younger cohorts.²¹⁵

Many young (and likely relatively affluent) people wanted to go out as soon as restrictions were eased. They would have done so without the voucher programs.²¹⁶ The voucher programs had a similar influence on getting people under 35 out and about as it did for residents aged 35 to 64:

Of respondents aged 18 to 34

- 52% went out more because of the D&D vouchers
- 29% went somewhere they wouldn't have otherwise because of the Stay vouchers
- 20% went out more because of the Parents vouchers

Of respondents aged 35 to 64:

- 49% went out more because of the D&D vouchers
- 28% went somewhere they wouldn't have otherwise because of the Stay vouchers
- 15% went out more because of the Parents vouchers

Of respondents aged 65 and over:

- 34% went out more because of the D&D vouchers
- 15% went somewhere they wouldn't have otherwise because of the Stay vouchers.²¹⁷

The available data does not enable more detailed insights into nuances in the vouchers' impact on behaviour.

Some residents who redeemed their vouchers would have gone out and spent money without the vouchers. Around 50% of those surveyed under the age of 65 reported that they went out more because of the D&D vouchers. Evidence indicates that elderly residents were more hesitant to go out and redeem their vouchers due to ongoing COVID-19 concern.

It is unclear to what extent the vouchers themselves got people out and spending compared to the easing of restrictions and increased vaccination rates.

Finding:

Survey respondents reported that they went out more because of the three voucher programs. They reported spending more money because of the Stay and Parents voucher programs than they would have otherwise. Less than half reported spending more money as a result of the D&D program.

²¹³ Consultation with NSW Government stakeholders and consumer focus groups

²¹⁴ Consultation with consumer representative groups

²¹⁵ Accenture survey (for residents over 65 N=228).

²¹⁶ Consultation with NSW Government stakeholders

²¹⁷ Accenture survey analysis (residents aged 18-34n N=283; residents aged 35-64, N=506; residents aged 65 and over, N=228). The sample of residents aged over 65 who registered for Parents vouchers is too small to report.

Finding:

Some residents who redeemed their vouchers would have gone out and spent money without the vouchers. Around 50% of those surveyed under the age of 65 reported that they went out more because of the D&D vouchers. Evidence indicates that elderly residents were more hesitant to go out and redeem their vouchers due to ongoing COVID-19 concern.

It is unclear to what extent the vouchers themselves got people out and spending compared to the easing of restrictions and increased vaccination rates.

Consumer spending and the voucher programs

The evaluation uses total spending in transactions where a voucher was used as an indicator of consumer spending associated with the voucher programs. It also examines spending on voucher transactions over time as a proportion of total spend in the sectors targeted to further assess the voucher programs' effectiveness.

In most instances, when a resident redeemed their voucher, the business would manually enter the total transaction amount (the voucher value plus any additional spending). It is difficult to verify the accuracy of these figures.

Where two residents used their vouchers in one transaction, this may not have been reflected in the program data. It is difficult to verify whether the business recorded that two vouchers were used in this transaction. Where they did not do so, the data on additionality would be overstated. These data limitations limit the extent to which the analysis of consumer spending associated with the vouchers should be relied upon.

Over the life of the programs, consumers spent:

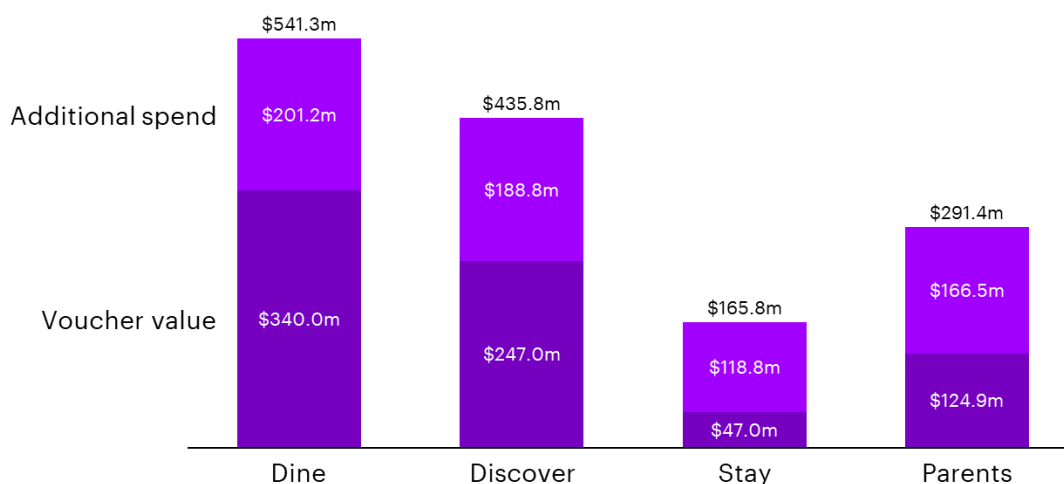
- \$541.3 million in transactions where a Dine voucher was used, including voucher value of \$340.0 million
- \$435.8 million in transactions where a Discover voucher was used, including voucher value of \$247.0 million
- \$165.8 million in transactions where a Stay voucher was used, including voucher value of \$47.0 million
- \$291.4 million in transactions where a Parents voucher was used, including voucher value of \$124.9 million.

This implies that, for every dollar of voucher redeemed, consumers spent:

- \$1.59 (i.e. an additional \$0.59) using Dine vouchers
- \$1.76 (i.e. an additional \$0.76) using Discover vouchers
- \$3.53 (i.e. an additional \$2.53) using Stay vouchers
- \$2.33 (i.e. an additional \$1.33) using Parents vouchers.

Figure 7.20: Consumer spending on each voucher program

Total value of transactions where a voucher was used for each program



Source: Service NSW program data

However, simply analysing the data directly collected is not sufficient to understanding whether the amount spent over and above the value of the voucher was induced by the program.

On the one hand, some of the amount spent over the value of the voucher by consumers may have been spent in the absence of the voucher. On the other hand, to the extent that the voucher programs created an increase in confidence, it may have resulted in more spending, potentially even in transactions where a voucher was not used. Indeed, survey respondents agreed that the promotion of the voucher programs made residents feel more confident to go out and travel in NSW, when restrictions weren't in place (see 7.3).

Consumer spending in Dine businesses is typically represented by low value and high frequency purchases. Dine vouchers could be readily used at many available businesses, for most residents. They were associated with the largest amount of spending relative to other vouchers. Dine voucher transactions represented almost 40% of total voucher transactions. This reflects the relatively high uptake of the D&D program, the longer duration of the program, and the larger pool of eligible residents who were offered three Dine vouchers.

Given low transaction values, Dine vouchers were associated with the lowest amount of additional spending. The average transaction value was \$37. The \$25 voucher value represented 63% of this. The Dine vouchers did not stimulate as much additional spend as other vouchers, with an additional \$0.59 spent for every dollar of Dine voucher redeemed.

Discover vouchers were also associated with relatively low additional spend (\$0.79 for every dollar of Discover voucher redeemed). The average transaction value was \$40. Most Discover vouchers were spent at cinemas (see 7.2.1.2).²¹⁸ This activity would not typically require residents to spend above the voucher value. The average cost of a cinema ticket in Australia in 2022 was \$16.26.²¹⁹

Stay voucher transactions represented the lowest share of total voucher transactions, at 12%. This was due to relatively low uptake. However, Stay vouchers were associated with the highest amount of additional spending. The average transaction value was \$152. Consumers spent an additional \$2.53 for every dollar of Stay voucher redeemed. This reflects the low voucher value relative to the cost of accommodation which necessitated more out of pocket spending average.

²¹⁸ Accenture survey (D&D users N=935)

²¹⁹ Screen Australia, Cinema Industry Trends, [2022](#).

The transaction value where a Parents voucher was redeemed was \$117. Consumers spent an estimated \$1.33 for every dollar of Parents voucher redeemed. More Parents vouchers were redeemed at Discover businesses than Stay businesses (see 7.2.1.2). Because transactions at Discover businesses are associated with less additional spending, this reduced the additional spending associated with the Parents program. In this way, the Parents program was less effective at stimulating additional spending relative to Stay.

Table 7.3: Average transaction value for each program (including the voucher)

	Dine	Discover	Stay	Parents
Average transaction value	\$37	\$40	\$152	\$117

Source: Service NSW program data

Voucher spending as a proportion of total industry spend

Over 2021 and 2022, household final consumption expenditure in NSW on hotels, cafes, restaurants and on recreation and culture was approximately \$125 billion.²²⁰ The voucher programs represented less than 1% of total consumer expenditure of the key industries targeted by the program.

Analysing voucher-related transactions as a proportion of total spend in the relevant sector indicates that the effectiveness of the D&D program waned over time.

Dine voucher redemptions represented approximately 3.4% of total industry spend on food and beverages in May 2021. It fell during the Delta outbreak, when Dine vouchers could only be used for takeaway for most residents. Prior to the close of the D&D program, more people used their vouchers. The value of Dine voucher redemptions as a proportion of total spend on food and beverages rose to 2.5%.

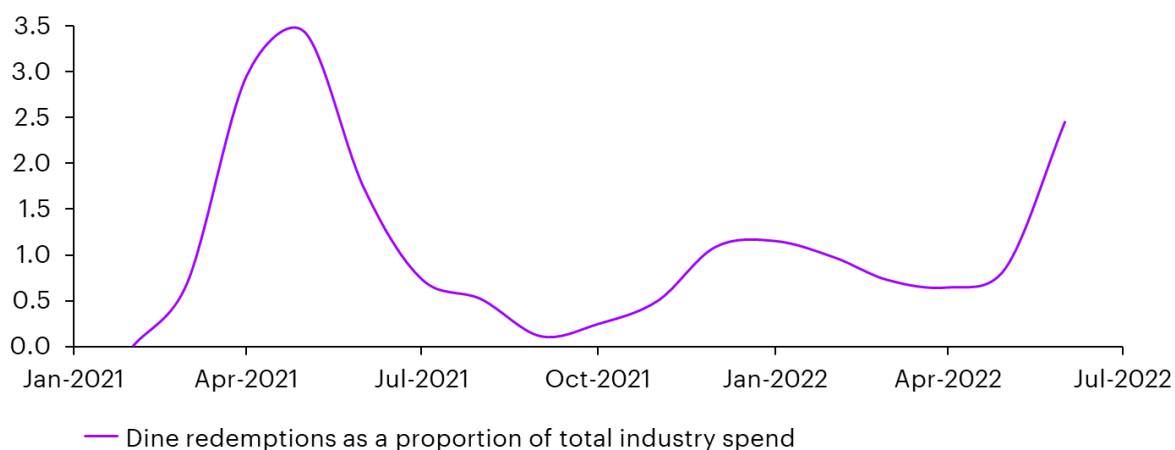
Overall, transactions where Dine vouchers were used represented approximately 1.2% of total industry spend on food and beverages over the life of the D&D program.²²¹

²²⁰ ABS, Australian National Accounts: State Accounts

²²¹ Spending at cafes and restaurants in NSW was approximately \$29 billion. Analysis of ABS Australian National Accounts: State Accounts and ABS Australian Industry, 2021-22.

Figure 7.21: Value of Dine vouchers redeemed as a proportion of total industry spend

Value of Dine vouchers redeemed per month as a proportion of total industry spend on food and beverages over the life of the D&D program (%)



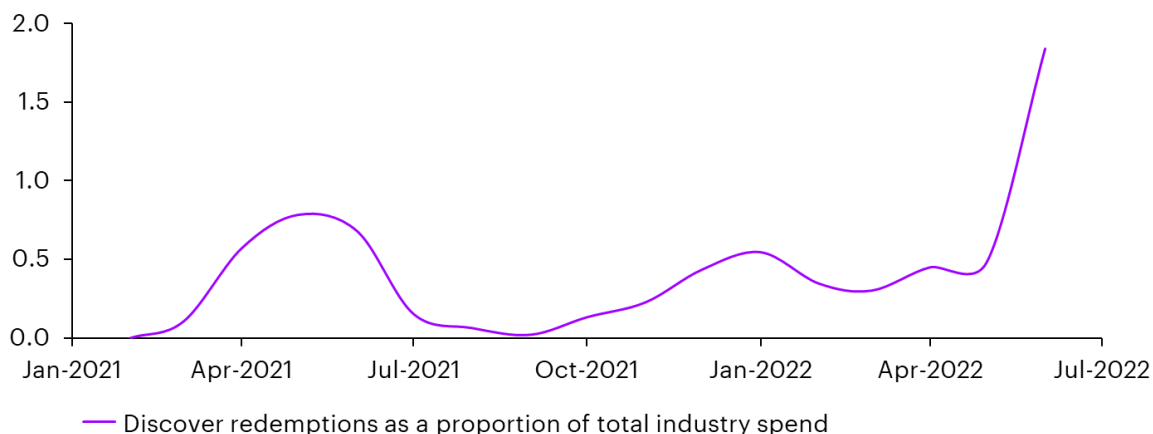
Source: Total monthly spend on food and beverages imputed from ABS State Accounts and ABS Industry data. SNSW redemption data.
Note: ABS State Accounts categories do not exactly align with the ANZSIC codes included in the D&D program.

The value of Discover vouchers redeemed represented a lower share of total industry spend than the Dine vouchers over the life of the program. This share was highest in June 2022, at 1.8%, when people redeemed their Discover vouchers before they expired.

In total, spending on Discover vouchers represented approximately 0.5% of total spending on recreation and culture over the life of the D&D program.²²²

Figure 7.22: Value of Discover vouchers redeemed as a proportion of total industry spend

Value of Discover vouchers redeemed per month as a proportion of total industry spend on recreation and culture over the life of the D&D program (%)



Source: Total monthly spend on recreation and culture imputed from ABS State Accounts. SNSW redemption data.
Note: ABS State Accounts categories do not exactly align with the ANZSIC codes included in the D&D program.

On this basis, the D&D program was more effective earlier in its lifetime.

The value of Stay vouchers redeemed gradually rose over its lifetime. In June 2022 redemptions represented 1.7% of total industry spend on accommodation. This coincided with the school holiday

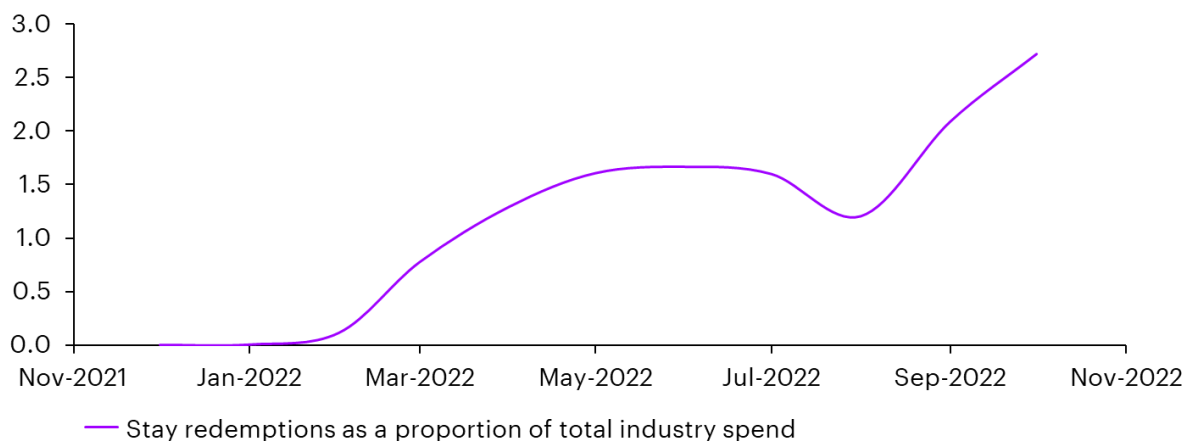
²²² Spending on recreation and culture was approximately \$55 billion. Analysis of ABS Australian National Accounts: State Accounts and ABS Australian Industry, 2021-22.

period. This share fell in July and August 2022 and rose again before the program closed. Redemptions represented 2.7% of total spend on accommodation in October 2022.

Over the 8-month period that the Stay program operated, the value of transactions where a Stay voucher was used represents approximately 1.3% of total spending.²²³

Figure 7.23: Value of Stay vouchers redeemed as a proportion of total industry spend

Value of Stay vouchers redeemed per month as a proportion of total industry spend on accommodation over the life of the Stay program (%)



Source: Total monthly spend on accommodation imputed from ABS State Accounts and ABS Industry. SNSW redemption data.

The total transaction value where a Parents voucher was used over the life of the program was less than 1% of total expenditure on recreation and culture and accommodation.

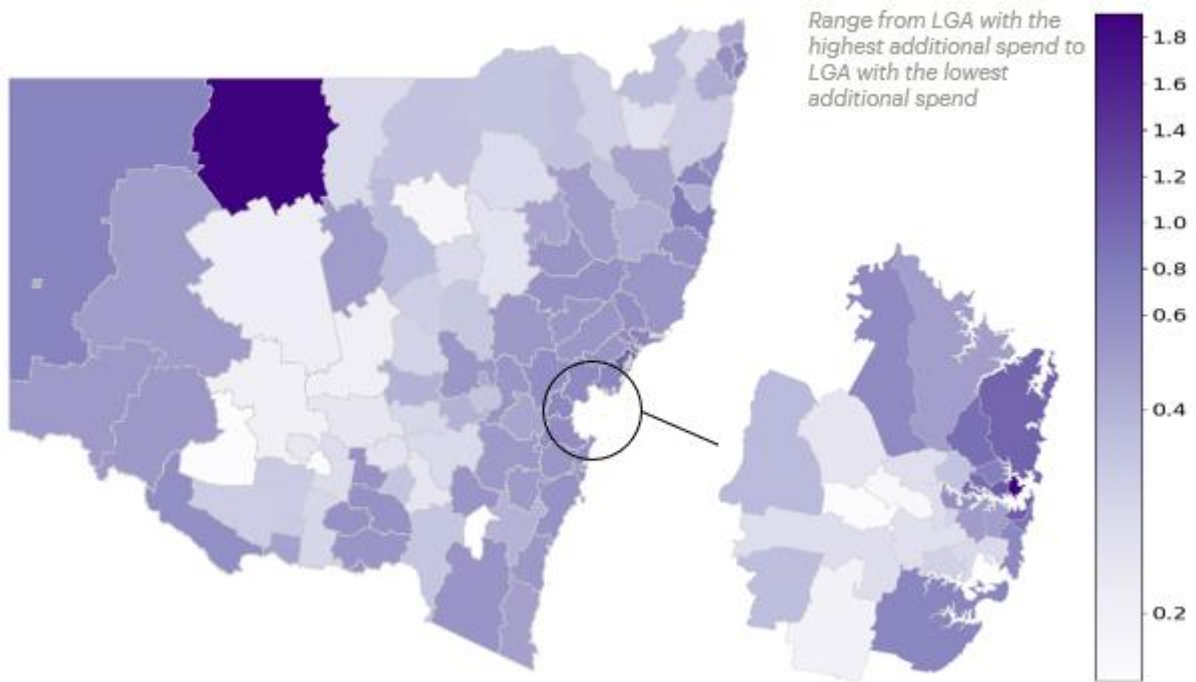
Consumer spending across LGAs

Additional spending above the voucher value varied by LGA. For Dine vouchers, statewide and on average, customers spent an additional \$0.59 for every dollar redeemed. Additional spending was highly concentrated in metropolitan LGAs (84%). The additional spend for Dine was highest in inner Sydney LGAs such as Sydney CBD, Mosman, North Sydney, Woollahra, and the Northern Beaches. Regional and remote LGAs received 14% and 2% of additional spend respectively.

²²³ Total spending on accommodation in NSW was approximately \$3 billion. Analysis of ABS Australian National Accounts: State Accounts and ABS Australian Industry, 2021-22.

Figure 7.24: Dine additional consumer spending by LGA

Customer out of pocket spend per dollar of voucher redeemed, LGA of redeeming customers

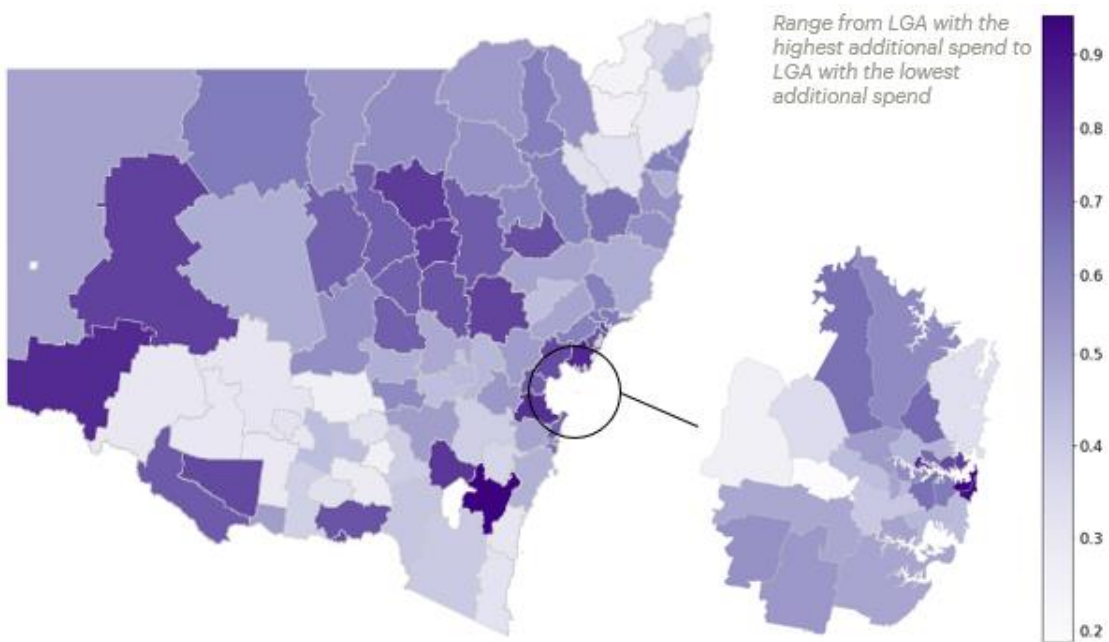


Source: SNSW program data

In contrast to Dine, additional spending for Discover vouchers was more widely dispersed across the State. Metropolitan LGAs received 39% of the overall additional spend. Regional areas received 32%, and remote areas received 29%.

Figure 7.25: Discover additional consumer spending by LGA

Customer out of pocket spend per dollar of voucher redeemed, LGA of redeeming customers



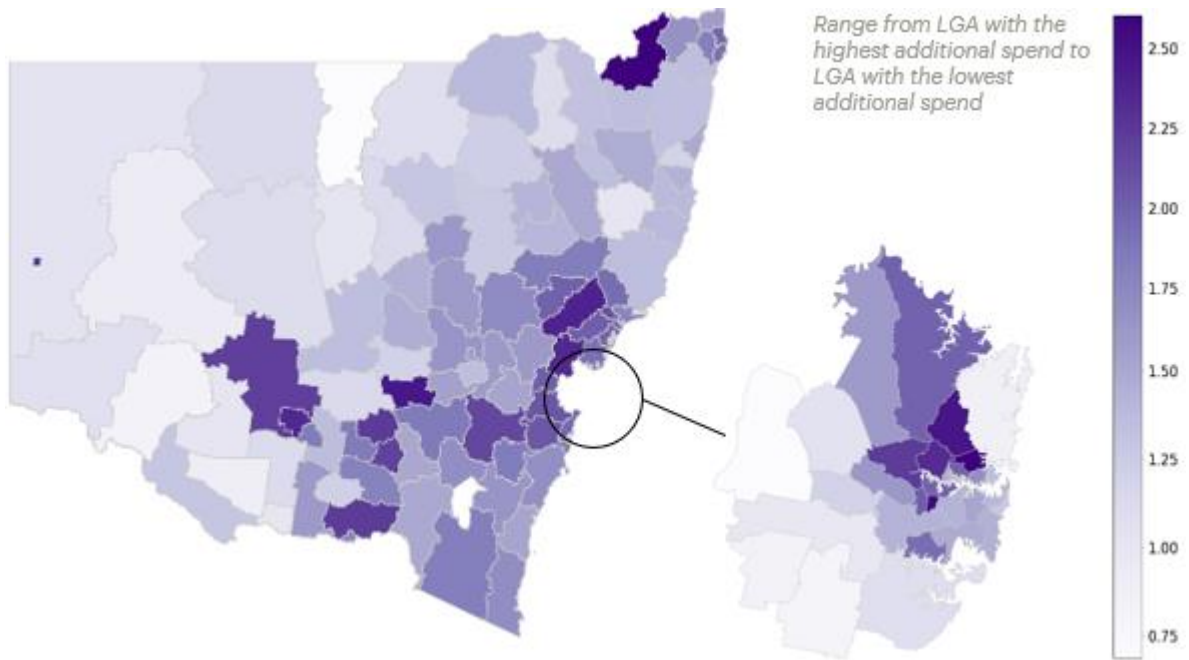
Source: SNSW program data

In aggregate, additional spending for Stay vouchers was also more evenly distributed across NSW. Metropolitan LGAs received the highest share of additional spend (41%), followed by regional (30%) and

remote (28%) LGAs. Additional spending was highest amongst customers from Metropolitan LGAs such as Willoughby, Burwood, and Ku-Ring-Gai. Regional tourist centers such as the North Coast and Hunter Valley and surrounds ranked highly by additional spending.

Figure 7.26: Stay additional consumer spending by LGA

Customer out of pocket spend per dollar of voucher redeemed, LGA of redeeming customers

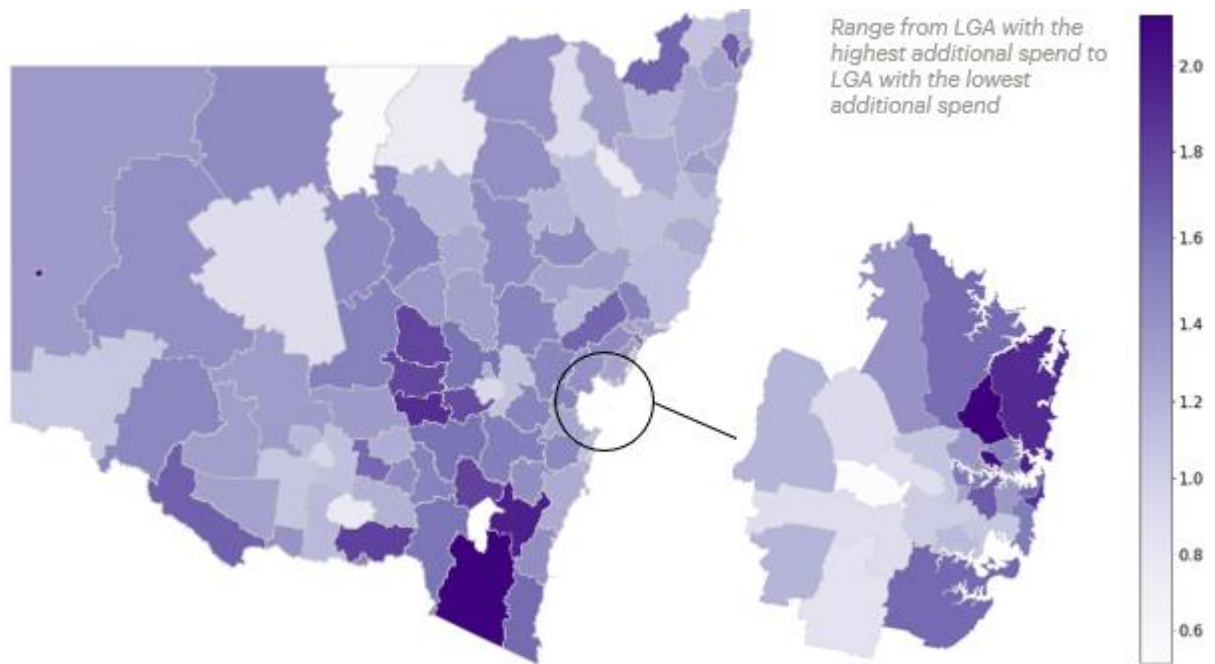


Source: SNSW program data

Additional spending for Parents vouchers was relatively evenly dispersed (Figure). There was no obvious concentration of additional spending in by remoteness area. The LGAs where the average additional spend was the highest were in northern Sydney, the Central West region (LGAs such as Weddin and Parkes), and in the Monaro region in the south-east. The LGA with the highest additional spend was Snowy Monaro.

Figure 7.27: Parents additional consumer spending by LGA

Customer out of pocket spend per dollar of voucher redeemed, LGA of redeeming customers



Source: SNSW program data

7.2.1.2 To what extent did the program result in increased business revenue?

The evaluation uses total revenue in transactions where a voucher was used as an indicator of business revenue associated with the voucher programs.

Total revenue figures across NSW are the same as total consumer expenditure figures. This is because the same transactions were recorded from resident and business perspectives. There are differences between how revenues and spending are distributed geographically. Residents did not always spend their vouchers in their local LGA.

Over the life of the programs, businesses recorded (Table 8.1: Voucher redemption data):

- \$541.3 million in transactions where a Dine voucher was used, including voucher value of \$340.0 million
- \$435.8 million in transactions where a Discover voucher was used, including voucher value of \$247.0 million
- \$165.8 million in transactions where a Stay voucher was used, including voucher value of \$47.0 million
- \$291.4 million in transactions where a Parents voucher was used, including voucher value of \$124.9 million.

This implies that, for every dollar of voucher redeemed, businesses received:

- \$1.59 (i.e. an additional \$0.59) of revenue from Dine vouchers
- \$1.76 (i.e. an additional \$0.76) of revenue from Discover vouchers
- \$3.53 (i.e. an additional \$2.53) of revenue from Stay vouchers
- \$2.33 (i.e. an additional \$1.33) of revenue from Parents vouchers

Again, simply analysing the data directly collected is not sufficient to understanding whether the amount received over and above the value of the voucher was induced by the program.

On the one hand, some of the amount received over the value of the voucher by businesses may have been received in the absence of the voucher. On the other hand, to the extent that the voucher programs created an increase in confidence, it may have resulted in more business revenue, potentially even in transactions where a voucher was not used.

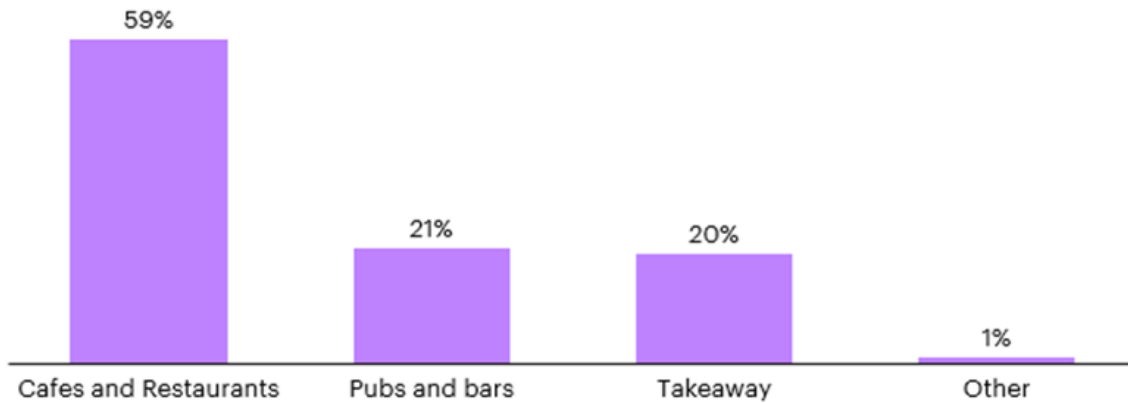
Service NSW program data for the voucher programs does not enable analysis of voucher use by business type (see chapter 4). The data is aggregated by ANZSIC code. This limits the ability to analyse the impact of the programs on businesses of different sizes or characteristics. The evaluation draws on an ex-post survey of NSW residents to understand the extent to which the programs impacted business revenue by business type.

Over half (59%) of Dine voucher users reported that they redeemed their Dine vouchers at cafes and restaurants. 21% redeemed vouchers at pubs and bars. 20% redeemed them at takeaway businesses when takeaway became eligible for the scheme. Spending at these types of businesses was relatively consistent. Between \$40 and \$44 was spent on average.²²⁴

²²⁴ Accenture survey (N=917)

Figure 7.28: Dine voucher use by business type

% of survey respondents who used Dine vouchers

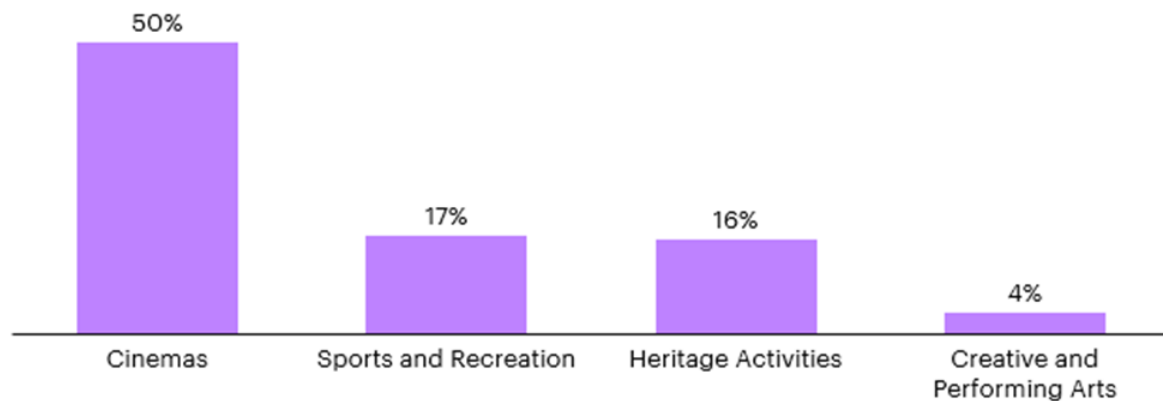


Source: Accenture survey (N=917 Dine voucher users)

Approximately half of all Discover voucher users redeemed them at cinemas. 17% of those who redeemed Discover vouchers did so at sports and recreation businesses such as zoos and amusements parks. 16% redeemed them at heritage businesses such as museums and art galleries. Only 4% of Discover voucher users redeemed their vouchers at creative and performing arts businesses. The average spend by Discover voucher users when redeeming their vouchers varies. A visit to the cinema was associated with relatively limited spending, with Discover users spending \$29 on average when they redeemed a voucher at a cinema. The average spend for Discover voucher users was \$71 at creative and performing arts businesses, \$57 at sports and recreation businesses and \$43 at heritage businesses.²²⁵

Figure 7.29: Discover voucher use by business type

% of survey respondents who used Discover vouchers



Source: Accenture survey (N=774 Discover voucher users)

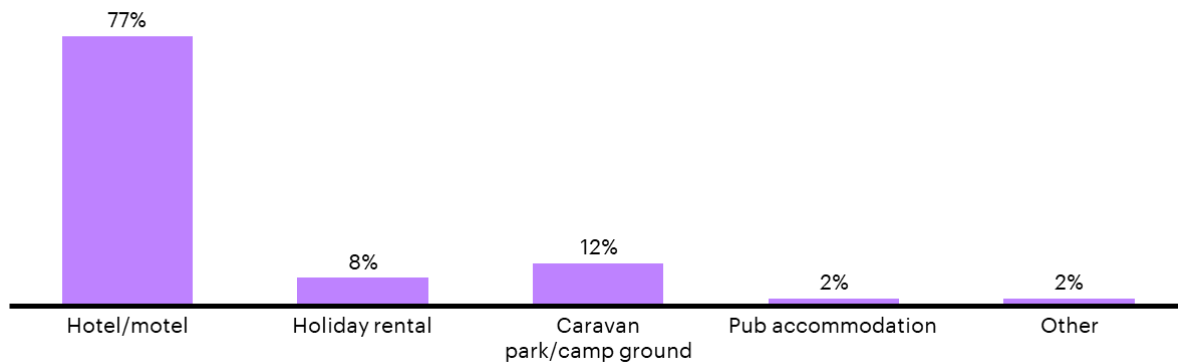
Over 75% of Stay voucher users redeemed their voucher at a hotel or motel in NSW, with residents spending approximately \$140 on average at this type of business. Around 12% redeemed their voucher at a campground or caravan park spending \$141 on average. Less than 10% redeemed their Stay voucher on another type of holiday rental and spent \$119 on average.²²⁶ The Stay voucher was associated with the highest additional spend.

²²⁵ Accenture survey (N=774 of Discover voucher users). The survey used industry categories in the ABS Industry 'Arts and recreation services' division.

²²⁶ Accenture survey (N=359 Stay voucher users).

Figure 7.30: Stay voucher use by business type

% of survey respondents who used Stay vouchers



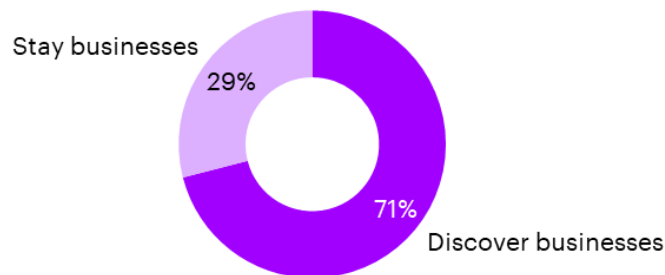
Source: Accenture survey (N=359)

Parents vouchers could be redeemed at either Stay or Discover businesses. Most (71%) were redeemed at Discover businesses while 29% were redeemed at Stay businesses.²²⁷

On average, when parents redeemed their voucher at a Stay business they spent approximately \$106 per person inclusive of the voucher compared to \$68 at Discover businesses.

Figure 7.31: Proportion of Parents voucher users who redeemed their vouchers at Stay vs Discover businesses

% of survey respondents who used Parents vouchers



Source: Accenture survey (N=220 Parents voucher users)

There was more variation in the types of Discover businesses at which Parents vouchers were redeemed. Cinemas were the most common business at which Parents vouchers were redeemed (29%). A relatively high proportion of Parents vouchers were redeemed at sports and recreation businesses (22% at zoos and aquariums and 13% at amusement parks).²²⁸ This may reflect the higher value of Parents vouchers than Discover vouchers. Zoos and amusement parks promoted the Parents vouchers to encourage uptake.²²⁹ These businesses may also have appealed more to families than other customer segments.

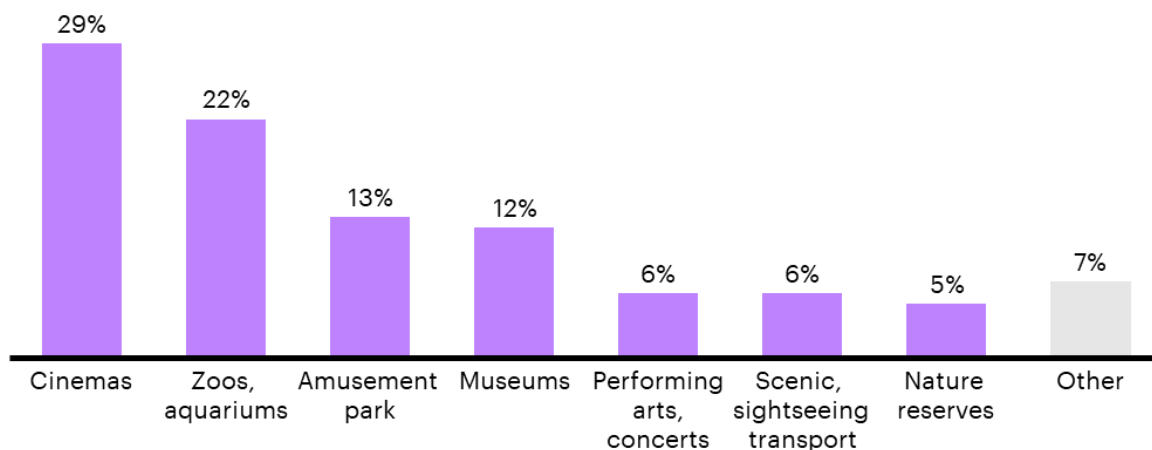
Figure 7.32: Parents voucher use by business type

% of survey respondents who used Parents vouchers

²²⁷ Accenture survey (N=200 Parents voucher users)

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Consultation with NSW Government stakeholders.



Source: Accenture survey (N=220 Parents voucher users)

Finding:

The voucher programs resulted in increased consumer and business revenue in targeted sectors. The total value of transactions for Dine vouchers was high, but Dine vouchers were associated with low additional consumer spend (\$0.59 per dollar of voucher redeemed) relative to other vouchers. Discover vouchers were associated with \$0.76 of additional spend for every dollar of voucher redeemed. Parents vouchers were associated with \$1.33 of additional spend for every dollar of voucher redeemed. Stay vouchers resulted in the greatest increase in consumer spend (and business revenue) with \$2.53 of additional spend for every dollar of voucher redeemed.

Finding:

Additional spending for Dine was concentrated in metropolitan areas of NSW and was highest in inner Sydney LGAs. For Discover, Stay and Parents vouchers, additional spending was more widely dispersed across the State.

Finding:

Voucher programs which target spending in sectors associated with infrequent and higher value purchases appear more likely to drive additional expenditure, compared to highly frequent purchases like dining out.

Finding:

The value of vouchers redeemed for each program as a proportion of total industry spend in the associated sectors was generally low. The total transaction value where a Parents voucher was used over the life of the program was less than 1% of total expenditure on recreation and culture and accommodation. The total value of transactions where a Dine or Discover voucher was used represents around 1.2% of total expenditure in the targeted sectors. The total value of transactions where a Stay voucher was used represents approximately 5.5% of total spending.

Finding:

The D&D program was most effective at encouraging spending in its first months of implementation. In May 2021, the proportion of D&D voucher transactions to total spend on food and beverages was relatively high (3.4%). The value of vouchers redeemed as a proportion of total spending increased at the end of each program's life as people used their vouchers prior to their expiry.

Finding:

Dine vouchers were redeemed at a variety of hospitality venues including cafes, restaurants, pubs and clubs and takeaway businesses. Survey data indicates that 59% of Dine vouchers were redeemed at cafes and restaurants.

Discover vouchers were redeemed at businesses including cinemas, zoos, aquariums and amusement parks. 50% of Discover vouchers were redeemed at cinemas.

77% of Stay vouchers were redeemed at hotels or motels. Stay vouchers were also redeemed at accommodation providers such as caravan parks and holiday rentals.

Over 70% of Parents vouchers were spent at Discover businesses rather than Stay businesses.

7.3 Confident and safe

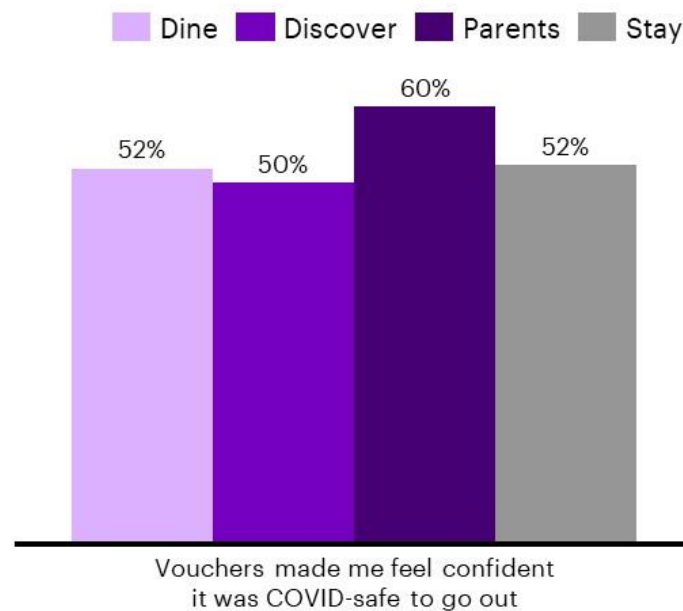
0.5 To what extent did the program result in people confidently and safely getting out and about and spending in a COVID-safe way?

The voucher programs were intended to encourage people to confidently and safely get out and about and spend in a COVID-safe way.

The promotion of the voucher programs was effective in making residents feel confident that it was COVID-safe to visit local businesses, or travel in NSW, when restrictions weren't in place.

Figure 7.33: Impact of vouchers on confidence to get out and about

% of respondents who agreed that the voucher programs made them feel confident that it was COVID-safe to go out when restrictions weren't in place



Source: Accenture survey (D&D N=935, Stay N=634, Parents N=220)

Getting people out and about, increasing confidence and supporting families impacted by the pandemic also represents benefits of the voucher programs. These are discussed in the efficiency assessment (see 8.1.2 to 8.1.6).

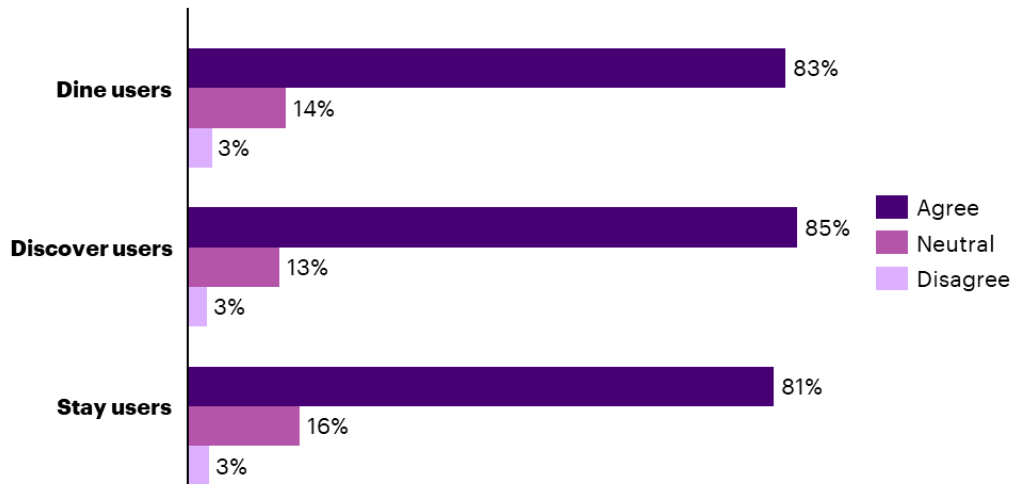
Finding:

The voucher programs influenced some residents' decision to get out and about and spend in a COVID-safe way. In a survey of NSW residents, respondents reported that the voucher programs made them feel confident that it was COVID-safe to go out and/or travel, when restrictions permitted.

The majority of residents who redeemed vouchers for each program observed COVID-safe practices when redeeming their Stay vouchers.

Figure 7.34: Consumers adherence to COVID-safe practices when redeeming vouchers

% of voucher users who observed COVID-safe practices when redeeming their vouchers



Source: Accenture survey (D&D N=935, Stay N=634)

The voucher programs were more likely to facilitate COVID-safe practices where participating businesses relied on point of sale purchases rather than online bookings. Restaurants and cafes, for example, connected their point of sale systems with the voucher system using Application Programming Interfaces (APIs). This meant customers had a relatively seamless and safe experience when redeeming their vouchers. Anecdotal evidence highlighted challenges in observing COVID-safe practices where businesses did not achieve API integration. Some Discover businesses such as museums, galleries or live events, did not have the capacity (whether resources or capabilities) to do so. In some instances, customers of these businesses were unable to have a seamless and COVID-safe redemption experience.²³⁰

Most businesses complied with COVID-safe practices as required. Service NSW found that 85% of businesses participating in the D&D program were adhering to QR code check-in requirements.²³¹

Finding:

Residents and businesses were generally compliant with COVID-safe regulations and observed COVID-safe practices when redeeming their vouchers. It was more difficult for residents to be COVID-safe in instances where businesses did not do best-practice integration or comply with QR code requirements.

²³⁰ Consultation with NSW Government stakeholders.

²³¹ NSW Government, L&GNSW Outcome Report: Dine & Discover Mystery Shopper Program, 12 July 2021.

8 Efficiency

Evaluating the efficiency of the voucher programs involves comparing the benefits generated by each program relative to the costs. The evaluation considers financial and non-financial (including social) benefits and costs. Where benefits and costs cannot be quantified, they are assessed qualitatively.

The less a voucher program costs the government and the more out of pocket spending that is associated with those vouchers, the higher the benefit-cost ratio of the program. There are inherent uncertainties in the quantification of benefits and costs. As such, the results of the cost-benefit analysis should not be considered in isolation.

Assessing the programs' efficiency, or 'value for money', addresses key evaluation questions:

- what were the financial costs and benefits of the programs?
- what were the social costs and benefits of the programs?
- to what extent did the benefits of the programs outweigh the costs?

8.1 Benefits

The evaluation considered the range of common benefits that the voucher programs could have delivered (see Appendix E).

The voucher programs created an increase in welfare from the perspective of consumers and businesses. These benefits are described as consumer surplus and producer surplus. These are quantified. There are also a range of broader benefits to the community which are qualitatively considered.

8.1.1 Consumer and producer surplus supported by consumer spending

Estimating consumer surplus requires a measure of consumer spending associated with the voucher programs. Consumer spending associated with the voucher programs is represented by:

- the value of transactions where a voucher was used (i.e., the value of vouchers redeemed and any spending above the voucher amount): the evaluation measures this using program data collected by Service NSW (see 4.1.2)
- the value of other transactions which occurred because of the voucher program (for example due to an increase in consumer confidence): the evaluation is not able to quantify this element of voucher-related spending (see 7.2.1.1).

The accuracy of Service NSW voucher redemption data, and therefore consumer spending figures, is uncertain. In many cases data on transaction values was not automatically collected by point of sale systems. Instead, staff at participating businesses manually entered the total value of the transaction. Consultation with Service NSW suggested that some businesses entered the value of the voucher rather than the total value of the transaction.²³² This would understate the total value of spending in transactions where a voucher was used.

The total value of consumer spending in transactions where a voucher was used was \$1.4 billion, of which \$759 million was paid for using vouchers funded by the NSW Government.

Table 8.1: Voucher redemption data

²³² Accenture correspondence with SNSW staff, October 2023. Service NSW could not provide data on the number of voucher transactions that were above, equal to or below the voucher amount.

	Value of vouchers redeemed (\$m)	Imputed additional spending (\$m)	Total value of transactions (\$m)
Dine	340.0	201.2	541.3
Discover	247.0	188.8	435.8
Stay	47.0	118.8	165.8
Parents	124.9	166.5	291.4

Source: Service NSW program data. Additional spending is imputed based on the total value of transactions where a voucher was used less the value of vouchers redeemed.

Difference-in-difference modelling

Difference-in-difference (DiD) is a statistical technique used to estimate causal relationships, often in the context of policy interventions. It aims to identify the causal effect of a treatment or intervention by comparing changes in outcomes over time between a treated group and a control group.

In the context of the voucher programs, DiD modelling can be used to quantify the relationship between the LGA-level program registration rate and total spending on eligible purchases. This provides an estimate of the value of all transactions induced by voucher programs, whether a voucher was used or not. In this way, DiD modelling can help the NSW Government to understand how expenditure patterns differed in areas of NSW where the voucher programs were used differently.

However, a strong set of conditions need to be met for a DiD model to produce reliable and unbiased estimates (see 4.2.1.4). These conditions were not met in the context of the voucher programs, primarily because most vouchers were universally available, meaning there was no 'control group' that did not receive vouchers to compare against the voucher recipients. There is also a risk of omitted variables in the DiD specification. Both these issues affect the assumption that in the absence of the voucher programs, the difference in spending between LGAs would be constant over time (i.e. parallel trends).

Notwithstanding these limitations, DiD modelling undertaken indicates that the voucher programs encouraged consumer spending. The total value of all transactions either directly or indirectly related to the vouchers was \$1.27 billion. The modelling estimated that total spending induced by each voucher program (including the value of the vouchers and additional spending) varied:

- Dine vouchers created \$660 million in total additional spending. Based on this estimate, the marginal propensity to consume (MPC) for Dine vouchers was 194%.
- Discover vouchers created \$455 million in total additional spending. Based on this estimate, the MPC for Discover vouchers was 184%.
- Stay vouchers created \$109 million in total additional spending. Based on this estimate, the MPC for Stay vouchers was 232%.
- Parents vouchers created \$33 million in total additional spending on Discover businesses and \$11 million in total additional spending on Stay businesses. Based on this estimate, the MPC for Parents vouchers was 35%.

Given the limitations in the DiD approach, the evaluation does not rely on these results to estimate the causal effect of the voucher programs on spending.

Previous studies have used DiD modeling to measure the impact on consumer spending of voucher-based stimulus programs. The studies estimated a MPC associated with the voucher programs. The estimates vary.

- Hsieh, Shimizutani, and Hori (2010) find that Japan's 1999 coupon-based stimulus on consumer spending increased consumer MPC by 10-20%.²³³
- Woo et al (2021) show that the shopping coupon program deployed by the Seoul Metropolitan Government during COVID-19 increased consumer spending by 18%.²³⁴
- Geng, Shi, and Zheng (2022) use AlipayHK transaction records to show that the 2021 Hong Kong Consumption Voucher scheme increased consumer spending by 109% of the value of the vouchers.²³⁵

The evaluation relies on program data on the value of transactions where a voucher was used to quantify the benefits of the programs.

Finding:

The total value of transactions where a voucher was used was \$1.34 billion, of which \$759 million was paid for using vouchers funded by the NSW Government.

The voucher programs may have stimulated spending in transactions where a voucher was not used. This additional spending cannot be quantified.

Difference-in-difference modelling is a common analytical technique for evaluating the impact of policy interventions like the voucher programs. However, program data and methodological limitations prohibited the evaluation from relying on difference-in-difference modelling results.

8.1.1.1 Consumer surplus

Consumer surplus is the gain to consumers if they ascribe more value to goods and services than they pay for them. There is a dead-weight loss if consumers value the good or service less than their total purchase price (out of pocket and voucher value).

Principe and Eisenhauer (2008) estimate that gifts in-kind are associated with a dead-weight loss of 7%, while gift cards are associated with a dead-weight loss of around 14%. This mirrors findings on the average dead-weight loss on gift cards obtained by Offenbergh of 15% (2007).²³⁶ Vouchers can be considered a type of gift card. They allow recipients to spend a pre-determined value with a defined set of merchants. The vouchers do not closely resemble a gift in-kind from the NSW Government. Gifts in-kind involve a direct transfer of a good or service. The evaluation relies on empirical estimates of a 14-15% dead-weight loss on gift cards to calculate the consumer surplus associated with the vouchers.

Consumer surplus is equal to the difference between a consumer's willingness to pay for a good or service and the amount paid:

- willingness to pay (WTP) is the total spend associated with the vouchers (including spend above the voucher value) minus the value of vouchers redeemed less a discount (dead-weight loss)
- amount paid is the total spend associated with the vouchers less the value of vouchers redeemed.

It follows that consumer surplus associated with the voucher programs is calculated as:

- $Consumer\ surplus = value\ of\ voucher\ redeemed \times (1 - discount)$

²³³ Chang-Tai Hsieh, Satoshi Shimizutani, and Masahiro Hori, 'Did Japan's Shopping Coupon Program Increase Spending?', *Journal of Public Economics* 94, no. 7 (2010): 523-29.

²³⁴ Seokjin Woo et al., 'Consumption Response to Seoul's Covid-19 Shopping Coupons: Evidence from Consumer Data', SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester, NY, 28 August 2021).

²³⁵ Hao Geng, 'Evaluating Hong Kong Consumption Voucher Scheme', Department of Economics, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, (2022).

²³⁶ Principe, K., and Eisenhauer J., (2008), Gift-giving and deadweight loss, *The Journal of Socio-Economics* 38 (2009) 215-220; Offenbergh, J. (2007), *Markets: Gift cards*, *Journal of Economic Perspectives*—Volume 21, Number 2—Spring 2007—Pages 227-238

The estimated total value of consumer surplus across the programs is \$798.4 million, incorporating the dead-weight loss (i.e discount on the face value of the vouchers) of 14-15%.

Table 8.2: Consumer surplus estimates

Consumer surplus (\$m)	
Dine	377.8
Discover	266.5
Stay	45.2
Parents	120.0

Note: figures are presented in 2023 net present value terms.

Finding:

The total value of consumer surplus across the programs is \$798.4 million.

Dine supported more consumer surplus than any other program (\$377.8 million), followed by Discover (\$266.5 million), Parents (\$120.0 million) and Stay (\$45.2 million).

8.1.1.2 Producer surplus

Consumer spending, including voucher value, is a transfer from consumers and government to businesses.

The surplus (gross operating surplus) that producers generate from this spending is a net benefit. Gross operating surplus associated with revenue from the vouchers program is calculated as:

$$GOS = Revenue \times EBIT \text{ ratio} \times (1 - leakage \text{ rate})$$

Where:

- revenue is the total value of transactions associated with the vouchers
- earnings before interest and taxes (EBIT) ratio is the ratio of earnings before interest and tax to sales and services income for an industry, and calculated using ABS data²³⁷
- leakage rate is the proportion of business profits which flow to other jurisdictions calculated using ABS data.²³⁸

The estimated total value of producer surplus across the programs is \$182.8 million in net present value terms. This is the upper bound estimate, which assumes that all spending associated with the vouchers was additional (see 8.3).

Table 8.3: Producer surplus estimates

Program	Producer surplus (\$m)
Dine	66.2
Discover	59.7
Stay	20.8
Parents	36.1

Note: results are presented in 2023 net present value terms.

Finding:

The total value of producer surplus across the programs is \$182.8 million.

The Dine program supported the highest amount of producer surplus (\$66.2 million), followed by Discover (\$59.7 million). The Parents program supported \$36.1 million in producer surplus. Stay supported the lowest total producer surplus, at \$20.8 million.

8.1.2 People getting out and about in a COVID-safe way

As discussed in section 7.2.1.1, consumers who redeemed D&D vouchers reported that the vouchers positively influenced their decision to go out (see Figure in 7.2.1.1).

²³⁷ EBIT to business income ratio is assumed to be 11.2% for Dine, 11.7% for Discover, 12.9% for Stay, and 12.3% for Parents. The EBIT to 'Sales and service income' ratio is used from ABS Australian Industry (2021-22) to calculate this ratio for each industry.

²³⁸ Leakage rate is assumed to be 13.4% for the accommodation and food sector, and 7.3% for the arts and recreation sector (ABS Economic Activity of Foreign and Australian Owned Businesses).

When D&D was conceived and launched, public fear of COVID-19 exposure and uncertainty around public health restrictions made some people hesitant to get out and about. This was also true when Stay and Parents were launched. The voucher programs countered this by providing encouragement from the Government to venture out in a COVID-safe manner. In this way the programs reinforced the broader intent behind Government policy after the relaxation of Public Health Orders.

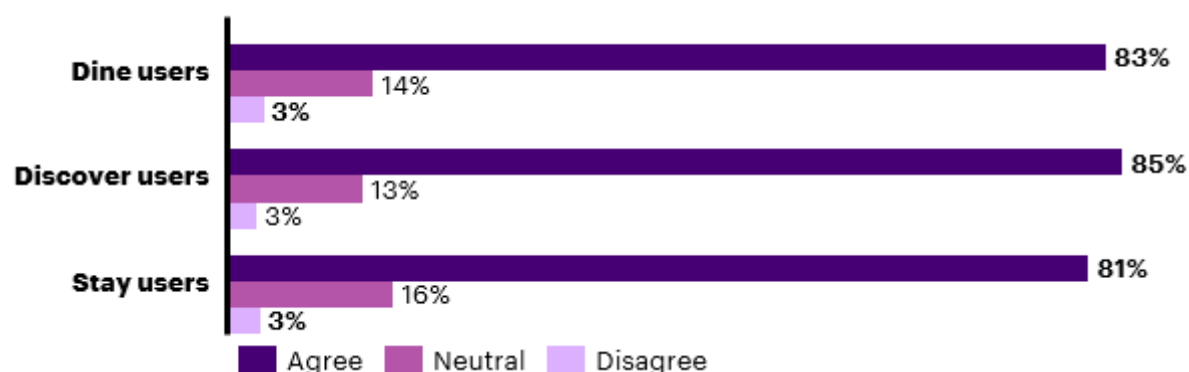
8.1.3 Reinforcing compliance with Public Health Orders

To benefit from the vouchers, businesses and consumers had to comply with public health orders. The programs provided a positive financial incentive for both businesses and consumers to comply with COVID-safe requirements.

Survey respondents overwhelmingly reported that they observed COVID-safe practices when they redeemed their vouchers (Figure). Business compliance was also high. A mystery shopper audit found that 85% of registered businesses were adhering to public health QR code check-in requirements.²³⁹

Figure 8.1: Share of users who observed COVID-safe practices where they redeemed their vouchers

% of voucher users



Source: Accenture survey of NSW residents (N=935), January 2023

8.1.4 Consumer and business confidence

In March 2020, business confidence saw its largest decline on record according to NAB's Monthly Business Survey.²⁴⁰ Consumer confidence fell to a record low (75.6) in April 2020, following the onset of the pandemic.²⁴¹ By September 2020, consumers and businesses were more optimistic. Consumer sentiment reached 93.8, while business confidence rose to -4 index points in the month.²⁴² These were well above the March 2020 figures.

Consumer confidence fell again between July and October 2021 while NSW was under strict public health restrictions caused by the Delta variant of COVID-19. However, confidence remained in net-positive territory.²⁴³ Business confidence fell into negative territory after the onset of Delta but by September 2021 it rebounded to above its long-run average.²⁴⁴

Consumer and business confidence is influenced by expectations of future economic conditions. The voucher programs supported business and consumer confidence by signaling that it was safe to return to

²³⁹ SNSW and NSW Treasury governance documents

²⁴⁰ NAB Monthly Business Survey March 2020

²⁴¹ Westpac-Melbourne Institute Index of Consumer Sentiment, August 2020.

²⁴² Westpac-Melbourne Institute Index of Consumer Sentiment, September 2020; NAB Monthly Business Survey September 2020.

²⁴³ Westpac-Melbourne Institute Index of Consumer Sentiment, October 2021.

²⁴⁴ NAB Monthly Business Survey September 2021

normal activities and that the government was committed to economic reopening. This may have affected:

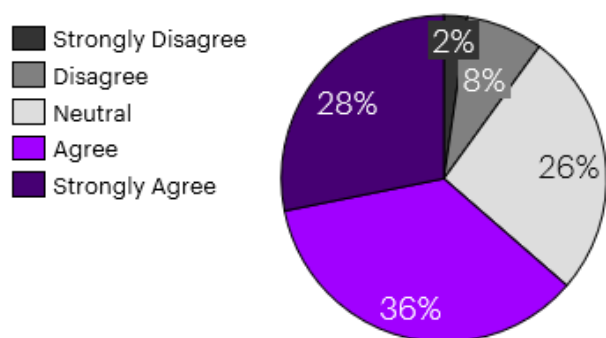
- consumer willingness to spend rather than save disposable income
- business willingness to reopen, hire, or make purchases of business inputs or other investments in expectation of future demand
- consumer and business willingness to commit to large purchases (e.g., a house or capital equipment).

8.1.5 Users of the Parents vouchers reported feeling recognised and supported

The intent of the Parents program was to reward and thank eligible households for their efforts to support learning from home in 2021. Survey results indicate that 64% of parents agreed that the Parents program made them feel appreciated by the government for supporting home learning (Figure).

Figure 8.2: Survey responses to “The Parents vouchers made me feel appreciated by the government for supporting learning from home in 2021”

% of survey respondents who used Parents vouchers



Source: Accenture survey of NSW residents (N=220), Jan 2023

8.1.6 Increased business and consumer MyServiceNSW registrations

The MyServiceNSW platform facilitates the provision of NSW Government services online. Residents and businesses needed to have a MyServiceNSW account to participate in the voucher programs.

Business and consumer registrations with MyServiceNSW increased during the operation of the vouchers programs.

- The number of businesses registered increased by over 400,000
- The number of residents registered increased by over 200,000.²⁴⁵

Increased registrations for MyServiceNSW over the period cannot be solely attributed to the vouchers programs. Multiple Service NSW programs went live during the lifetime of the D&D, Stay and Parents programs that may have encouraged registration. For example, the COVID-Safe check-in function within the SNSW app was widely used and drove an increase in registrations.

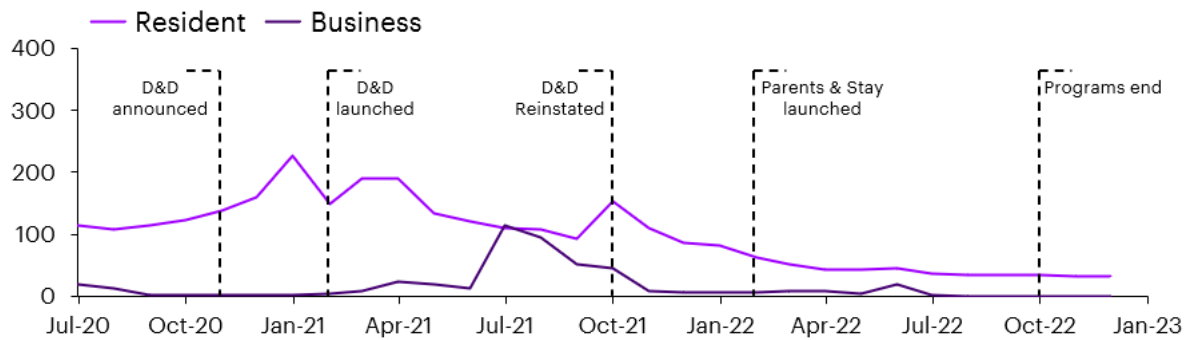
However, it is likely that D&D and Stay contributed to the increase in the number of residents and businesses registered for a MyServiceNSW account. Resident registrations increased after the launch of D&D in February 2021 and again after the reinstatement of the scheme in October 2021 (Figure).²⁴⁶

²⁴⁵ Service NSW, MyServiceNSW registration data, May 2023

²⁴⁶ Note that this is not evidence of causality.

Figure 8.3: Monthly MyServiceNSW account registrations

Number of accounts registered per month, 000's, Jan 2021 – Dec 2022



Source: SNSW MyServiceNSW registration data, May 2023

As a result, future programs can be deployed to a larger user base. Broader benefits of having more registered users may include:

- more efficient communication with a larger number of people via the SNSW app, in cases where people have opted in to receiving communications
- increased reach of future programs.

Finding:

The voucher programs created a range of benefits for the broader community (these benefits have not been quantified in the cost-benefit analysis result).

The programs encouraged people to get out and about and spend in a COVID-safe way, while reinforcing compliance with Public Health Orders.

The voucher programs instilled a level of confidence among consumers and businesses which is likely to have influenced their spending decisions.

Some Parents voucher users reported feeling supported by the NSW Government as a result of the vouchers in line with the policy intent.

8.2 Costs

The evaluation considered a range of costs associated with the voucher programs. The voucher programs created two types of costs which are quantified (dead-weight loss and costs of the NSW Government). They also created a range of broader costs to the community.

The dead-weight loss arising from consumers valuing the vouchers at less than their face value is incorporated into consumer surplus estimates (see 8.1.1).

8.2.1 Costs to NSW Government

The NSW Government incurred costs to administer the programs. These costs are comprised of the vouchers themselves, implementation costs and operational costs.

Table 8.4: NSW Government costs

	Value of vouchers (\$m)	Implementation costs (\$m)	Operational costs (\$m)
Dine	340.0	4.7	6.2
Discover	247.0	3.4	4.5
Stay	47.0	2.2	2.1
Parents	124.9	1.5	4.2

Source: SNSW program data. These are in nominal terms.

Finding:

The D&D voucher program incurred higher costs for the NSW Government to implement than the Stay or Parents programs. Dine vouchers cost \$340 million and Discover vouchers cost \$247 million. This reflects the relatively high redemption of D&D vouchers among the NSW population.

The D&D program was more costly to implement and operate than Stay or Parents. This reflects the D&D program being the first of the three voucher programs to be stood up, and its relatively long duration.

8.2.2 Opportunity costs and diversion of Government funding

Government policies have opportunity costs. This is the foregone benefit of committing resources towards other activities or initiatives.

The opportunity costs incurred by the voucher programs included government financial and human resources. This created a social cost in terms of delays or disruptions to existing services, and delayed improvements to existing services or launch of new services.

In addition, Service NSW reported that the programs led to higher volumes of customer contact at physical and remote service centres. The demand for Service NSW services was identified as a concern prior to the launch of D&D due to increased wait times (estimated to increase by up to 41% in March 2021), crowding and queuing.²⁴⁷ The evaluator does not have data to quantify the ultimate demand for

²⁴⁷ Service NSW, Frontline Impacts and Risk Q3 FY2021, December 2020.

services at Service NSW service centres as a result of the voucher programs. Nonetheless, this demand may have created social costs in terms of:

- customers having to spend more time to receive services
- some customers being unable to receive a service
- customers being placed at increased risk of exposure to COVID-19 from spending time at crowded in-person service centres.

The choice of policy mechanism also created opportunity costs. The decision to implement voucher programs limited the NSW Government's ability to pursue alternative policies.

The policy intent of the D&D and Stay programs was to stimulate the economy and support affected businesses. There are various ways to pursue these objectives, including direct financial assistance to consumers or businesses.

The policy intent of the Parents program was to reward and thank eligible households for their efforts to support learning from home. The NSW Government could have supported parents affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in various ways, including providing mental health services to families (see 5.3.1).

Further, the voucher programs may have affected consumer spending decisions. Survey respondents reported that voucher users went to businesses they wouldn't have otherwise visited (this was reported by 42% of Dine users, 54% of Discover users, 40% of Stay users and 60% of Parents users). Voucher users also spent more money than they otherwise would have (see 7.2.1.1).

Economic theory suggests that vouchers distort consumption choices.²⁴⁸ By affecting demand for eligible services, the voucher programs may have shifted the allocation of resources between industries.

These distortions represent another cost of the programs.

8.2.3 Unequal distribution of benefits

The design of the voucher programs, including the digital format of vouchers, created the potential for some groups to benefit more than others.

Notwithstanding that vouchers were made available in non-digital formats, those who accessed them digitally were able to receive their vouchers in a more timely manner.

The number of participating businesses varied among metropolitan, regional and remote areas of NSW.

Overall the voucher programs generated less benefits for older residents, people living with a disability, people living in remote areas, and people with lower incomes (see 6.1.5.2, 7.1). This creates social costs, including:

- some residents of the NSW population were unable to benefit from government transfers
- a negative perception among some residents about the fairness of the NSW Government's policy.

8.2.4 Business implementation costs

Businesses who participated in the voucher programs incurred costs. These have not been quantified. Excluding these costs may overstate the net benefits achieved by the voucher programs. Business costs include:

- integrating the voucher with point of sale (POS) technology systems

²⁴⁸ Southworth, H. M. (1945). The economics of public measures to subsidize food consumption. *Journal of Farm Economics* 27 (1), 38–66; Schonger, M. (2012). Vouchers, equality and competition (Doctoral dissertation, Princeton University).

- where POS integration was not achieved, some businesses incurred costs in acquiring the necessary tools to accept vouchers and providing training to staff

Finding:

In addition to the costs incurred by the NSW Government, the voucher programs created broader costs that are not quantified.

The programs created opportunity costs associated with allocating government resources to the voucher programs and foregoing other initiatives. Consumers and businesses also reallocated resources towards the voucher programs, which may have been inefficient.

There was a degree of inequity in the distribution of benefits associated with the voucher programs.

Businesses incurred costs to participate in the voucher programs such as implementing COVID-safe measures, integrating the voucher technology and acquiring the tools and skills required to accept vouchers.

8.3 Value for money

The value for money of each voucher program is determined by comparing the net benefits of the program to a case where the program did not exist.

8.3.1 Counterfactual

The evaluation does not identify a specific counterfactual (see chapter 4). In order to compare spending with and without the voucher programs, the evaluation considers two counterfactual scenarios:

- 1) all spending associated with the vouchers (voucher value and any out of pocket spend) is additional, i.e. consumers would not have spent the voucher amount or any additional amount in the absence of the voucher programs
- 2) no spending associated with the vouchers is additional, i.e. consumers would have spent the same amount in the absence of the voucher programs.

There is a third counterfactual scenario in which the voucher program encourages spending on transactions that do not involve a voucher. This may be due to increased consumer confidence to get out and about and spend money. The evaluation does not quantify this potential effect on spending.

It is likely that some proportion of spending associated with the vouchers would have occurred in the absence of the vouchers programs. The net benefits for each program are presented as a range, rather than a point estimate, to account for inherent uncertainty.

8.3.2 Cost benefit analysis

Voucher programs represent a direct transfer from government to consumers, and in turn from consumers to businesses. Transfers have a benefit-cost ratio (BCR) of one.

The voucher programs' BCR will vary from one to the extent that:

- they support additional spending (beyond the value of the voucher)
- they are associated with administrative and other costs
- they generate producer and consumer surplus
- they generate deadweight loss.

Minimising administrative fees and incentivising additional spending will increase the likelihood that a voucher program delivers a BCR of greater than one.

Detailed results of the cost-benefit analysis are presented in sections 8.3.2.1 and 8.3.2.2. Sensitivity analysis was conducted to test the results of the CBA by varying key assumptions to reflect risks and uncertainties.²⁴⁹

Table 8.5 summarises the results. The net benefit and BCR for each program is presented as a range. The upper bound represents the counterfactual in which all spending associated with the vouchers is additional. The lower bound represents the counterfactual in which none of the spending is additional.

²⁴⁹ NSW Government Guide to Cost-Benefit Analysis, TPG23-08, February 2023.

Table 8.5: Estimated net benefit and benefit-cost ratio for each voucher program

	Net benefit (\$m)		BCR	
	<i>Lower bound</i>	<i>Upper bound</i>	<i>Lower bound</i>	<i>Upper bound</i>
Dine	(75.85)	(9.69)	0.83	0.98
Discover	(55.10)	4.62	0.83	1.01
Stay	(12.50)	8.31	0.78	1.14
Parents	(26.72)	9.41	0.82	1.06

Note: results are presented in 2023 net present value terms.

Assumptions

The CBA is based on the following assumptions. They align with NSW Government guidelines and/or consultation with NSW Government stakeholders. See Appendix F for details.

- A discount rate is applied in line with NSW Government CBA guidelines²⁵⁰
- An inflation rate is estimated based on the ABS Consumer Price Index
- A dead-weight loss assumption is applied based on estimates from academic literature (see 8.1.1)
- A leakage rate is applied to account for the share of business profits that 'leak out' to other jurisdictions
- An EBIT ratio is applied based on ABS Australian Industry data. This represents the amount of profit businesses generate for every unit of income.

8.3.2.1 Upper bound: all spending is additional

Based on a scenario where all spending associated with the voucher programs was additional, the estimated BCR for each voucher program is close to 1.

The costs associated with Dine vouchers outweighed any benefits accruing to consumers and businesses. Dine vouchers generated a net cost of \$9.69 million. This equated to a BCR (upper bound) of 0.98. Dine vouchers had relatively high registration and redemption among consumers and thus came at a high cost to the NSW Government. They supported more consumer surplus than other vouchers. However, Dine vouchers were associated with low additional spending (consumers spent \$1.59 for every dollar of Dine voucher redeemed).

Discover vouchers generated a net benefit of \$4.62 million, and a BCR (upper bound) of 1.01. Similar to Dine, the costs of Discover vouchers to the NSW Government were relatively high and they were associated with relatively low additional spending. Consumers spent \$1.76 for every dollar of Discover voucher redeemed.

Parents vouchers generated the highest net benefit at \$9.41 million. This equated to a BCR of 1.06. For every dollar of Parents voucher redeemed, consumers spent \$2.33. They had relatively low redemption compared to other programs. However, the higher quantity and value of Parents vouchers influenced the cost of the program to the government.

²⁵⁰ NSW Government, Guide to Cost-Benefit Analysis, TPP17-03, March 2017. This guidance was current when the programs were launched.

Stay vouchers generated a net benefit of \$8.31 million and had the highest BCR, at 1.14. The Stay vouchers were relatively low in value. They were associated with the highest additional spend (consumers spent \$3.53 for every dollar of Stay voucher redeemed).

Sensitivity

Varying the assumed discount rate and leakage rate produces similar results. Varying the EBIT ratio by 10% either side causes the BCRs to vary more widely, driven by the impact on producer surplus.

Table 8.6: Cost-benefit analysis results for scenario where all spending associated with the vouchers is additional

		Sensitivity	Dine	Discover	Stay	Parents
Central estimate	Net benefit (\$m)		(9.69)	4.62	8.31	9.41
	BCR		0.98	1.01	1.14	1.06
Discount rate	Net benefit (\$m)	3%	(9.01)	4.30	8.01	9.07
		10%	(10.21)	4.87	8.53	9.66
	BCR	3%	0.98	1.01	1.14	1.06
		10%	0.98	1.01	1.14	1.06
Inflation rate	Net benefit (\$m)	-1%	(9.52)	4.54	8.23	9.33
		+1%	(9.86)	4.71	8.38	9.49
	BCR	-1%	0.98	1.01	1.14	1.06
		+1%	0.98	1.01	1.14	1.06
Leakage rate	Net benefit (\$m)	-10%	(2.05)	9.33	10.71	13.44
		+10%	(17.33)	(1.82)	5.91	5.38
	BCR	-10%	1.00	1.03	1.19	1.09
		+10%	0.96	0.99	1.10	1.04
EBIT ratio	Net benefit (\$m)	-10%	(68.83)	(46.34)	(7.82)	(19.94)
		+10%	49.45	55.59	24.44	38.76
	BCR	-10%	0.84	0.86	0.86	0.86
		+10%	1.11	1.17	1.42	1.26

Note: results are presented in 2023 net present value terms.

Where reducing the leakage and EBIT ratio assumptions by 10% would cause them to be negative, these parameters are set to 0% in the lower bound.

8.3.2.2 Lower bound: no spending is additional

Lower bound estimates of net benefits are produced based on a counterfactual in which none of the spending associated with the voucher programs was additional. In this scenario, businesses do not receive any producer surplus as a result of the voucher programs. In the absence of any producer surplus, the only benefit associated with the programs is consumer surplus.

In this scenario, the cost-benefit analysis produces a BCR of below 1 for all programs. Each program produces a negative net benefit (net cost).

Table 8.7: Estimated net benefit and benefit-cost ratio (lower bound)

	Dine	Discover	Stay	Parents
Net benefit (\$m)	(75.85)	(55.10)	(12.50)	(26.72)
BCR	0.83	0.83	0.78	0.82

Note: results are presented in 2023 net present value terms. Results based on lower bound estimates (assumes that none of the spending associated with the vouchers was additional).

Sensitivity

The discount rate applied to the scenario in which no spending is additional is varied in line with NSW Government guidelines. The net benefits are relatively insensitive to adjustments in the assumed discount rate. This does not affect the programs' BCR.

Sensitivity testing is not conducted for assumptions of the leakage rate or EBIT ratio. Varying these assumptions will not affect the BCR results. This is because producer surplus is zero under a counterfactual where no spending is additional.

Table 8.8: Cost-benefit analysis results for scenario where no spending is additional

		Sensitivity	Dine	Discover	Stay	Parents
Central estimate	Net benefit (\$m)		(75.85)	(55.10)	(12.50)	(26.72)
	BCR		0.83	0.83	0.78	0.83
Discount rate	Net benefit (\$m)	3%	(70.54)	(51.24)	(12.05)	(25.76)
		10%	(79.95)	(58.08)	(12.83)	(27.42)
	BCR	3%	0.83	0.83	0.78	0.82
		10%	0.83	0.83	0.78	0.82
Inflation rate	Net benefit (\$m)	-1%	(74.50)	(54.12)	(12.39)	(26.48)
		+1%	(77.20)	(56.08)	(12.61)	(26.95)
	BCR	-1%	0.83	0.83	0.78	0.82
		+1%	0.83	0.83	0.78	0.82

Note: results are presented in 2023 net present value terms.

Finding:

The benefit-cost ratio (BCR) for each voucher program is calculated based on two counterfactuals: one where all spending associated with the vouchers is additional, and one where no spending is additional. The result is presented as a range. It is likely that some proportion of spending associated with the vouchers would have occurred in the absence of the voucher programs. As such, the BCR is likely to fall somewhere within the range.

The BCR for the Dine program is between 0.83 and 0.98.

The BCR for the Discover program is between 0.83 and 1.01.

The BCR for the Stay program is between 0.78 and 1.14.

The BCR of the Parents program is between 0.82 and 1.06.

8.3.3 Distributional analysis

8.3.3.1 Distribution of consumer surplus across metropolitan, regional and remote NSW

The design of the programs created more benefit for individuals in metropolitan areas (see chapter 6). Spending associated with the vouchers was higher in metropolitan LGAs relative to regional LGAs, and again in regional LGAs relative to remote LGAs (see chapter 7).

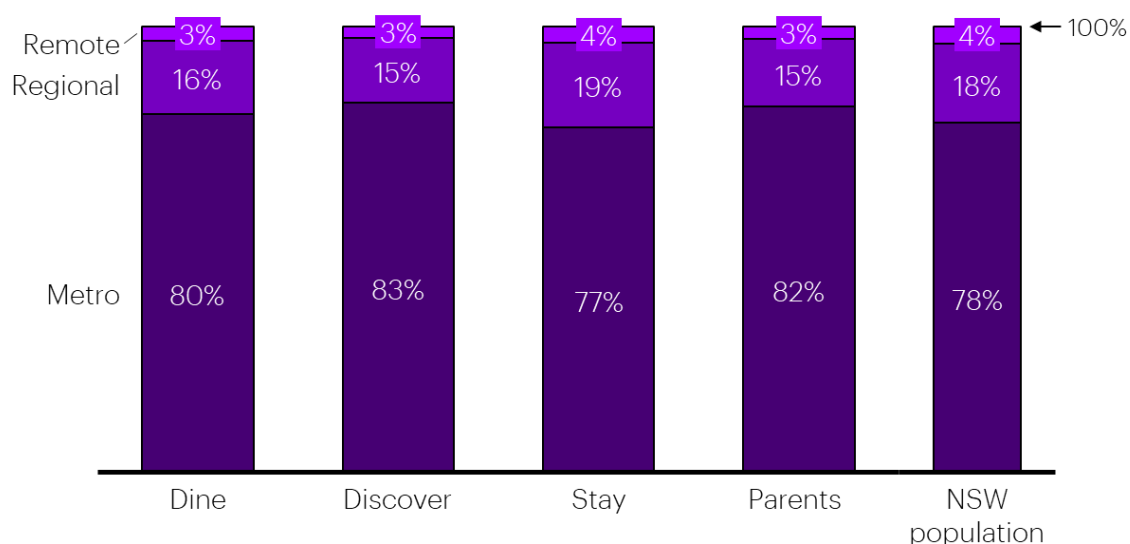
Consumers in metropolitan areas received more benefit from the voucher programs than those in other parts of NSW.

For each program, consumers in metropolitan LGAs received between 77% and 83% of the total consumer surplus. Consumer surplus was low in regional areas, representing between 15% (Discover and Parents) and 19% (Stay) of total consumer surplus. Remote areas received between 3% and 4% of the total consumer surplus for each program.

The share of consumer surplus received by remoteness area is closely proportionate with the spread of the NSW population across metropolitan, regional and remote LGAs for the Stay program. This reflects that people travelled to regional and remote areas to use Stay vouchers. Consumer surplus received from the Dine, Discover and Parents vouchers did not have the same outcome. Remote and regional LGAs received a lower share of consumer surplus for these programs relative to their share of the NSW population.

Figure 8.4: Geographic distribution of consumer surplus

% of total consumer surplus for each voucher program received in metropolitan, regional and remote LGAs and % of adult NSW residents living in metropolitan, regional and remote LGAs in 2022



Source: Accenture analysis of Service NSW program data and ABS Regional population by age and sex, 2022. Note: the adult population includes residents over the age of 19 due to ABS age grouping.

This reflects the discrepancies in registration and redemption rates across different parts of the State. Voucher redemption was higher in metropolitan areas (see 7.1.1). This was in part due to less participating businesses in regional and remote areas as well as lower digital literacy and related accessibility issues.

Consumer surplus was more evenly distributed for the Stay program relative to the other programs. Stay vouchers encouraged people to travel outside their LGAs to redeem their vouchers, which may have broadened their options of participating businesses.

Table 8.9: Average consumer surplus associated with the voucher programs

	Dine (\$)	Discover (\$)	Stay (\$)	Parents (\$)
Metropolitan LGAs	5,892,213	4,415,682	698,002	1,959,446
Regional LGAs	1,256,408	807,850	179,284	376,637
Remote LGAs	310,180	179,963	43,308	90,560

Note: results are presented in 2023 net present value terms.

Finding:

Consumers in metropolitan areas received more benefit from the voucher programs relative to other areas of NSW.

Consumers in metropolitan LGAs received a higher share of each program’s total consumer surplus than consumers in regional or remote LGAs. Metropolitan LGAs received between 77% and 83% of the total consumer surplus. Consumers in metropolitan LGAs received a slightly higher share of consumer surplus for Dine, Discover and Parents relative to their share of the population. Consumers in remote LGAs received a lower share of consumer surplus (3%) for Dine, Discover and Parents relative to their share of the population (4%).

The distribution of consumer surplus associated with Stay voucher was more even across NSW. Consumer surplus from Stay vouchers in regional and remote LGAs represented 19% and 4% of the total consumer surplus for the Stay program, respectively. This is closely proportionate to the spread of the NSW adult population which is approximately 18% regional and 4% remote.

Across all areas, Dine and Discover vouchers were associated with the highest average consumer surplus, followed by Parents and Stay vouchers.

8.3.3.2 Distribution of producer surplus across metropolitan, regional and remote NSW

The design of the programs also created more benefit for businesses in metropolitan areas of NSW (see 6.1.5.2).

Voucher redemptions, and consumer spending, were higher in metropolitan LGAs relative to regional LGAs, and again in regional LGAs relative to remote LGAs (see 7.1).

The inequitable distribution of benefits is further evidenced by the share of producer surplus in metropolitan LGAs relative to regional and remote LGAs.

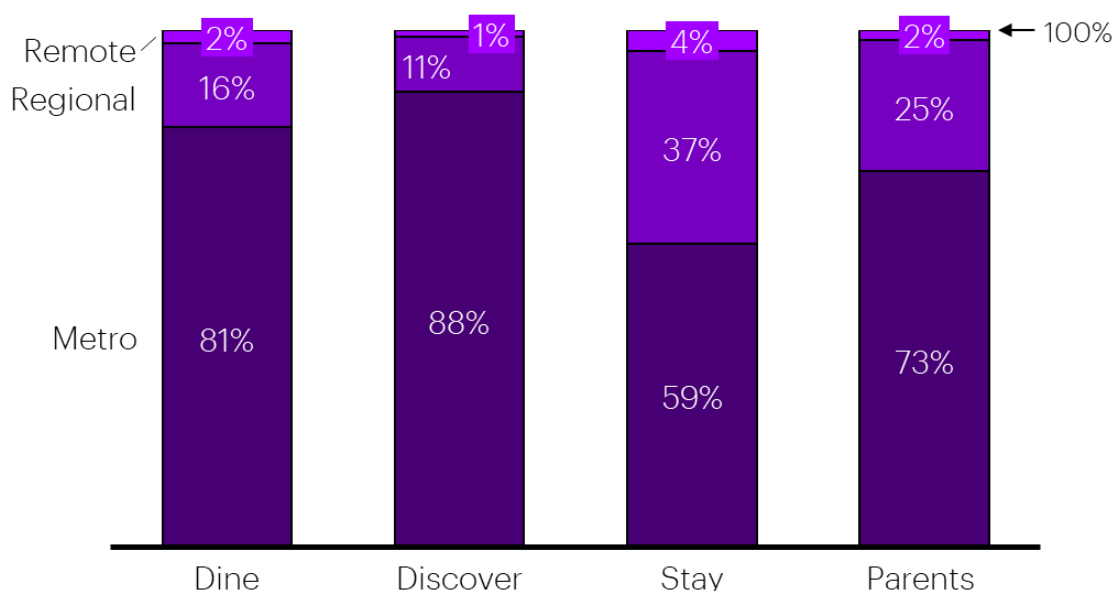
Producer surplus was low in remote areas. Residents in remote LGAs make up approximately 4% of the NSW population. Remote LGAs are also less likely to be visited by residents from other parts of the State than regional or metropolitan LGAs. Accordingly, businesses in remote LGAs received between 2% and 5% of each program’s total producer surplus.

Producer surplus associated with the Stay program was more evenly distributed between metropolitan and regional areas relative to the other programs. Metropolitan LGAs and regional LGAs received 59% and 37% of the total producer surplus from Stay vouchers, respectively. Businesses participating in the Stay program received more additional spend from consumers (see 7.2).

Businesses in regional LGAs received 25% of the Parents program’s producer surplus. This is due to the contribution of Stay businesses.

Figure 8.5: Geographic distribution of producer surplus

% of total producer surplus for each voucher program received in metropolitan, regional and remote LGAs



Source: Accenture analysis of Service NSW program data.

The distribution of producer surplus for each voucher program reflects discrepancies in business registration and voucher redemption across different parts of NSW. Businesses in metropolitan LGAs that participated in the voucher programs received more benefit than businesses in regional LGAs. Businesses in remote areas received limited benefit from participating in the voucher programs.

Table 8.10: Average producer surplus associated with the voucher programs

	Dine (\$)	Discover (\$)	Stay (\$)	Parents (\$)
Metropolitan LGAs	1,194,161	1,170,016	284,434	583,570
Regional LGAs	228,966	141,048	175,877	200,011
Remote LGAs	43,999	21,140	23,596	18,134

Note: results are presented in 2023 net present value terms. Results based on upper bound producer surplus estimates (assumes that all spending associated with the vouchers was additional (see 8.3)).

Finding:

Businesses in metropolitan areas received more benefit from the voucher programs relative to other areas of NSW.

Businesses in metropolitan LGAs received a higher share of each program's total producer surplus than those in other parts of NSW. Discover businesses in metropolitan LGAs received 88% of the total producer surplus for Discover. Businesses in remote LGAs received just 1% of Discover's producer surplus.

Producer surplus supported by the Stay program was more evenly distributed between metropolitan and regional LGAs. Businesses in metropolitan and regional LGAs received 59% and 37% of the total producer surplus for the Stay program, respectively. This reflects the redemption of Stay vouchers being more evenly distributed across the State.

Appendix A: Illion Spend Analytics data

This section provides more detail on illion Spend Analytics data, how illion spending categories correspond with ABS industry categories and the D&D, Stay, and Parents programs more broadly.

As mentioned in section 4.1.3 – Illion Spend Analytics data, a limitation of the illion Spend Analytics data is the way that transactions are categorised by business industry. Because these categories differ to ABS industry categories it is not possible to create a 1:1 match between spending captured in this dataset and the specific ANZSIC codes that were included in the D&D, Stay, and Parents programs.

For the purpose of modelling the effect of the voucher programs on consumer spending, Accenture selected the illion spending category which most closely matched the set of ANZSIC codes included in each program. Table A.1 shows the correspondence between the ABS 4-digit ANZSIC codes included in the programs, the ABS industry category label, and the illion spending category.

The illion spending categories used were ‘restaurants, cafes and pubs’ for Dine businesses, ‘recreational events, memberships and tickets’ for Discover businesses, and ‘accommodation’ for Stay businesses.

The illion categories for Dine and Discover businesses were a strong match for the ANZSIC codes included in the programs. For Stay, there was no close match. Instead, a custom category was constructed based on business names. This allowed irrelevant businesses to be filtered out.

Table A.1: Mapping of eligible ANZSIC codes to ABS and illion industry categories

4-digit ANZSIC Code	Business eligible for:			ABS industry category	Illion spending category
	Dine	Discover	Stay		
4511 - Cafes and restaurants	Yes	No	No	Accommodation and food services	Restaurants, cafes and pubs
4520 - Pubs, taverns and bars	Yes	No	No	Accommodation and food services	Restaurants, cafes and pubs
4530 - Clubs (hospitality)	Yes	No	No	Accommodation and food services	Restaurants, cafes and pubs
4512 - Takeaway food services	Yes	No	No	Accommodation and food services	Fast food and takeaway
5010 - Scenic and sightseeing transport	No	Yes	No	Transport, post and warehousing	Recreational events, memberships and tickets
5513 - Motion picture exhibition	No	Yes	No	Information media and telecommunication	Recreational events, memberships and tickets
7530 - Local government administration	No	Yes	No	Local government administration	Recreational events, memberships and tickets

8910 - Museum operation				Arts and recreation services	Recreational events, memberships and tickets
8921 - Zoological and botanical gardens operation				Arts and recreation services	Recreational events, memberships and tickets
8922 - Nature reserves and conservation park operation				Arts and recreation services	Recreational events, memberships and tickets
9001 - Performing arts operation				Arts and recreation services	Recreational events, memberships and tickets
9003 - Performing arts venue operation				Arts and recreation services	Recreational events, memberships and tickets
9131 - Amusement parks and centres operation				Arts and recreation services	Recreational events, memberships and tickets
9139 - Amusement and other recreational activities				Arts and recreation services	Recreational events, memberships and tickets
4400 - Accommodation				Accommodation and food services	Custom
9559 - Other interest group				Other services	Custom
6712 - Non-residential property operators				Rental, hiring and real estate services	Custom
6962 - Business management services				Professional, scientific and technical services	Custom
9201 - Casino operation				Arts and recreation services	Custom
6961 - Corporate head office management services				Professional, scientific and technical services	Custom

Appendix B: Survey respondents and focus groups

Accenture conducted a survey of NSW residents over the age of 18. The survey asked residents a series of questions in relation to whether they used the voucher programs and their experiences. The survey was conducted in January 2023.

The sample size of the consumer survey was N = 1,017

Table B.1: Demographics of survey respondents*# and % of survey respondents*

Demographic	# of respondents	% of respondents
Female	516	50.7%
Male	501	49.3%
18-29	182	17.9%
30-39	197	19.4%
40-49	173	17.0%
50-64	237	23.3%
65+	228	22.4%
Metro	761	74.8%
Inner regional	203	20.0%
Outer regional/remote	53	5.2%
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	30	2.9%
Has a disability	121	11.9%
First language other than English	113	11.1%
Parent/carer of school-aged child	264	30.0%
Dine & Discover users ²⁵¹	935	92%
Stay program users	634	63%
Parents program users	220	22%

The sample size of the consumer focus groups was N = 17, with 6 participants each for the D&D program and Parents program users and 5 participants for Stay program users.

²⁵¹ Users refers to individuals that registered for the respective voucher program.

Appendix C: Income versus program redemption rates

Table C.1: Redemption rate versus median income by LGA, LGA remoteness area



Source: SNSW program redemption data; ABS, 'Personal Income in Australia - Table 2', 2020

Appendix D: Difference-in-difference summary results

This section details the methodology for the Difference-in-Differences (DiD) approach used to estimate the impact on consumer spending of the programs as part of the Efficiency chapter of this evaluation.

The DiD approach is a widely used method in policy evaluation contexts and has been used for the specific purpose of measuring the effect of voucher-based stimulus programs on consumer spending.²⁵² It compares the changes in outcomes between a treatment group and a control group before and after an intervention, assuming parallel trends in the absence of the intervention. This allows for causal inference by estimating the difference between the changes in the treatment and control groups over time, which can be attributed to the intervention.

The modelling estimated the total additional spend resulting from the programs (either in transactions where a voucher was used, or in transactions indirectly induced by the programs). This involves measuring the relationship between consumer spending in relevant industries and variation in voucher redemption rates across LGAs. Exploiting differences in redemption rates across LGAs allows an estimation of the causal effect of the voucher programs on consumer spending.

Additionally, the model incorporates control variables and fixed effects to account for confounding factors, including a comprehensive set of LGA-specific factors, and time-related factors.

The controls included in the model are:

- **LGA fixed effects:** These fixed effects control for unobservable, time-invariant characteristics of each LGA. By controlling for these factors, the model can isolate the effect of voucher redemption on consumer spending.
 - Source: illion Spend Analytics data provides the LGA of an individual.
- **Remoteness:** Dummy variables for remoteness categories (Inner Regional Australia, Major Cities of Australia, Outer Regional Australia, Remote Australia, and Very Remote Australia) capture differences in consumer spending patterns across geographic locations.
 - Source: ABS LGA to Remoteness Area data.
- **Time fixed effects (quarterly):** Controls for common time-specific shocks affecting all LGAs, including pre-treatment periods before the vouchers were introduced. Set to quarterly rather than monthly to reduce multicollinearity.
 - Source: The consumer spend analytics dataset is a timeseries dataset
- **Income:** Controls for variations in consumer spending due to differences in income levels among LGAs.
 - Source: Consumer spend analytics data.
- **Age demographics dummy variables:** controls for age profile of LGAs based on % of people within age buckets (18-29, 30-39, 40-59, and above 60).
 - Source: ABS data.
- **A flag for whether the LGA was in lockdown in that month:** This control accounts for any impact of lockdown measures on consumer spending in an LGA.
 - Source: Desktop research.
- **The proportion of residents in an LGA born overseas:** This control accounts for potential differences in spending patterns based on the cultural diversity of each LGA.

²⁵² For example, see: Hao Geng, 'Evaluating Hong Kong Consumption Voucher Scheme', n.d.; Chang-Tai Hsieh, Satoshi Shimizutani, and Masahiro Hori, 'Did Japan's Shopping Coupon Program Increase Spending?', *Journal of Public Economics* 94, no. 7 (1 August 2010): 523–29; Seokjin Woo et al., 'Consumption Response to Seoul's Covid-19 Shopping Coupons: Evidence from Consumer Data', SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester, NY, 28 August 2021).

- Source: ABS data.
- **SEIFA Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD):** a composite index capturing a range of potential omitted variables, including socio-economic disadvantage, digital literacy, internet access, and education levels.
 - ABS data.

The full specification of the model is show in Figure D.1.

Figure D.1: Difference-in-difference model specification

$$y_{i,t} = \gamma_i + \lambda_t + T_{i,t}^{PRE} + \beta_1 T_{i,t}^1 + \beta_2 T_{i,t}^2 + \beta_3 T_{i,t}^3 + \dots + \mu_{i,t} X_{i,t} + \epsilon_{i,t}$$

Where:

- i indexes LGA, and t indexes time (months)
- $t = -5, -4, \dots, 0, 1, 2, \dots$; $t = 0$ is the month that precedes the announcement of the program
- $y_{i,t}$ represents LGA $_i$'s total spend in sector Y in month t - includes value of voucher redemptions
- γ_i represents LGA $_i$'s fixed effects – it is a dummy variable
 - This aims to control for level differences in spending between LGAs and other controls
- λ_t represents time fixed effects – it is a series of dummies, one for each quarter
 - This aims to control for time – varying changes in spending
- $T_{i,t}^1$ = % of eligible LGA pop that redeemed the vouchers in their program in $t = 1$, ranges from 1 to last month of program,
- $T_{i,t}^{PRE} = 1$ for time periods before the program started in LGA = i , i. e. $t < 1$
- $X_{i,t}$ is a vector of controls (SEIFA IRSAD, income, lockdown flag, % of LGA born OS, age, remoteness)

Model results

Table D. 1: Difference-in-difference model results

Dine

Dependent variable:	Dine_business_moneyTT	R-squared:	0.793
Model:	OLS	Adj. R-squared:	0.778
Method:	Least Squares	F-statistic:	53.16
Date:	Wed, 13 Sep 2023	Prob (F-statistic):	0
Time:	15:42:31	Log-Likelihood:	-9331.3
No. Observations:	2295	AIC:	18970
Df Residuals:	2140	BIC:	19860
Df Model:	154		
Covariance Type:	Non-robust		

Variables	coef	std err	t	P> t	[0.025	0.975]
const	-3.95	18.62	-0.21	0.83	-40.47	32.57
SEIFA_IRSAD	0.15	0.04	3.49	0.00	0.07	0.23
INCOME_TOTAL_ANNUAL_GROSS	0.00	0.00	4.31	0.00	0.00	0.00
Prop_OS_Excl_Not_Stated	-300.34	174.63	-1.72	0.09	-642.80	42.12
lockdown	-28.77	3.62	-7.94	0.00	-35.88	-21.66
30_39_PROP	-6.85	9.24	-0.74	0.46	-24.96	11.26
40_59_PROP	5.16	11.52	0.45	0.65	-17.42	27.74
OVER_60_PROP	-8.32	8.74	-0.95	0.34	-25.46	8.82

TREATMENT_redemptions_dine_P01_2021_03_01	112.97	22.46	5.03	0.00	68.93	157.02
TREATMENT_redemptions_dine_P02_2021_04_01	65.00	11.53	5.64	0.00	42.39	87.61
TREATMENT_redemptions_dine_P03_2021_05_01	29.46	9.59	3.07	0.00	10.66	48.27
TREATMENT_redemptions_dine_P04_2021_06_01	19.35	16.44	1.18	0.24	-12.88	51.58
TREATMENT_redemptions_dine_P05_2021_07_01	50.24	53.83	0.93	0.35	-55.33	155.81
TREATMENT_redemptions_dine_P06_2021_08_01	-60.61	85.68	-0.71	0.48	-228.64	107.42
TREATMENT_redemptions_dine_P07_2021_09_01	288.07	269.91	1.07	0.29	-241.23	817.38
TREATMENT_redemptions_dine_P08_2021_10_01	-114.47	152.45	-0.75	0.45	-413.44	184.49
TREATMENT_redemptions_dine_P09_2021_11_01	61.37	70.13	0.88	0.38	-76.16	198.91
TREATMENT_redemptions_dine_P10_2021_12_01	222.57	31.45	7.08	0.00	160.89	284.25
TREATMENT_redemptions_dine_P11_2022_01_01	-32.03	39.92	-0.80	0.42	-110.32	46.25
TREATMENT_redemptions_dine_P12_2022_02_01	-79.37	44.57	-1.78	0.08	-166.77	8.03
TREATMENT_redemptions_dine_P13_2022_03_01	191.45	55.87	3.43	0.00	81.90	301.01
TREATMENT_redemptions_dine_P14_2022_04_01	79.40	57.33	1.39	0.17	-33.03	191.83
TREATMENT_redemptions_dine_P15_2022_05_01	19.30	44.34	0.44	0.66	-67.65	106.26
TREATMENT_redemptions_dine_P16_2022_06_01	43.90	14.71	2.99	0.00	15.05	72.74
RA_Major Cities of Australia	57.16	33.92	1.69	0.09	-9.36	123.67
RA_Outer Regional Australia	-20.58	9.75	-2.11	0.04	-39.70	-1.45
RA_Remote Australia	-41.56	7.81	-5.32	0.00	-56.88	-26.24
RA_Very Remote Australia	-43.76	6.42	-6.82	0.00	-56.35	-31.17
LGA_Armidale Regional	12.98	5.51	2.35	0.02	2.16	23.79
LGA_Ballina	0.75	5.38	0.14	0.89	-9.80	11.29
LGA_Balranald	-14.50	3.89	-3.73	0.00	-22.12	-6.88
LGA_Bathurst Regional	16.00	7.53	2.13	0.03	1.24	30.77
LGA_Bayside (NSW)	36.02	26.93	1.34	0.18	-16.78	88.82
LGA_Bega Valley	32.34	8.55	3.78	0.00	15.58	49.10
LGA_Bellingen	13.83	7.93	1.74	0.08	-1.73	29.38
LGA_Berrigan	-31.20	8.97	-3.48	0.00	-48.80	-13.60
LGA_Blacktown	37.58	16.67	2.26	0.02	4.90	70.26
LGA_Bland	-16.86	5.83	-2.89	0.00	-28.29	-5.42
LGA_Blayney	-23.37	13.64	-1.71	0.09	-50.12	3.37
LGA_Blue Mountains	-42.63	28.91	-1.48	0.14	-99.33	14.06
LGA_Bogan	-6.05	5.05	-1.20	0.23	-15.96	3.85
LGA_Bourke	-38.10	7.97	-4.78	0.00	-53.73	-22.47
LGA_Brewarrina	-26.25	8.43	-3.12	0.00	-42.78	-9.73
LGA_Broken Hill	24.77	3.79	6.54	0.00	17.35	32.20
LGA_Burwood	33.63	36.75	0.92	0.36	-38.44	105.69
LGA_Byron	33.51	13.44	2.49	0.01	7.16	59.86
LGA_Cabonne	-4.79	15.52	-0.31	0.76	-35.22	25.64
LGA_Camden	-9.46	23.39	-0.40	0.69	-55.33	36.41
LGA_Canada Bay	-0.20	6.93	-0.03	0.98	-13.79	13.40
LGA_Canterbury-Bankstown	32.29	23.79	1.36	0.18	-14.37	78.94
LGA_Carrathool	13.02	15.47	0.84	0.40	-17.32	43.35
LGA_Central Coast (NSW)	-26.91	30.43	-0.88	0.38	-86.58	32.76
LGA_Central Darling	-3.18	10.06	-0.32	0.75	-22.92	16.55
LGA_Cessnock	16.34	9.74	1.68	0.09	-2.75	35.44

LGA_Clarence Valley	8.64	7.80	1.11	0.27	-6.66	23.95
LGA_Cobar	12.77	3.71	3.44	0.00	5.49	20.06
LGA_Coffs Harbour	28.56	6.57	4.35	0.00	15.67	41.45
LGA_Coolamon	-14.05	15.34	-0.92	0.36	-44.13	16.04
LGA_Coonamble	-20.50	7.54	-2.72	0.01	-35.28	-5.71
LGA_Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional	-22.78	10.47	-2.18	0.03	-43.31	-2.24
LGA_Cowra	11.16	9.76	1.14	0.25	-7.98	30.30
LGA_Cumberland	50.25	38.23	1.32	0.19	-24.71	125.22
LGA_Dubbo Regional	16.48	7.50	2.20	0.03	1.78	31.19
LGA_Dungog	-24.24	15.13	-1.60	0.11	-53.90	5.43
LGA_Edward River	-19.70	13.00	-1.52	0.13	-45.20	5.80
LGA_Eurobodalla	-5.83	5.47	-1.07	0.29	-16.56	4.90
LGA_Fairfield	80.04	45.60	1.76	0.08	-9.39	169.47
LGA_Federation	-11.47	9.82	-1.17	0.24	-30.72	7.78
LGA_Forbes	4.72	6.45	0.73	0.47	-7.94	17.37
LGA_Georges River	25.41	26.17	0.97	0.33	-25.91	76.74
LGA_Gilgandra	-19.12	7.06	-2.71	0.01	-32.96	-5.28
LGA_Glen Innes Severn	-10.64	3.91	-2.72	0.01	-18.31	-2.96
LGA_Goulburn Mulwaree	12.28	5.62	2.19	0.03	1.26	23.30
LGA_Greater Hume Shire	-11.29	13.22	-0.85	0.39	-37.22	14.63
LGA_Griffith	54.95	26.92	2.04	0.04	2.15	107.75
LGA_Gunnedah	57.55	4.94	11.64	0.00	47.86	67.24
LGA_Gwydir	-19.32	6.96	-2.78	0.01	-32.97	-5.68
LGA_Hawkesbury	-34.75	35.79	-0.97	0.33	-104.93	35.44
LGA_Hay	-35.65	3.49	-10.22	0.00	-42.49	-28.81
LGA_Hilltops	10.50	9.54	1.10	0.27	-8.21	29.20
LGA_Hornsby	2.65	11.21	0.24	0.81	-19.33	24.63
LGA_Hunters Hill	-57.45	17.73	-3.24	0.00	-92.22	-22.68
LGA_Inner West	-14.22	4.93	-2.89	0.00	-23.89	-4.56
LGA_Inverell	8.01	3.55	2.25	0.02	1.04	14.98
LGA_Junee	-1.44	6.40	-0.23	0.82	-13.99	11.10
LGA_Kempsey	10.63	7.54	1.41	0.16	-4.16	25.42
LGA_Kiama	5.64	5.27	1.07	0.29	-4.70	15.99
LGA_Ku-ring-gai	-0.20	9.65	-0.02	0.98	-19.12	18.73
LGA_Kyogle	-11.08	7.45	-1.49	0.14	-25.70	3.54
LGA_Lachlan	-41.99	5.34	-7.87	0.00	-52.46	-31.52
LGA_Lake Macquarie	-38.93	38.93	-1.00	0.32	-115.28	37.41
LGA_Lane Cove	-1.50	3.77	-0.40	0.69	-8.90	5.90
LGA_Leeton	11.27	7.59	1.49	0.14	-3.61	26.15
LGA_Lismore	13.51	5.89	2.29	0.02	1.96	25.06
LGA_Lithgow	3.95	5.97	0.66	0.51	-7.75	15.66
LGA_Liverpool	38.79	20.27	1.91	0.06	-0.96	78.55
LGA_Liverpool Plains	-5.60	4.61	-1.21	0.23	-14.63	3.44
LGA_Lockhart	-24.04	6.26	-3.84	0.00	-36.32	-11.76
LGA_Maitland	-37.39	40.93	-0.91	0.36	-117.65	42.86
LGA_Mid-Coast	-0.77	6.09	-0.13	0.90	-12.71	11.17

LGA_Mid-Western Regional	5.18	9.41	0.55	0.58	-13.27	23.63
LGA_Moree Plains	38.02	4.43	8.58	0.00	29.32	46.71
LGA_Mosman	-18.88	5.25	-3.60	0.00	-29.17	-8.59
LGA_Murray River	-3.91	9.93	-0.39	0.69	-23.37	15.56
LGA_Murrumbidgee	-16.54	3.79	-4.37	0.00	-23.96	-9.11
LGA_Muswellbrook	0.68	7.51	0.09	0.93	-14.05	15.41
LGA_Nambucca Valley	30.65	7.26	4.22	0.00	16.41	44.88
LGA_Narrabri	30.51	5.91	5.17	0.00	18.92	42.09
LGA_Narrandera	-12.37	4.32	-2.86	0.00	-20.85	-3.89
LGA_Narromine	-13.02	7.02	-1.85	0.06	-26.79	0.76
LGA_Newcastle	-41.85	32.18	-1.30	0.19	-104.96	21.25
LGA_North Sydney	-8.53	6.50	-1.31	0.19	-21.28	4.22
LGA_Northern Beaches	-12.70	10.13	-1.25	0.21	-32.56	7.16
LGA_Oberon	4.65	5.76	0.81	0.42	-6.65	15.95
LGA_Orange	2.46	7.48	0.33	0.74	-12.21	17.14
LGA_Parkes	26.77	4.08	6.57	0.00	18.78	34.76
LGA_Parramatta	39.11	35.67	1.10	0.27	-30.84	109.06
LGA_Penrith	6.53	13.58	0.48	0.63	-20.09	33.16
LGA_Port Macquarie-Hastings	22.98	5.01	4.59	0.00	13.16	32.80
LGA_Port Stephens	15.68	5.12	3.06	0.00	5.64	25.73
LGA_Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional	-31.11	28.18	-1.10	0.27	-86.37	24.16
LGA_Randwick	21.72	7.76	2.80	0.01	6.51	36.93
LGA_Richmond Valley	7.04	10.89	0.65	0.52	-14.32	28.39
LGA_Ryde	20.94	23.38	0.90	0.37	-24.91	66.80
LGA_Shellharbour	-30.73	28.54	-1.08	0.28	-86.70	25.24
LGA_Shoalhaven	7.93	5.05	1.57	0.12	-1.98	17.84
LGA_Singleton	13.36	9.20	1.45	0.15	-4.67	31.40
LGA_Snowy Monaro Regional	44.05	9.33	4.72	0.00	25.75	62.34
LGA_Snowy Valleys	20.59	7.04	2.92	0.00	6.78	34.40
LGA_Strathfield	48.76	51.67	0.94	0.35	-52.56	150.09
LGA_Sutherland Shire	-37.58	28.08	-1.34	0.18	-92.65	17.49
LGA_Sydney	30.85	24.37	1.27	0.21	-16.94	78.64
LGA_Tamworth Regional	11.98	8.41	1.42	0.15	-4.51	28.47
LGA_Temora	6.40	4.90	1.31	0.19	-3.20	16.01
LGA_Tenterfield	-19.31	4.63	-4.17	0.00	-28.39	-10.24
LGA_The Hills Shire	19.50	8.16	2.39	0.02	3.50	35.50
LGA_Tweed	-38.01	29.31	-1.30	0.20	-95.49	19.47
LGA_Unincorporated NSW	-14.32	12.79	-1.12	0.26	-39.40	10.76
LGA_Upper Hunter Shire	-4.92	7.69	-0.64	0.52	-20.00	10.16
LGA_Upper Lachlan Shire	-22.71	11.74	-1.94	0.05	-45.74	0.31
LGA_Uralla	-7.39	4.19	-1.76	0.08	-15.61	0.83
LGA_Wagga Wagga	4.85	6.01	0.81	0.42	-6.93	16.63
LGA_Walcha	-36.50	5.29	-6.90	0.00	-46.87	-26.13
LGA_Walgett	-2.70	4.40	-0.62	0.54	-11.32	5.92
LGA_Warren	-49.48	4.42	-11.21	0.00	-58.14	-40.82
LGA_Warrumbungle Shire	-28.14	3.86	-7.29	0.00	-35.70	-20.57

LGA_Waverley	38.07	9.52	4.00	0.00	19.41	56.74
LGA_Weddin	-25.23	4.98	-5.07	0.00	-34.98	-15.47
LGA_Wentworth	-8.72	4.13	-2.11	0.04	-16.82	-0.62
LGA_Willoughby	18.04	24.21	0.75	0.46	-29.44	65.51
LGA_Wingecarribee	22.81	7.10	3.21	0.00	8.88	36.74
LGA_Wollondilly	23.02	7.87	2.93	0.00	7.59	38.44
LGA_Wollongong	-27.62	19.37	-1.43	0.15	-65.60	10.37
LGA_Woollahra	-12.39	5.69	-2.18	0.03	-23.54	-1.24
LGA_Yass Valley	-13.03	9.88	-1.32	0.19	-32.41	6.36
TIME_UNIT_2021_Q2	-3.11	3.08	-1.01	0.31	-9.15	2.92
TIME_UNIT_2021_Q3	-2.04	5.05	-0.41	0.69	-11.95	7.86
TIME_UNIT_2021_Q4	-2.16	3.49	-0.62	0.54	-9.00	4.68
TIME_UNIT_2022_Q1	8.20	4.47	1.84	0.07	-0.56	16.96
TIME_UNIT_2022_Q2	16.71	4.39	3.80	0.00	8.09	25.32

Discover

Dependent variable:	Discover_business_moneyTT	R-squared:	0.680
Model:	OLS	Adj. R-squared:	0.657
Method:	Least Squares	F-statistic:	29.54
Date:	Wed, 13 Sep 2023	Prob (F-statistic):	0
Time:	15:42:50	Log-Likelihood:	-6073
No. Observations:	2295	AIC:	12460
Df Residuals:	2140	BIC:	13350
Df Model:	154		
Covariance Type:	Non-robust		

Variables	coeff	std err	t	P> t	[0.025	0.975]
const	-3.15	4.51	-0.70	0.49	-11.98	5.69
SEIFA_IRSAD	0.01	0.01	0.96	0.34	-0.01	0.03
INCOME_TOTAL_ANNUAL_GROSS	0.00	0.00	-0.41	0.68	0.00	0.00
Prop_OS_Excl_Not_Stated	-16.93	42.28	-0.40	0.69	-99.85	66.00
lockdown	-4.60	0.86	-5.35	0.00	-6.29	-2.92
30_39_PROP	1.25	2.21	0.57	0.57	-3.09	5.59
40_59_PROP	2.48	2.78	0.89	0.37	-2.97	7.94
OVER_60_PROP	0.62	2.11	0.29	0.77	-3.52	4.76
TREATMENT_redemptions_discover_P01_2021_03_01	61.92	22.27	2.78	0.01	18.26	105.59
TREATMENT_redemptions_discover_P02_2021_04_01	61.87	6.23	9.93	0.00	49.65	74.10
TREATMENT_redemptions_discover_P03_2021_05_01	36.98	4.47	8.27	0.00	28.21	45.75
TREATMENT_redemptions_discover_P04_2021_06_01	40.32	4.67	8.64	0.00	31.16	49.47
TREATMENT_redemptions_discover_P05_2021_07_01	20.54	14.03	1.46	0.14	-6.97	48.04
TREATMENT_redemptions_discover_P06_2021_08_01	-36.73	33.93	-1.08	0.28	-103.27	29.81
TREATMENT_redemptions_discover_P07_2021_09_01	57.11	56.98	1.00	0.32	-54.62	168.84
TREATMENT_redemptions_discover_P08_2021_10_01	23.47	22.72	1.03	0.30	-21.10	68.03
TREATMENT_redemptions_discover_P09_2021_11_01	67.94	11.44	5.94	0.00	45.51	90.37
TREATMENT_redemptions_discover_P10_2021_12_01	64.85	6.02	10.78	0.00	53.06	76.65
TREATMENT_redemptions_discover_P11_2022_01_01	32.04	6.92	4.63	0.00	18.48	45.60
TREATMENT_redemptions_discover_P12_2022_02_01	34.98	10.39	3.37	0.00	14.61	55.36
TREATMENT_redemptions_discover_P13_2022_03_01	93.49	11.25	8.31	0.00	71.44	115.55
TREATMENT_redemptions_discover_P14_2022_04_01	80.54	7.75	10.39	0.00	65.33	95.74
TREATMENT_redemptions_discover_P15_2022_05_01	42.83	7.19	5.95	0.00	28.72	56.93

TREATMENT_redemptions_discover_P16_2022_06_01	30.86	1.82	17.00	0.00	27.31	34.43
RA_Major Cities of Australia	5.31	8.21	0.65	0.52	-10.79	21.40
RA_Outer Regional Australia	-0.86	2.36	-0.37	0.72	-5.49	3.76
RA_Remote Australia	0.79	1.89	0.42	0.68	-2.92	4.49
RA_Very Remote Australia	-2.13	1.54	-1.38	0.17	-5.16	0.90
LGA_Armidale Regional	0.88	1.33	0.66	0.51	-1.74	3.49
LGA_Ballina	2.04	1.30	1.57	0.12	-0.51	4.59
LGA_Balranald	7.68	0.94	8.21	0.00	5.84	9.52
LGA_Bathurst Regional	-0.27	1.83	-0.15	0.88	-3.86	3.32
LGA_Bayside (NSW)	2.96	6.52	0.46	0.65	-9.82	15.75
LGA_Bega Valley	3.38	2.07	1.64	0.10	-0.67	7.44
LGA_Bellingen	3.95	1.92	2.06	0.04	0.19	7.71
LGA_Berrigan	-0.65	2.17	-0.30	0.77	-4.90	3.60
LGA_Blacktown	1.96	4.03	0.49	0.63	-5.95	9.87
LGA_Bland	-0.58	1.41	-0.41	0.68	-3.35	2.19
LGA_Blayney	-0.76	3.30	-0.23	0.82	-7.24	5.71
LGA_Blue Mountains	-3.33	7.00	-0.48	0.64	-17.05	10.40
LGA_Bogan	2.49	1.22	2.04	0.04	0.09	4.88
LGA_Bourke	-5.05	1.93	-2.62	0.01	-8.83	-1.27
LGA_Brewarrina	-1.49	2.04	-0.73	0.47	-5.49	2.51
LGA_Broken Hill	0.11	0.91	0.12	0.90	-1.68	1.90
LGA_Burwood	1.95	8.90	0.22	0.83	-15.50	19.39
LGA_Byron	3.64	3.25	1.12	0.26	-2.74	10.01
LGA_Cabonne	-0.17	3.76	-0.05	0.96	-7.54	7.19
LGA_Camden	-0.43	5.67	-0.08	0.94	-11.54	10.68
LGA_Canada Bay	0.83	1.68	0.50	0.62	-2.46	4.13
LGA_Canterbury-Bankstown	2.24	5.76	0.39	0.70	-9.06	13.54
LGA_Carrathool	-4.11	3.74	-1.10	0.27	-11.45	3.23
LGA_Central Coast (NSW)	-2.78	7.37	-0.38	0.71	-17.23	11.66
LGA_Central Darling	1.81	2.43	0.75	0.46	-2.95	6.58
LGA_Cessnock	1.15	2.36	0.49	0.63	-3.48	5.79
LGA_Clarence Valley	-0.68	1.89	-0.36	0.72	-4.38	3.02
LGA_Cobar	9.49	0.90	10.58	0.00	7.73	11.25
LGA_Coffs Harbour	0.01	1.59	0.01	1.00	-3.11	3.12
LGA_Coolamon	-2.90	3.71	-0.78	0.43	-10.18	4.38
LGA_Coonamble	1.55	1.83	0.85	0.40	-2.03	5.12
LGA_Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional	-2.08	2.53	-0.82	0.41	-7.05	2.88
LGA_Cowra	-1.71	2.36	-0.72	0.47	-6.34	2.92
LGA_Cumberland	3.57	9.26	0.39	0.70	-14.58	21.72
LGA_Dubbo Regional	-1.91	1.82	-1.05	0.29	-5.48	1.65
LGA_Dungog	-1.73	3.66	-0.47	0.64	-8.91	5.46
LGA_Edward River	6.56	3.14	2.09	0.04	0.40	12.72
LGA_Eurobodalla	0.29	1.32	0.22	0.82	-2.30	2.89
LGA_Fairfield	4.56	11.04	0.41	0.68	-17.10	26.22
LGA_Federation	1.28	2.37	0.54	0.59	-3.37	5.94
LGA_Forbes	-2.68	1.56	-1.72	0.09	-5.75	0.38
LGA_Georges River	1.74	6.33	0.28	0.78	-10.68	14.17
LGA_Gilgandra	-2.99	1.71	-1.75	0.08	-6.34	0.36
LGA_Glen Innes Severn	-0.53	0.95	-0.56	0.57	-2.39	1.32
LGA_Goulburn Mulwaree	-0.01	1.36	-0.01	0.99	-2.68	2.66
LGA_Greater Hume Shire	-0.39	3.20	-0.12	0.90	-6.66	5.88
LGA_Griffith	2.06	6.51	0.32	0.75	-10.70	14.83
LGA_Gunnedah	-1.69	1.20	-1.41	0.16	-4.04	0.66
LGA_Gwydir	-0.33	1.68	-0.20	0.84	-3.63	2.97
LGA_Hawkesbury	-2.73	8.66	-0.32	0.75	-19.72	14.26
LGA_Hay	-0.63	0.84	-0.74	0.46	-2.28	1.03
LGA_Hilltops	-2.27	2.31	-0.98	0.33	-6.79	2.26
LGA_Hornsby	2.27	2.71	0.84	0.40	-3.05	7.60
LGA_Hunters Hill	-7.49	4.30	-1.74	0.08	-15.92	0.93
LGA_Inner West	-0.67	1.19	-0.56	0.58	-3.01	1.67
LGA_Inverell	-1.73	0.86	-2.02	0.04	-3.42	-0.05
LGA_Junee	-0.51	1.55	-0.33	0.74	-3.54	2.52
LGA_Kempsey	-1.57	1.82	-0.86	0.39	-5.14	2.01
LGA_Kiama	2.33	1.28	1.82	0.07	-0.18	4.84
LGA_Ku-ring-gai	1.79	2.34	0.77	0.44	-2.79	6.37
LGA_Kyogle	-2.18	1.80	-1.21	0.23	-5.71	1.34

LGA_Lachlan	-2.05	1.29	-1.59	0.11	-4.58	0.48
LGA_Lake Macquarie	-3.45	9.43	-0.37	0.71	-21.94	15.04
LGA_Lane Cove	-0.39	0.91	-0.42	0.67	-2.18	1.40
LGA_Leeton	0.22	1.83	0.12	0.91	-3.38	3.82
LGA_Lismore	0.77	1.42	0.54	0.59	-2.02	3.56
LGA_Lithgow	3.17	1.44	2.20	0.03	0.34	6.00
LGA_Liverpool	2.05	4.91	0.42	0.68	-7.58	11.67
LGA_Liverpool Plains	2.08	1.11	1.87	0.06	-0.10	4.27
LGA_Lockhart	-2.47	1.52	-1.63	0.10	-5.45	0.50
LGA_Maitland	-4.07	9.91	-0.41	0.68	-23.51	15.36
LGA_Mid-Coast	-1.66	1.47	-1.13	0.26	-4.55	1.23
LGA_Mid-Western Regional	-1.98	2.28	-0.87	0.38	-6.45	2.48
LGA_Moree Plains	-2.23	1.07	-2.08	0.04	-4.34	-0.13
LGA_Mosman	-0.98	1.27	-0.77	0.44	-3.46	1.51
LGA_Murray River	-1.71	2.40	-0.72	0.48	-6.41	2.99
LGA_Murrumbidgee	-0.96	0.92	-1.05	0.30	-2.76	0.84
LGA_Muswellbrook	-1.20	1.82	-0.66	0.51	-4.77	2.37
LGA_Nambucca Valley	-0.48	1.75	-0.27	0.78	-3.92	2.96
LGA_Narrabri	-0.37	1.43	-0.26	0.80	-3.17	2.44
LGA_Narrandera	0.62	1.05	0.59	0.55	-1.43	2.67
LGA_Narromine	-2.27	1.70	-1.34	0.18	-5.61	1.06
LGA_Newcastle	-3.90	7.79	-0.50	0.62	-19.18	11.38
LGA_North Sydney	0.09	1.57	0.06	0.96	-3.00	3.17
LGA_Northern Beaches	1.76	2.45	0.72	0.47	-3.05	6.57
LGA_Oberon	2.60	1.39	1.87	0.06	-0.13	5.33
LGA_Orange	2.09	1.81	1.15	0.25	-1.47	5.65
LGA_Parkes	-0.58	0.99	-0.59	0.56	-2.51	1.36
LGA_Parramatta	3.26	8.63	0.38	0.71	-13.67	20.20
LGA_Penrith	0.19	3.29	0.06	0.96	-6.26	6.63
LGA_Port Macquarie-Hastings	-0.70	1.21	-0.58	0.56	-3.08	1.67
LGA_Port Stephens	1.00	1.24	0.80	0.42	-1.44	3.43
LGA_Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional	-0.53	6.81	-0.08	0.94	-13.89	12.83
LGA_Randwick	0.37	1.88	0.20	0.85	-3.31	4.05
LGA_Richmond Valley	-0.29	2.63	-0.11	0.91	-5.46	4.87
LGA_Ryde	2.33	5.66	0.41	0.68	-8.77	13.43
LGA_Shellharbour	-3.18	6.91	-0.46	0.65	-16.73	10.37
LGA_Shoalhaven	1.10	1.22	0.90	0.37	-1.30	3.50
LGA_Singleton	-0.45	2.23	-0.20	0.84	-4.82	3.92
LGA_Snowy Monaro Regional	6.93	2.26	3.07	0.00	2.50	11.36
LGA_Snowy Valleys	-0.85	1.70	-0.50	0.62	-4.19	2.49
LGA_Strathfield	4.81	12.50	0.39	0.70	-19.71	29.34
LGA_Sutherland Shire	-0.69	6.80	-0.10	0.92	-14.03	12.65
LGA_Sydney	1.68	5.90	0.29	0.78	-9.88	13.25
LGA_Tamworth Regional	-0.96	2.04	-0.47	0.64	-4.95	3.03
LGA_Temora	1.89	1.19	1.60	0.11	-0.43	4.22
LGA_Tenterfield	-1.88	1.12	-1.68	0.09	-4.08	0.31
LGA_The Hills Shire	2.56	1.97	1.30	0.20	-1.31	6.43
LGA_Tweed	-3.51	7.09	-0.50	0.62	-17.42	10.39
LGA_Unincorporated NSW	-2.45	3.09	-0.80	0.43	-8.50	3.60
LGA_Upper Hunter Shire	1.75	1.86	0.94	0.35	-1.90	5.40
LGA_Upper Lachlan Shire	-1.74	2.84	-0.61	0.54	-7.31	3.83
LGA_Uralla	-0.95	1.01	-0.94	0.35	-2.93	1.04
LGA_Wagga Wagga	-1.08	1.46	-0.74	0.46	-3.94	1.77
LGA_Walcha	3.80	1.28	2.98	0.00	1.30	6.31
LGA_Walgett	-3.57	1.06	-3.36	0.00	-5.66	-1.49
LGA_Warren	-3.42	1.07	-3.20	0.00	-5.51	-1.32
LGA_Warrumbungle Shire	-2.04	0.93	-2.18	0.03	-3.87	-0.21
LGA_Waverley	1.84	2.30	0.80	0.43	-2.68	6.36
LGA_Weddin	-0.57	1.20	-0.47	0.64	-2.93	1.79
LGA_Wentworth	-2.16	0.99	-2.17	0.03	-4.11	-0.21
LGA_Willoughby	2.12	5.86	0.36	0.72	-9.38	13.61
LGA_Wingecarribee	4.23	1.72	2.47	0.01	0.87	7.60
LGA_Wollondilly	2.83	1.91	1.48	0.14	-0.91	6.58
LGA_Wollongong	-2.47	4.69	-0.53	0.60	-11.67	6.72
LGA_Woollahra	-1.02	1.37	-0.75	0.46	-3.71	1.67
LGA_Yass Valley	0.32	2.39	0.13	0.89	-4.36	5.01

TIME_UNIT_2021_Q2	-0.86	0.54	-1.59	0.11	-1.92	0.20
TIME_UNIT_2021_Q3	0.61	0.79	0.77	0.44	-0.95	2.17
TIME_UNIT_2021_Q4	-0.72	0.45	-1.59	0.11	-1.61	0.17
TIME_UNIT_2022_Q1	0.61	0.61	1.01	0.31	-0.58	1.81
TIME_UNIT_2022_Q2	2.20	0.63	3.49	0.00	0.96	3.44

Stay

Dependent variable:	Stay_business_moneyTT	R-squared:	0.362
Model:	OLS	Adj. R-squared:	0.326
Method:	Least Squares	F-statistic:	10.12
Date:	Wed, 13 Sep 2023	Prob (F-statistic):	1.2E-168
Time:	15:43:10	Log-Likelihood:	-9136.6
No. Observations:	2807	AIC:	18570
Df Residuals:	2657	BIC:	19460
Df Model:	149		
Covariance Type:	Non-robust		

Variables	coeff	Std err	t	P> t	[0.025	0.975]
const	-2.84	6.76	-0.42	0.68	-16.10	10.43
SEIFA_IRSAD	0.01	0.02	0.51	0.61	-0.02	0.04
INCOME_TOTAL_ANNUAL_GROSS	0.00	0.00	-0.22	0.83	0.00	0.00
Prop_OS_Excl_Not_Stayed	-2.45	63.42	-0.04	0.97	-126.80	121.90
lockdown	-3.10	0.86	-3.60	0.00	-4.80	-1.41
30_39_PROP	3.11	3.52	0.88	0.38	-3.80	10.02
40_59_PROP	6.13	4.51	1.36	0.18	-2.72	14.98
OVER_60_PROP	0.25	3.43	0.07	0.94	-6.47	6.97
TREATMENT_redemptions_stay_P01_2022_02_01	-813.26	715.43	-1.14	0.26	-2216.11	589.59
TREATMENT_redemptions_stay_P02_2022_03_01	292.13	82.81	3.53	0.00	129.75	454.51
TREATMENT_redemptions_stay_P03_2022_04_01	185.35	86.12	2.15	0.03	16.48	354.22
TREATMENT_redemptions_stay_P04_2022_05_01	99.16	63.21	1.57	0.12	-24.79	223.11
TREATMENT_redemptions_stay_P05_2022_06_01	150.70	61.03	2.47	0.01	31.03	270.37
TREATMENT_redemptions_stay_P06_2022_07_01	131.09	68.59	1.91	0.06	-3.40	265.59
TREATMENT_redemptions_stay_P07_2022_08_01	211.40	92.75	2.28	0.02	29.53	393.26
TREATMENT_redemptions_stay_P08_2022_09_01	78.89	56.35	1.40	0.16	-31.60	189.37
TREATMENT_redemptions_stay_P09_2022_10_01	191.28	62.35	3.07	0.00	69.02	313.55
RA_Major Cities of Australia	1.58	12.31	0.13	0.90	-22.55	25.72
RA_Outer Regional Australia	1.47	3.59	0.41	0.68	-5.57	8.52
RA_Remote Australia	1.23	2.87	0.43	0.67	-4.41	6.86
RA_Very Remote Australia	2.76	2.37	1.16	0.25	-1.89	7.40
LGA_Armidale Regional	-1.78	2.17	-0.82	0.41	-6.03	2.47
LGA_Ballina	3.07	2.12	1.45	0.15	-1.08	7.23
LGA_Balranald	-5.15	1.51	-3.42	0.00	-8.10	-2.20
LGA_Bathurst Regional	0.48	2.86	0.17	0.87	-5.13	6.08
LGA_Bayside (NSW)	0.13	9.82	0.01	0.99	-19.12	19.39
LGA_Bega Valley	-1.86	3.13	-0.60	0.55	-8.00	4.28
LGA_Bellingen	3.55	2.94	1.21	0.23	-2.22	9.31
LGA_Berrigan	9.48	3.35	2.83	0.01	2.90	16.05
LGA_Blacktown	-0.15	6.09	-0.03	0.98	-12.09	11.79
LGA_Bland	-1.00	2.20	-0.46	0.65	-5.31	3.31
LGA_Blayney	-1.03	5.02	-0.21	0.84	-10.87	8.82
LGA_Blue Mountains	-1.07	10.52	-0.10	0.92	-21.69	19.55
LGA_Bogan	1.65	1.92	0.86	0.39	-2.12	5.43
LGA_Bourke	-1.35	2.95	-0.46	0.65	-7.14	4.45
LGA_Brewarrina	-2.75	3.14	-0.88	0.38	-8.91	3.41
LGA_Broken Hill	0.33	1.49	0.23	0.82	-2.58	3.25
LGA_Burwood	-0.80	13.09	-0.06	0.95	-26.47	24.88

LGA_Byron	10.79	4.92	2.19	0.03	1.14	20.45
LGA_Cabonne	0.69	5.72	0.12	0.90	-10.53	11.91
LGA_Camden	-0.26	8.50	-0.03	0.98	-16.93	16.41
LGA_Canada Bay	0.91	2.58	0.35	0.73	-4.15	5.96
LGA_Canterbury-Bankstown	-0.44	8.65	-0.05	0.96	-17.40	16.53
LGA_Carrathool	-3.72	5.63	-0.66	0.51	-14.77	7.32
LGA_Central Coast (NSW)	0.75	11.05	0.07	0.95	-20.91	22.41
LGA_Central Darling	-4.57	3.69	-1.24	0.22	-11.79	2.66
LGA_Cessnock	0.96	3.64	0.26	0.79	-6.17	8.09
LGA_Clarence Valley	5.19	2.96	1.75	0.08	-0.61	10.98
LGA_Cobar	10.03	1.47	6.81	0.00	7.15	12.92
LGA_Coffs Harbour	7.03	2.53	2.79	0.01	2.08	11.99
LGA_Coolamon	-2.14	5.63	-0.38	0.70	-13.17	8.89
LGA_Coonamble	-3.07	2.78	-1.11	0.27	-8.53	2.38
LGA_Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional	7.19	3.89	1.85	0.07	-0.44	14.81
LGA_Cowra	-1.80	3.63	-0.50	0.62	-8.92	5.31
LGA_Cumberland	-1.09	13.90	-0.08	0.94	-28.34	26.16
LGA_Dubbo Regional	0.07	2.84	0.03	0.98	-5.49	5.64
LGA_Dungog	-4.07	5.55	-0.73	0.46	-14.96	6.82
LGA_Edward River	1.04	4.79	0.22	0.83	-8.35	10.43
LGA_Eurobodalla	0.93	2.15	0.43	0.67	-3.30	5.15
LGA_Fairfield	0.00	16.60	0.00	1.00	-32.54	32.54
LGA_Federation	3.86	3.65	1.06	0.29	-3.30	11.02
LGA_Forbes	2.00	2.41	0.83	0.41	-2.72	6.71
LGA_Georges River	-0.96	9.52	-0.10	0.92	-19.62	17.70
LGA_Gilgandra	-3.22	2.62	-1.23	0.22	-8.35	1.91
LGA_Glen Innes Severn	-1.83	1.54	-1.19	0.23	-4.85	1.18
LGA_Goulburn Mulwaree	1.37	2.20	0.63	0.53	-2.93	5.68
LGA_Greater Hume Shire	-0.38	4.87	-0.08	0.94	-9.93	9.17
LGA_Griffith	-0.26	9.79	-0.03	0.98	-19.45	18.94
LGA_Gunnedah	-2.72	1.88	-1.44	0.15	-6.40	0.97
LGA_Gwydir	0.81	2.60	0.31	0.75	-4.29	5.91
LGA_Hawkesbury	-1.17	12.99	-0.09	0.93	-26.64	24.30
LGA_Hay	4.56	1.38	3.30	0.00	1.85	7.27
LGA_Hilltops	-2.69	3.56	-0.76	0.45	-9.67	4.29
LGA_Hornsby	-1.44	4.12	-0.35	0.73	-9.52	6.64
LGA_Hunters Hill	-3.85	6.45	-0.60	0.55	-16.50	8.80
LGA_Inner West	-0.51	1.87	-0.28	0.78	-4.19	3.16
LGA_Inverell	12.16	1.41	8.66	0.00	9.40	14.91
LGA_Junee	-2.38	2.46	-0.97	0.33	-7.19	2.44
LGA_Kempsey	1.14	2.86	0.40	0.69	-4.47	6.76
LGA_Kiama	6.87	2.10	3.27	0.00	2.74	10.99
LGA_Ku-ring-gai	-0.18	3.50	-0.05	0.96	-7.04	6.69
LGA_Kyogle	-0.46	2.81	-0.16	0.87	-5.97	5.05
LGA_Lachlan	-1.49	2.02	-0.74	0.46	-5.45	2.47
LGA_Lake Macquarie	3.23	14.13	0.23	0.82	-24.48	30.94
LGA_Lane Cove	-2.37	1.49	-1.60	0.11	-5.28	0.54
LGA_Leeton	-1.50	2.81	-0.53	0.59	-7.00	4.01
LGA_Lismore	0.72	2.28	0.31	0.75	-3.75	5.19
LGA_Lithgow	1.18	2.30	0.51	0.61	-3.34	5.70
LGA_Liverpool	0.33	7.40	0.05	0.96	-14.17	14.83
LGA_Liverpool Plains	-1.32	1.76	-0.75	0.46	-4.77	2.14
LGA_Lockhart	-4.73	2.35	-2.01	0.04	-9.34	-0.12
LGA_Maitland	-1.30	14.85	-0.09	0.93	-30.43	27.82
LGA_Mid-Coast	0.79	2.36	0.34	0.74	-3.83	5.42
LGA_Mid-Western Regional	3.18	3.52	0.90	0.37	-3.72	10.08
LGA_Moree Plains	6.77	1.70	3.97	0.00	3.43	10.11
LGA_Mosman	-3.27	2.01	-1.63	0.10	-7.21	0.66
LGA_Murray River	18.02	3.72	4.84	0.00	10.72	25.33
LGA_Murrumbidgee	-1.54	1.49	-1.04	0.30	-4.46	1.38
LGA_Muswellbrook	-0.39	2.85	-0.14	0.89	-5.98	5.20
LGA_Nambucca Valley	-2.12	2.71	-0.78	0.43	-7.42	3.19
LGA_Narrabri	2.23	2.22	1.01	0.31	-2.11	6.58
LGA_Narrandera	-1.46	1.66	-0.88	0.38	-4.72	1.80
LGA_Narromine	7.71	2.60	2.96	0.00	2.61	12.82
LGA_Newcastle	-0.18	11.68	-0.02	0.99	-23.07	22.72

LGA_North Sydney	2.44	2.43	1.01	0.32	-2.32	7.21
LGA_Northern Beaches	0.15	3.72	0.04	0.97	-7.14	7.45
LGA_Oberon	2.20	2.24	0.98	0.33	-2.19	6.59
LGA_Orange	1.49	2.84	0.53	0.60	-4.08	7.07
LGA_Parkes	0.74	1.59	0.46	0.64	-2.37	3.85
LGA_Parramatta	-0.71	12.92	-0.06	0.96	-26.04	24.62
LGA_Penrith	-0.26	4.96	-0.05	0.96	-10.00	9.47
LGA_Port Macquarie-Hastings	9.25	2.00	4.63	0.00	5.33	13.16
LGA_Port Stephens	1.66	2.03	0.82	0.41	-2.32	5.65
LGA_Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional	-0.58	10.25	-0.06	0.96	-20.67	19.51
LGA_Randwick	0.24	2.90	0.08	0.93	-5.45	5.92
LGA_Richmond Valley	-0.42	4.04	-0.10	0.92	-8.33	7.50
LGA_Ryde	0.72	8.52	0.09	0.93	-15.98	17.43
LGA_Shellharbour	6.39	10.35	0.62	0.54	-13.91	26.69
LGA_Shoalhaven	0.49	2.01	0.24	0.81	-3.46	4.43
LGA_Singleton	-1.69	3.45	-0.49	0.62	-8.45	5.06
LGA_Snowy Monaro Regional	-0.96	3.46	-0.28	0.78	-7.74	5.83
LGA_Snowy Valleys	2.68	2.68	1.00	0.32	-2.58	7.94
LGA_Strathfield	-2.74	18.74	-0.15	0.88	-39.50	34.01
LGA_Sutherland Shire	1.55	10.20	0.15	0.88	-18.45	21.55
LGA_Sydney	0.70	8.86	0.08	0.94	-16.67	18.06
LGA_Tamworth Regional	-0.79	3.16	-0.25	0.80	-7.00	5.41
LGA_Temora	-4.07	1.87	-2.18	0.03	-7.73	-0.42
LGA_Tenterfield	-3.61	1.78	-2.03	0.04	-7.09	-0.13
LGA_The Hills Shire	-0.03	3.05	-0.01	0.99	-6.01	5.94
LGA_Tweed	0.22	10.65	0.02	0.98	-20.66	21.10
LGA_Unincorporated NSW	10.07	4.70	2.14	0.03	0.85	19.29
LGA_Upper Hunter Shire	3.33	2.91	1.15	0.25	-2.37	9.03
LGA_Upper Lachlan Shire	-0.77	4.36	-0.18	0.86	-9.31	7.77
LGA_Uralla	1.71	1.63	1.05	0.30	-1.49	4.91
LGA_Wagga Wagga	-0.77	2.33	-0.33	0.74	-5.35	3.81
LGA_Walcha	1.34	2.00	0.67	0.50	-2.57	5.25
LGA_Walgett	-2.32	1.63	-1.42	0.16	-5.51	0.87
LGA_Warren	2.87	1.70	1.69	0.09	-0.47	6.20
LGA_Warrumbungle Shire	-4.11	1.51	-2.71	0.01	-7.08	-1.14
LGA_Waverley	2.10	3.52	0.60	0.55	-4.81	9.01
LGA_Weddin	-3.53	1.90	-1.86	0.06	-7.25	0.20
LGA_Wentworth	1.15	1.61	0.71	0.48	-2.01	4.31
LGA_Willoughby	-0.89	8.84	-0.10	0.92	-18.22	16.43
LGA_Wingecarribee	0.64	2.70	0.24	0.81	-4.66	5.94
LGA_Wollondilly	0.87	2.98	0.29	0.77	-4.97	6.72
LGA_Wollongong	1.12	7.07	0.16	0.87	-12.74	14.98
LGA_Woollahra	4.86	2.13	2.28	0.02	0.68	9.04
LGA_Yass Valley	2.10	3.69	0.57	0.57	-5.14	9.33
TIME_UNIT_2021_Q2	-0.73	0.47	-1.56	0.12	-1.64	0.19
TIME_UNIT_2021_Q3	-1.69	0.66	-2.58	0.01	-2.98	-0.40
TIME_UNIT_2021_Q4	-0.41	0.47	-0.86	0.39	-1.34	0.52
TIME_UNIT_2022_Q1	0.67	0.59	1.13	0.26	-0.49	1.83
TIME_UNIT_2022_Q2	0.64	1.16	0.56	0.58	-1.62	2.91
TIME_UNIT_2022_Q3	3.54	1.31	2.70	0.01	0.97	6.11
TIME_UNIT_2022_Q4	1.02	1.77	0.58	0.56	-2.45	4.49

Parents (Discover businesses)

Dependent variable:	Discover_business_moneyTT	R-squared:	0.624
Model:	OLS	Adj. R-squared:	0.603
Method:	Least Squares	F-statistic:	29.57
Date:	Wed, 13 Sep 2023	Prob (F-statistic):	0
Time:	15:43:32	Log-Likelihood:	-7734.3
No. Observations:	2807	AIC:	15770
Df Residuals:	2657	BIC:	16660
Df Model:	149		
Covariance Type:	Non-robust		

Variable	coeff	std err	t	P> t	[0.025	0.975]
const	-2.06	4.10	-0.50	0.62	-10.11	5.98
SEIFA_IRSAD	0.00	0.01	0.49	0.62	-0.01	0.02
INCOME_TOTAL_ANNUAL_GROSS	0.00	0.00	-1.12	0.26	0.00	0.00
Prop_OS_Excl_Not_Stated	10.68	38.48	0.28	0.78	-64.78	86.14
lockdown	-8.64	0.52	-16.50	0.00	-9.67	-7.62
30_39_PROP	2.00	2.14	0.93	0.35	-2.20	6.20
40_59_PROP	-0.21	2.74	-0.08	0.94	-5.58	5.16
OVER_60_PROP	3.35	2.08	1.62	0.11	-0.72	7.43
TREATMENT_redemptions_parents_house_share_P01_2022_02_01	-4.28	5.04	-0.85	0.40	-14.15	5.60
TREATMENT_redemptions_parents_house_share_P02_2022_03_01	19.59	3.26	6.01	0.00	13.20	25.97
TREATMENT_redemptions_parents_house_share_P03_2022_04_01	13.21	2.37	5.59	0.00	8.58	17.85
TREATMENT_redemptions_parents_house_share_P04_2022_05_01	5.42	3.47	1.56	0.12	-1.38	12.22
TREATMENT_redemptions_parents_house_share_P05_2022_06_01	36.89	3.32	11.13	0.00	30.39	43.40
TREATMENT_redemptions_parents_house_share_P06_2022_07_01	24.59	3.92	6.27	0.00	16.90	32.28
TREATMENT_redemptions_parents_house_share_P07_2022_08_01	17.77	8.04	2.21	0.03	2.00	33.55
TREATMENT_redemptions_parents_house_share_P08_2022_09_01	8.54	4.03	2.12	0.03	0.64	16.44
TREATMENT_redemptions_parents_house_share_P09_2022_10_01	8.85	3.85	2.30	0.02	1.29	16.41
RA_Major Cities of Australia	2.09	7.47	0.28	0.78	-12.56	16.73
RA_Outer Regional Australia	-0.07	2.18	-0.03	0.97	-4.34	4.20
RA_Remote Australia	1.55	1.74	0.89	0.37	-1.86	4.97
RA_Very Remote Australia	-2.57	1.44	-1.79	0.07	-5.39	0.25
LGA_Armidale Regional	0.02	1.32	0.01	0.99	-2.56	2.60
LGA_Ballina	3.23	1.29	2.52	0.01	0.71	5.75
LGA_Balranald	4.48	0.91	4.90	0.00	2.69	6.27
LGA_Bathurst Regional	2.02	1.73	1.17	0.24	-1.38	5.42
LGA_Bayside (NSW)	-1.45	5.96	-0.24	0.81	-13.13	10.23
LGA_Bega Valley	3.12	1.90	1.64	0.10	-0.61	6.85
LGA_Bellingen	3.63	1.78	2.04	0.04	0.13	7.13
LGA_Berrigan	-0.77	2.03	-0.38	0.71	-4.76	3.22
LGA_Blacktown	-0.30	3.70	-0.08	0.94	-7.55	6.94
LGA_Bland	0.62	1.33	0.46	0.64	-2.00	3.23
LGA_Blayney	1.09	3.05	0.36	0.72	-4.89	7.06
LGA_Blue Mountains	1.30	6.38	0.20	0.84	-11.21	13.81
LGA_Bogan	3.96	1.16	3.41	0.00	1.68	6.24
LGA_Bourke	-4.63	1.79	-2.58	0.01	-8.14	-1.11
LGA_Brewarrina	-0.07	1.91	-0.04	0.97	-3.81	3.66
LGA_Broken Hill	0.88	0.90	0.97	0.33	-0.89	2.64
LGA_Burwood	-3.13	7.94	-0.39	0.69	-18.71	12.45
LGA_Byron	2.10	2.99	0.70	0.48	-3.76	7.96
LGA_Cabonne	2.31	3.47	0.67	0.51	-4.49	9.12
LGA_Camden	3.64	5.16	0.71	0.48	-6.48	13.75
LGA_Canada Bay	-0.35	1.56	-0.22	0.82	-3.42	2.72
LGA_Canterbury-Bankstown	-1.73	5.25	-0.33	0.74	-12.02	8.57
LGA_Carrathool	-6.04	3.42	-1.77	0.08	-12.74	0.66
LGA_Central Coast (NSW)	1.84	6.70	0.27	0.78	-11.31	14.98
LGA_Central Darling	2.48	2.24	1.11	0.27	-1.90	6.87
LGA_Cessnock	4.01	2.21	1.82	0.07	-0.32	8.33
LGA_Clarence Valley	-0.04	1.79	-0.02	0.98	-3.56	3.48
LGA_Cobar	10.32	0.89	11.54	0.00	8.56	12.07

<i>LGA_Coffs Harbour</i>	-0.36	1.53	-0.24	0.81	-3.37	2.64
<i>LGA_Coolamon</i>	0.92	3.41	0.27	0.79	-5.77	7.61
<i>LGA_Coonamble</i>	2.94	1.69	1.74	0.08	-0.37	6.25
<i>LGA_Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional</i>	-1.52	2.36	-0.64	0.52	-6.14	3.11
<i>LGA_Cowra</i>	-1.34	2.20	-0.61	0.54	-5.66	2.97
<i>LGA_Cumberland</i>	-2.28	8.43	-0.27	0.79	-18.81	14.26
<i>LGA_Dubbo Regional</i>	-0.32	1.72	-0.19	0.85	-3.69	3.06
<i>LGA_Dungog</i>	0.53	3.37	0.16	0.88	-6.08	7.13
<i>LGA_Edward River</i>	8.27	2.91	2.85	0.00	2.58	13.97
<i>LGA_Eurobodalla</i>	-0.09	1.30	-0.07	0.94	-2.65	2.46
<i>LGA_Fairfield</i>	-2.67	10.07	-0.27	0.79	-22.42	17.08
<i>LGA_Federation</i>	1.46	2.22	0.66	0.51	-2.89	5.80
<i>LGA_Forbes</i>	-1.24	1.46	-0.85	0.40	-4.11	1.62
<i>LGA_Georges River</i>	-1.45	5.77	-0.25	0.80	-12.77	9.87
<i>LGA_Gilgandra</i>	-1.53	1.59	-0.96	0.34	-4.65	1.58
<i>LGA_Glen Innes Severn</i>	-1.02	0.93	-1.10	0.27	-2.85	0.81
<i>LGA_Goulburn Mulwaree</i>	0.63	1.33	0.47	0.64	-1.98	3.24
<i>LGA_Greater Hume Shire</i>	1.80	2.96	0.61	0.54	-3.99	7.60
<i>LGA_Griffith</i>	-0.35	5.94	-0.06	0.95	-12.00	11.30
<i>LGA_Gunnedah</i>	-0.64	1.14	-0.56	0.57	-2.88	1.59
<i>LGA_Gwydir</i>	-0.15	1.58	-0.10	0.93	-3.25	2.95
<i>LGA_Hawkesbury</i>	2.81	7.88	0.36	0.72	-12.64	18.27
<i>LGA_Hay</i>	-0.79	0.84	-0.94	0.35	-2.44	0.86
<i>LGA_Hilltops</i>	-1.19	2.16	-0.55	0.58	-5.42	3.04
<i>LGA_Hornsby</i>	0.80	2.50	0.32	0.75	-4.11	5.70
<i>LGA_Hunters Hill</i>	-2.67	3.92	-0.68	0.50	-10.35	5.00
<i>LGA_Inner West</i>	-0.24	1.14	-0.21	0.83	-2.47	1.99
<i>LGA_Inverell</i>	-2.05	0.85	-2.41	0.02	-3.73	-0.38
<i>LGA_Junee</i>	-0.65	1.49	-0.44	0.66	-3.58	2.27
<i>LGA_Kempsey</i>	-1.09	1.73	-0.63	0.53	-4.50	2.31
<i>LGA_Kiama</i>	4.52	1.27	3.56	0.00	2.04	7.01
<i>LGA_Ku-ring-gai</i>	1.27	2.12	0.60	0.55	-2.90	5.43
<i>LGA_Kyogle</i>	-1.52	1.70	-0.89	0.37	-4.86	1.82
<i>LGA_Lachlan</i>	-1.54	1.23	-1.25	0.21	-3.94	0.87
<i>LGA_Lake Macquarie</i>	1.94	8.57	0.23	0.82	-14.87	18.75
<i>LGA_Lane Cove</i>	-1.08	0.90	-1.20	0.23	-2.85	0.68
<i>LGA_Leeton</i>	0.81	1.70	0.48	0.64	-2.53	4.15
<i>LGA_Lismore</i>	1.51	1.38	1.09	0.28	-1.21	4.22
<i>LGA_Lithgow</i>	3.77	1.40	2.70	0.01	1.03	6.51
<i>LGA_Liverpool</i>	-1.14	4.49	-0.25	0.80	-9.93	7.66
<i>LGA_Liverpool Plains</i>	3.86	1.07	3.62	0.00	1.77	5.96
<i>LGA_Lockhart</i>	-1.05	1.43	-0.73	0.46	-3.85	1.75
<i>LGA_Maitland</i>	2.17	9.01	0.24	0.81	-15.50	19.84
<i>LGA_Mid-Coast</i>	-1.01	1.43	-0.71	0.48	-3.81	1.79
<i>LGA_Mid-Western Regional</i>	-0.07	2.13	-0.03	0.97	-4.25	4.11
<i>LGA_Moree Plains</i>	-3.34	1.03	-3.23	0.00	-5.37	-1.31
<i>LGA_Mosman</i>	-0.75	1.22	-0.62	0.54	-3.14	1.64
<i>LGA_Murray River</i>	-1.59	2.26	-0.70	0.48	-6.02	2.85
<i>LGA_Murrumbidgee</i>	0.07	0.90	0.08	0.94	-1.70	1.85
<i>LGA_Muswellbrook</i>	0.00	1.73	0.00	1.00	-3.39	3.39
<i>LGA_Nambucca Valley</i>	-1.00	1.64	-0.61	0.54	-4.22	2.22
<i>LGA_Narrabri</i>	0.62	1.35	0.46	0.64	-2.01	3.26
<i>LGA_Narrandera</i>	0.30	1.01	0.30	0.77	-1.68	2.28
<i>LGA_Narromine</i>	-0.89	1.58	-0.56	0.57	-3.99	2.21
<i>LGA_Newcastle</i>	0.41	7.09	0.06	0.95	-13.48	14.30
<i>LGA_North Sydney</i>	0.03	1.48	0.02	0.99	-2.87	2.92
<i>LGA_Northern Beaches</i>	3.84	2.26	1.70	0.09	-0.59	8.27
<i>LGA_Oberon</i>	3.36	1.36	2.48	0.01	0.70	6.03
<i>LGA_Orange</i>	3.64	1.72	2.11	0.04	0.26	7.02
<i>LGA_Parkes</i>	0.70	0.96	0.73	0.47	-1.19	2.59
<i>LGA_Parramatta</i>	-2.00	7.84	-0.26	0.80	-17.37	13.38
<i>LGA_Penrith</i>	2.40	3.01	0.80	0.43	-3.50	8.31
<i>LGA_Port Macquarie-Hastings</i>	0.34	1.21	0.29	0.78	-2.02	2.71
<i>LGA_Port Stephens</i>	2.30	1.23	1.87	0.06	-0.11	4.71
<i>LGA_Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional</i>	1.32	6.22	0.21	0.83	-10.86	13.51
<i>LGA_Randwick</i>	-0.74	1.76	-0.42	0.67	-4.19	2.71

LGA_Richmond Valley	0.76	2.45	0.31	0.76	-4.04	5.56
LGA_Ryde	-0.97	5.17	-0.19	0.85	-11.10	9.17
LGA_Shellharbour	1.57	6.28	0.25	0.80	-10.74	13.89
LGA_Shoalhaven	1.31	1.22	1.07	0.28	-1.08	3.69
LGA_Singleton	1.97	2.09	0.94	0.35	-2.12	6.07
LGA_Snowy Monaro Regional	6.04	2.10	2.88	0.00	1.93	10.16
LGA_Snowy Valleys	-1.05	1.63	-0.65	0.52	-4.24	2.14
LGA_Strathfield	-2.16	11.37	-0.19	0.85	-24.46	20.14
LGA_Sutherland Shire	4.40	6.19	0.71	0.48	-7.74	16.53
LGA_Sydney	-2.11	5.37	-0.39	0.70	-12.65	8.43
LGA_Tamworth Regional	0.75	1.92	0.39	0.70	-3.01	4.51
LGA_Temora	1.63	1.13	1.45	0.15	-0.58	3.85
LGA_Tenterfield	-3.35	1.08	-3.11	0.00	-5.46	-1.24
LGA_The Hills Shire	2.37	1.85	1.28	0.20	-1.25	5.99
LGA_Tweed	-0.77	6.46	-0.12	0.91	-13.44	11.90
LGA_Unincorporated NSW	-4.98	2.85	-1.75	0.08	-10.57	0.62
LGA_Upper Hunter Shire	3.32	1.76	1.89	0.06	-0.13	6.78
LGA_Upper Lachlan Shire	-0.59	2.64	-0.22	0.82	-5.77	4.59
LGA_Uralla	-1.11	0.99	-1.12	0.26	-3.05	0.83
LGA_Wagga Wagga	-0.26	1.42	-0.18	0.85	-3.04	2.52
LGA_Walcha	3.69	1.21	3.05	0.00	1.32	6.06
LGA_Walgett	-5.00	0.99	-5.04	0.00	-6.95	-3.06
LGA_Warren	-2.99	1.03	-2.89	0.00	-5.01	-0.96
LGA_Warrumbungle Shire	-2.78	0.92	-3.02	0.00	-4.58	-0.98
LGA_Waverley	0.11	2.14	0.05	0.96	-4.09	4.30
LGA_Weddin	-1.72	1.15	-1.49	0.14	-3.98	0.54
LGA_Wentworth	-2.98	0.98	-3.05	0.00	-4.90	-1.06
LGA_Willoughby	-1.35	5.36	-0.25	0.80	-11.86	9.16
LGA_Wingecarribee	5.01	1.64	3.05	0.00	1.79	8.22
LGA_Wollondilly	6.07	1.81	3.36	0.00	2.52	9.61
LGA_Wollongong	-0.07	4.29	-0.02	0.99	-8.48	8.34
LGA_Woollahra	-0.72	1.29	-0.55	0.58	-3.25	1.82
LGA_Yass Valley	1.14	2.24	0.51	0.61	-3.25	5.52
TIME_UNIT_2021_Q2	3.61	0.28	12.76	0.00	3.06	4.17
TIME_UNIT_2021_Q3	2.73	0.40	6.85	0.00	1.95	3.51
TIME_UNIT_2021_Q4	1.88	0.29	6.55	0.00	1.32	2.44
TIME_UNIT_2022_Q1	2.90	0.37	7.80	0.00	2.17	3.63
TIME_UNIT_2022_Q2	4.81	0.66	7.30	0.00	3.52	6.10
TIME_UNIT_2022_Q3	2.55	0.93	2.75	0.01	0.73	4.36
TIME_UNIT_2022_Q4	3.25	1.37	2.37	0.02	0.57	5.94

Parents (Stay businesses)

Dependent variable:	Stay_business_moneyTT	R-squared:	0.363
Model:	OLS	Adj. R-squared:	0.327
Method:	Least Squares	F-statistic:	10.14
Date:	Wed, 13 Sep 2023	Prob (F-statistic):	5.6E-169
Time:	15:43:53	Log-Likelihood:	-9135.7
No. Observations:	2807	AIC:	18570
Df Residuals:	2657	BIC:	19460
Df Model:	149		
Covariance Type:		Non-robust	

Variable	coeff	std err	t	P> t	[0.025	0.975]
const	-3.34	6.76	-0.49	0.62	-16.60	9.92
SEIFA_IRSAD	0.01	0.02	0.58	0.56	-0.02	0.04
INCOME_TOTAL_ANNUAL_GROSS	0.00	0.00	-0.53	0.59	0.00	0.00

Prop_OS_Excl_Not_Stated	-6.61	63.40	-0.10	0.92	-130.93	117.71
lockdown	-3.03	0.86	-3.52	0.00	-4.73	-1.34
30_39_PROP	3.48	3.53	0.99	0.33	-3.45	10.40
40_59_PROP	5.89	4.51	1.31	0.19	-2.96	14.74
OVER_60_PROP	0.37	3.42	0.11	0.91	-6.34	7.08
TREATMENT_redemptions_parents_house_share_P01_2022_02_01	-21.74	8.30	-2.62	0.01	-38.01	-5.47
TREATMENT_redemptions_parents_house_share_P02_2022_03_01	13.97	5.37	2.60	0.01	3.45	24.49
TREATMENT_redemptions_parents_house_share_P03_2022_04_01	6.49	3.90	1.67	0.10	-1.15	14.13
TREATMENT_redemptions_parents_house_share_P04_2022_05_01	4.79	5.71	0.84	0.40	-6.41	15.99
TREATMENT_redemptions_parents_house_share_P05_2022_06_01	11.58	5.46	2.12	0.03	0.87	22.29
TREATMENT_redemptions_parents_house_share_P06_2022_07_01	-3.45	6.46	-0.53	0.59	-16.12	9.22
TREATMENT_redemptions_parents_house_share_P07_2022_08_01	-1.18	13.25	-0.09	0.93	-27.17	24.80
TREATMENT_redemptions_parents_house_share_P08_2022_09_01	-4.96	6.64	-0.75	0.46	-17.98	8.06
TREATMENT_redemptions_parents_house_share_P09_2022_10_01	19.44	6.35	3.06	0.00	6.99	31.89
RA_Major Cities of Australia	2.68	12.30	0.22	0.83	-21.45	26.80
RA_Outer Regional Australia	1.52	3.59	0.42	0.67	-5.52	8.56
RA_Remote Australia	1.36	2.87	0.47	0.64	-4.27	6.99
RA_Very Remote Australia	2.57	2.37	1.09	0.28	-2.07	7.22
LGA_Armidale Regional	-1.49	2.17	-0.69	0.49	-5.74	2.76
LGA_Ballina	3.23	2.12	1.52	0.13	-0.92	7.38
LGA_Balranald	-5.46	1.50	-3.63	0.00	-8.41	-2.51
LGA_Bathurst Regional	0.82	2.85	0.29	0.77	-4.77	6.42
LGA_Bayside (NSW)	0.61	9.82	0.06	0.95	-18.64	19.86
LGA_Bega Valley	-1.40	3.13	-0.45	0.66	-7.54	4.74
LGA_Bellingen	3.59	2.94	1.22	0.22	-2.17	9.35
LGA_Berrigan	9.32	3.35	2.78	0.01	2.75	15.89
LGA_Blacktown	0.10	6.09	0.02	0.99	-11.84	12.03
LGA_Bland	-0.88	2.19	-0.40	0.69	-5.18	3.43
LGA_Blayney	-0.83	5.02	-0.17	0.87	-10.67	9.01
LGA_Blue Mountains	-1.63	10.51	-0.16	0.88	-22.25	18.98
LGA_Bogan	2.00	1.92	1.05	0.30	-1.75	5.76
LGA_Bourke	-1.43	2.95	-0.48	0.63	-7.22	4.37
LGA_Brewarrina	-2.61	3.14	-0.83	0.41	-8.76	3.55
LGA_Broken Hill	0.02	1.49	0.01	0.99	-2.89	2.93
LGA_Burwood	-0.06	13.09	0.00	1.00	-25.72	25.61
LGA_Byron	10.93	4.92	2.22	0.03	1.28	20.58
LGA_Cabonne	0.75	5.72	0.13	0.90	-10.47	11.96
LGA_Camden	-0.69	8.50	-0.08	0.94	-17.36	15.97
LGA_Canada Bay	1.07	2.58	0.41	0.68	-3.99	6.12
LGA_Canterbury-Bankstown	-0.08	8.65	-0.01	0.99	-17.04	16.87
LGA_Carrathool	-3.60	5.63	-0.64	0.52	-14.64	7.44
LGA_Central Coast (NSW)	0.27	11.04	0.03	0.98	-21.37	21.92
LGA_Central Darling	-4.66	3.68	-1.27	0.21	-11.88	2.56
LGA_Cessnock	1.29	3.63	0.36	0.72	-5.83	8.41
LGA_Clarence Valley	5.27	2.96	1.78	0.08	-0.53	11.06
LGA_Cobar	10.26	1.47	6.96	0.00	7.37	13.14
LGA_Coffs Harbour	7.50	2.52	2.97	0.00	2.55	12.45
LGA_Coolamon	-2.24	5.62	-0.40	0.69	-13.26	8.79
LGA_Coonamble	-3.38	2.78	-1.21	0.23	-8.83	2.08
LGA_Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional	7.42	3.89	1.91	0.06	-0.20	15.03
LGA_Cowra	-1.64	3.63	-0.45	0.65	-8.74	5.47
LGA_Cumberland	-0.48	13.89	-0.03	0.97	-27.71	26.76
LGA_Dubbo Regional	0.34	2.84	0.12	0.90	-5.22	5.91
LGA_Dungog	-3.92	5.55	-0.71	0.48	-14.80	6.97
LGA_Edward River	0.82	4.79	0.17	0.87	-8.57	10.20
LGA_Eurobodalla	1.52	2.15	0.71	0.48	-2.69	5.73
LGA_Fairfield	0.81	16.59	0.05	0.96	-31.72	33.34
LGA_Federation	3.78	3.65	1.04	0.30	-3.38	10.94
LGA_Forbes	1.91	2.41	0.79	0.43	-2.81	6.63
LGA_Georges River	-0.29	9.51	-0.03	0.98	-18.94	18.36
LGA_Gilgandra	-3.43	2.62	-1.31	0.19	-8.57	1.70
LGA_Glen Innes Severn	-1.68	1.54	-1.10	0.27	-4.70	1.33
LGA_Goulburn Mulwaree	1.56	2.19	0.71	0.48	-2.74	5.86
LGA_Greater Hume Shire	-0.70	4.87	-0.14	0.89	-10.25	8.85
LGA_Griffith	0.36	9.79	0.04	0.97	-18.84	19.55
LGA_Gunnedah	-2.72	1.88	-1.45	0.15	-6.41	0.96

LGA_Gwydir	0.82	2.60	0.31	0.75	-4.29	5.92
LGA_Hawkesbury	-2.06	12.99	-0.16	0.87	-27.52	23.40
LGA_Hay	4.66	1.39	3.37	0.00	1.94	7.37
LGA_Hilltops	-2.55	3.55	-0.72	0.47	-9.52	4.42
LGA_Hornsby	-1.03	4.12	-0.25	0.80	-9.10	7.05
LGA_Hunters Hill	-4.30	6.45	-0.67	0.51	-16.94	8.35
LGA_Inner West	-0.81	1.87	-0.43	0.67	-4.48	2.87
LGA_Inverell	12.25	1.40	8.72	0.00	9.50	15.00
LGA_Junee	-2.22	2.46	-0.90	0.37	-7.03	2.59
LGA_Kempsey	1.40	2.86	0.49	0.62	-4.20	7.00
LGA_Kiama	7.64	2.09	3.66	0.00	3.54	11.74
LGA_Ku-ring-gai	0.21	3.50	0.06	0.95	-6.65	7.06
LGA_Kyogle	-0.74	2.81	-0.26	0.79	-6.24	4.76
LGA_Lachlan	-1.58	2.02	-0.78	0.44	-5.54	2.38
LGA_Lake Macquarie	2.75	14.13	0.20	0.85	-24.95	30.45
LGA_Lane Cove	-2.27	1.49	-1.53	0.13	-5.18	0.64
LGA_Leeton	-1.09	2.81	-0.39	0.70	-6.60	4.41
LGA_Lismore	0.58	2.28	0.25	0.80	-3.89	5.05
LGA_Lithgow	1.52	2.30	0.66	0.51	-3.00	6.03
LGA_Liverpool	0.61	7.39	0.08	0.93	-13.88	15.11
LGA_Liverpool Plains	-1.38	1.76	-0.78	0.43	-4.83	2.07
LGA_Lockhart	-4.92	2.35	-2.09	0.04	-9.53	-0.31
LGA_Maitland	-1.88	14.85	-0.13	0.90	-30.99	27.24
LGA_Mid-Coast	1.32	2.35	0.56	0.57	-3.29	5.93
LGA_Mid-Western Regional	3.48	3.51	0.99	0.32	-3.41	10.37
LGA_Moree Plains	6.52	1.70	3.83	0.00	3.18	9.86
LGA_Mosman	-3.28	2.01	-1.64	0.10	-7.22	0.65
LGA_Murray River	17.86	3.72	4.80	0.00	10.56	25.16
LGA_Murrumbidgee	-1.58	1.49	-1.06	0.29	-4.50	1.34
LGA_Muswellbrook	-0.07	2.85	-0.03	0.98	-5.66	5.51
LGA_Nambucca Valley	-1.91	2.71	-0.71	0.48	-7.22	3.39
LGA_Narrabri	2.25	2.22	1.02	0.31	-2.09	6.60
LGA_Narrandera	-1.55	1.67	-0.93	0.35	-4.82	1.71
LGA_Narrromine	7.62	2.60	2.93	0.00	2.52	12.73
LGA_Newcastle	-0.68	11.67	-0.06	0.95	-23.57	22.20
LGA_North Sydney	2.55	2.43	1.05	0.29	-2.22	7.32
LGA_Northern Beaches	-0.07	3.72	-0.02	0.99	-7.36	7.23
LGA_Oberon	2.50	2.24	1.12	0.26	-1.88	6.89
LGA_Orange	1.85	2.84	0.65	0.51	-3.71	7.42
LGA_Parkes	0.90	1.59	0.57	0.57	-2.21	4.01
LGA_Parramatta	0.18	12.91	0.01	0.99	-25.15	25.50
LGA_Penrith	-0.66	4.96	-0.13	0.89	-10.40	9.07
LGA_Port Macquarie-Hastings	9.91	1.99	4.99	0.00	6.01	13.81
LGA_Port Stephens	2.29	2.02	1.13	0.26	-1.68	6.26
LGA_Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional	-1.25	10.24	-0.12	0.90	-21.33	18.82
LGA_Randwick	0.23	2.90	0.08	0.94	-5.45	5.92
LGA_Richmond Valley	-0.63	4.03	-0.16	0.88	-8.54	7.28
LGA_Ryde	1.36	8.52	0.16	0.87	-15.34	18.06
LGA_Shellharbour	6.10	10.35	0.59	0.56	-14.19	26.39
LGA_Shoalhaven	1.05	2.01	0.52	0.60	-2.89	4.98
LGA_Singleton	-1.27	3.44	-0.37	0.71	-8.02	5.48
LGA_Snowy Monaro Regional	-0.72	3.46	-0.21	0.83	-7.51	6.06
LGA_Snowy Valleys	2.98	2.68	1.11	0.27	-2.27	8.24
LGA_Strathfield	-1.65	18.74	-0.09	0.93	-38.39	35.09
LGA_Sutherland Shire	1.08	10.20	0.11	0.92	-18.92	21.07
LGA_Sydney	1.07	8.85	0.12	0.90	-16.29	18.44
LGA_Tamworth Regional	-0.50	3.16	-0.16	0.88	-6.69	5.70
LGA_Temora	-3.87	1.86	-2.08	0.04	-7.52	-0.22
LGA_Tenterfield	-3.77	1.77	-2.12	0.03	-7.25	-0.29
LGA_The Hills Shire	0.37	3.05	0.12	0.90	-5.60	6.34
LGA_Tweed	-0.76	10.65	-0.07	0.94	-21.63	20.12
LGA_Unincorporated NSW	9.84	4.70	2.09	0.04	0.62	19.05
LGA_Upper Hunter Shire	3.55	2.90	1.22	0.22	-2.14	9.25
LGA_Upper Lachlan Shire	-0.72	4.35	-0.17	0.87	-9.26	7.81
LGA_Uralla	1.68	1.63	1.03	0.30	-1.52	4.88
LGA_Wagga Wagga	-0.58	2.33	-0.25	0.81	-5.15	4.00

LGA_Walcha	1.24	2.00	0.62	0.53	-2.67	5.16
LGA_Walgett	-2.50	1.63	-1.53	0.13	-5.71	0.70
LGA_Warren	2.83	1.70	1.66	0.10	-0.50	6.17
LGA_Warrumbungle Shire	-4.15	1.51	-2.74	0.01	-7.11	-1.18
LGA_Waverley	2.13	3.52	0.60	0.55	-4.78	9.03
LGA_Weddin	-3.73	1.90	-1.97	0.05	-7.45	-0.01
LGA_Wentworth	0.69	1.61	0.43	0.67	-2.47	3.85
LGA_Willoughby	-0.30	8.83	-0.03	0.97	-17.62	17.02
LGA_Wingecarribee	1.05	2.70	0.39	0.70	-4.24	6.35
LGA_Wollondilly	1.16	2.98	0.39	0.70	-4.68	7.00
LGA_Wollongong	0.84	7.07	0.12	0.91	-13.01	14.70
LGA_Woollahra	4.57	2.13	2.15	0.03	0.40	8.75
LGA_Yass Valley	2.22	3.69	0.60	0.55	-5.01	9.45
TIME_UNIT_2021_Q2	-0.72	0.47	-1.55	0.12	-1.64	0.19
TIME_UNIT_2021_Q3	-1.72	0.66	-2.63	0.01	-3.01	-0.44
TIME_UNIT_2021_Q4	-0.40	0.47	-0.85	0.40	-1.33	0.53
TIME_UNIT_2022_Q1	1.27	0.61	2.07	0.04	0.06	2.47
TIME_UNIT_2022_Q2	1.36	1.09	1.25	0.21	-0.77	3.49
TIME_UNIT_2022_Q3	6.65	1.52	4.36	0.00	3.66	9.64
TIME_UNIT_2022_Q4	-0.52	2.26	-0.23	0.82	-4.95	3.91

Appendix E: Common benefit categories

NSW CBA guidance outlines common benefit categories included in cost-benefit analyses. The evaluation considered the extent to which the benefit categories are relevant to the voucher programs.

Table E.1: Common benefit categories

Item	Description	Included?	Justification
Savings or avoided costs	Expected reductions in public or private expenditure due to an initiative. This could be due to improved efficiency or reduced need for future services (e.g. an early intervention program reducing the future need for acute health, education, community or justice services).	No	The evaluation dismissed savings or avoided costs as a benefit. The voucher programs were designed to stimulate economic activity and consumer spending rather than generate savings or avoided costs.
Government revenue	Incremental extra revenue to the NSW Government resulting from the initiative that would not be realised in the base case. Generally included only when extra revenue is raised from non-NSW parties, as fees or taxes paid by NSW residents would be a transfer (from the payer to the Government) rather than a cost or benefit.	No	The evaluation dismissed government revenue as a benefit. The voucher programs were not designed to generate government revenue.
Consumer surplus	When a consumer receives a good or service at a lower price than the maximum they are willing to pay. Initiatives that improve a service may increase consumer surplus. For example, travel time savings, improved green or public space, improved theatre or museum offerings.	Yes	Consumer surplus is included as a benefit of the voucher program. Consumers who redeemed vouchers received consumer surplus to the extent they spent above the voucher value.
Producer surplus	When the price that a producer receives for a good or service is greater than the cost of production.	Yes	Producer surplus is included as a benefit of the voucher program. Consumer spending including voucher value is a transfer from consumers and government to businesses. The gross operating surplus that producers generated from this spending is a net benefit.
Labour surplus	When a worker's actual wages are greater than the minimum they are willing to accept to do the job (i.e., their reservation wage).	No	The evaluation dismissed labour surplus as a benefit of the voucher programs. A program can generate labour surplus if:

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it increases demand for labour such that wage rates increase relative to the reservation wage • it increases employment in terms of hours worked or number of employees, conditional on the workers employed not displacing workers elsewhere in the economy. <p>There is insufficient evidence to support including labour surplus in the cost-benefit analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • data on the reservation wage of workers at participating businesses during the relevant time period is not available • the voucher programs were unlikely to have caused excess demand for workers in the relevant industries at the time.
Benefits to the broader community	<p>The benefits of public services, such as emergency services, health and education services, and public transport, that flow to the community as a whole rather than to the users of the services only. For example, public transport can generate lower pollution and reduced congestion.</p> <p>These benefits accruing to third parties are known as positive externalities.</p> <p>Note: when a price is charged for a public service, but that price does not reflect the full value of positive externalities, the price alone will not reflect the full benefits of the service.</p>	Yes	<p>The evaluation assesses benefits to the broader community from the voucher programs primarily using qualitative evidence and survey data.</p> <p>Benefits to the broader community considered are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • people getting out and about in a COVID-safe way • reinforcing compliance with NSW Public Health Orders • Consumer and business confidence • Parents feeling recognised and supported • Increased registration and use of MyServiceNSW.
Residual value	<p>When an asset still has value at the end of the CBA analysis period. This could be because the asset is still producing benefits or because it can be resold.</p>	No	<p>The evaluation dismissed residual value as a benefit of the voucher programs.</p> <p>The voucher programs were time limited and designed to generate immediate benefits by stimulating consumer spending and supporting businesses impacted by the pandemic. The vouchers had no value upon their expiry.</p>

Appendix F: Cost-benefit analysis assumptions

The CBA is based on the following assumptions.

A **discount rate** of 7% is used in line with the NSW Government's previous CBA guidelines (TPP17-03), as this was the guidance when the programs were launched. The discount rate is applied inversely, i.e. costs and benefits from 2021 and 2022 are increased at 7% per year.

An **inflation rate** of 5.32% is applied, based on the ABS Consumer Price Index between January 2021 and January 2023²⁵³

A **dead-weight loss** assumption of between 14% and 15% is applied based on previous academic literature (see 8.1.1). This accounts for the fact that people are likely to value vouchers at a discount to their face value (incorporated into consumer surplus estimates)

A **leakage rate** accounts for business profits leaking outside NSW. Using ABS data, the share of business profits in each relevant sector that goes to foreign-owned businesses is calculated. The 'leakage rate' as follows:²⁵⁴

$$\text{Leakage rate}_{vi} = \frac{\text{foreign owned business profit after tax}_{vi}}{\text{Total profit after tax}_{vi}}$$

where:

vi = The relevant sector for the voucher program

- *Accommodation and Food Services – Dine, Stay and Parents*
- *Arts and recreation services – Discover and Parents*

The evaluation uses a leakage rate assumption of 13.4% for the accommodation and food sector, and 7.3% for the arts and recreation sector.

The leakage rate is likely understated as it does not account for interstate leakage (i.e. profits that go to other states within Australia). There is no data available on profits for Australian owned businesses that flow to other states from NSW. This approach was tested with NSW Treasury stakeholders.

An **EBIT ratio** is calculated for each relevant sector using ABS Australian Industry data (2021-22). This represents the amount of profit generated for a business for every unit of income. Producer surplus estimates assume that the average ratio of profits to income for an industry remained stable during the voucher programs.

The sub-industry classifications used to calculate an EBIT ratio for each target sector are:

- Dine: 'Food and beverages'
- Discover: weighted average of 'Creative and performing arts activities', 'Heritage activities' and 'Sports and recreation activities'
- Stay: 'Accommodation'
- The EBIT ratio assumptions are:
 - Dine: 11.19%
 - Discover: 11.72%
 - Stay: 12.90%
 - Parents: average of Parents and Stay.

²⁵³ ABS CPI Index, Sydney CPI index for January 2021, January 2022 and January 2023.

²⁵⁴ This approach to calculate the leakage rate was tested and validated with NSW Treasury CEE

Appendix G: Table of report findings and recommendations

Table G. 1: Table of report findings and recommendations

RELEVANCE	
FINDINGS	
Was the D&D program’s policy intent relevant and appropriate?	<p>When the D&D voucher program was conceived, NSW was experiencing low consumer confidence. Spending in recreation businesses was at 37% of its pre-pandemic level. Spending in restaurants, cafes and pubs had recovered and was 8% above the pre-pandemic level.</p> <p>In this context, the policy intent to stimulate consumer demand and support businesses affected by COVID-19 was relevant. Stimulating demand aligns with creating a “strong, resilient and diverse economy”.</p> <p>It was also aligned with broader government priorities, including getting residents out and about in a COVID-safe manner.</p> <p>Recreation businesses were more affected by the COVID-19 pandemic than restaurants, cafes and pubs. Spending on recreation businesses remained depressed when the D&D program was conceived. Spending on restaurants, cafes and pubs had recovered to pre-pandemic levels. Supporting restaurants, cafes and pubs was less relevant to creating a “strong, resilient and diverse economy”.</p>
Did the D&D program remain relevant?	<p>The relevance of the D&D voucher program’s policy intent between February and June 2021 was mixed. Consumer spending on restaurants, cafes and pubs was at 98% of pre-pandemic levels when the program was launched in February 2021. Spending on recreation businesses had not recovered. It was at 35% of pre-pandemic levels in February 2021. Supporting recreation businesses was more relevant for creating a “strong, resilient and diverse economy”.</p> <p>The program continued to be aligned with broader government priorities of incentivising COVID-safe practices.</p> <p>The original policy mechanism of incentivising consumer spending and supporting businesses by encouraging in-person spending was no longer relevant to the circumstances. More broadly, public health conditions became the central policy focus and concern. In the circumstances, programs aimed at stimulating consumer spending and supporting businesses were not a government priority. However, consumer spending was depressed, including on hotels, cafes, restaurants and recreation businesses.</p> <p>The D&D program was adapted at the start of the Delta outbreak with the addition of takeaway. This was appropriate to ensure alignment with the NSW Government’s public health priorities.</p> <p>However, takeaway businesses were not adversely affected by the pandemic. While public health restrictions were in place following the Delta outbreak, consumer spending on takeaway businesses was above 100% of January 2020 levels.</p> <p>An extension of the D&D program in October 2021 was not relevant given the economic circumstances at the time.</p> <p>Aggregate demand was recovering across NSW. Restaurants, cafes and pubs in particular did not require further stimulus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • spending on fast food and takeaway businesses was at 100% of the pre-pandemic level • consumer spending on restaurants and cafes was recovering, at 68% of the pre-pandemic level. <p>The policy intent remained relevant for recreation businesses, where consumer spending was at 10% of pre-pandemic levels.</p>
	<p>When the Stay program was first conceived, spending on accommodation businesses was at 58% of the pre-pandemic level. Overnight domestic travel in Sydney fell by 60% in the year to 31 March 2021. The policy intent to support accommodation providers in the CBD was relevant.</p>

<p>Was the Stay program's policy intent and outcomes relevant?</p>	<p>There was also a case for supporting accommodation providers in regional NSW. Domestic overnight visitor numbers in regional NSW fell by 20% in the year to 31 March 2021.</p> <p>The Stay program was also aligned with broader government priorities, including getting residents out and about in a COVID-safe manner.</p> <p>When the revised Stay program was announced in October 2021, spending on accommodation businesses had fallen to 31% of the pre-pandemic level. Domestic overnight visitors in the month of September 2021 had fallen by 82% compared to September 2020. The policy intent to support accommodation providers across NSW was relevant.</p>
<p></p>	<p>The secondary policy goal of the Stay program to encourage discretionary travel across NSW, in order to incentivise additional spending in other industries, was relevant. The Stay program encouraged residents to go on overnight trips, where they were likely to spend money in local economies. The secondary policy goal was relevant to the State Outcome of creating a "strong, resilient and diverse economy".</p>
<p>Did the Stay program remain relevant?</p>	<p>The policy intent to support accommodation providers in NSW was less relevant by the time the Stay program launched. Consumer spending on accommodation businesses was recovering, reaching 75% of the pre-pandemic level. Domestic overnight visitation to NSW was approximately 6% higher in January 2022 than January 2021. International borders reopened as the Stay program commenced.</p> <p>The accommodation sector was recovering during the Stay program rollout. NSW had the highest number of domestic overnight visitors in April 2022 since May 2019. Occupancy in NSW rose by 14% in the quarter to 30 June 2022. Spending on accommodation businesses reached 114% of its pre-pandemic level in July 2022. The policy intent to support accommodation businesses statewide was no longer relevant.</p>
<p>Was the Parents program's policy intent and outcomes relevant?</p>	<p>The businesses targeted by the Parents program had been negatively impacted by the pandemic and consumer spending remained below the pre-pandemic level. Spending on accommodation and recreation businesses was beginning to recover when the Parents program was announced. Domestic overnight visitation to NSW fell due to the Delta outbreak. NSW received the lowest number of domestic overnight visitors in September 2021 since before the pandemic. However, domestic overnight visitation was three times higher in October 2021.</p> <p>NSW reached double vaccination targets and restrictions were being eased, in the lead up to the summer period. Spending, and domestic overnight visitation, could be expected to continue rising at this time.</p> <p>It was not relevant to support arts, recreation and tourism businesses and accommodation businesses beyond the support provided by the Stay and D&D programs.</p> <p>However, the program was aligned with broader government priorities of encouraging residents to get vaccinated.</p> <p>The Parents program policy intent was not relevant to creating a "strong, resilient and diverse economy".</p> <p>The COVID-19 pandemic impacted families and parents. There was a case for supporting these groups in a relevant and targeted manner. Support can be provided several ways. Policies that ensure adequate infrastructure and services to support mental health and recovery of people impacted would directly address this objective.</p>
<p>Did the Parents program remain relevant?</p>	<p>The policy goal of supporting businesses targeted by the Parents program was of limited relevance during its establishment phase. Consumer spending on accommodation businesses and, to a lesser extent, recreation businesses was recovering between October 2021 and February 2022 before the program was fully launched. In February 2022, spending on accommodation businesses was at 75% of pre-pandemic levels and spending on recreation businesses was at 55% of pre-pandemic levels. The businesses included in the Parents program did not require further support beyond the already operational D&D program and the Stay program which launched in February 2022.</p> <p>While the Parents program was underway from February to October 2022, spending on recreation businesses and on accommodation businesses continued to rise towards pre-pandemic levels. By July 2022, spending on recreation was at 76% of its pre-pandemic (January 2020) level and spending on accommodation business had exceeded January 2020 levels. The D&D program and the Stay program were operating at the same time.</p> <p>The policy goal of supporting businesses targeted by the Parents program continued to have limited relevance.</p>

Was the design of the D&D, Stay and Parents programs appropriate to achieve their policy intent and outcomes?

The economic contraction in the sectors addressed by the D&D, Stay, and Parents programs was driven by low consumer demand. Direct support measures were already in place to mitigate the impact of this on businesses. Given this, it was reasonable to provide additional indirect support by stimulating consumer demand.

This was also aligned with broader government priorities, including getting residents out and about and encouraging COVID-safe practices.

Vouchers were the most appropriate vehicle for stimulating consumer spending in a way that achieved the policy intent of all three programs.

D&D and Stay vouchers were targeted in line with the policy intent. Targeting vouchers to specific industries means that businesses in these industries are most likely to receive support.

The appropriateness of the decision not to means test cannot be assessed due to a lack of evidence. However, this decision was pragmatic given the need to rapidly deliver the stimulus programs.

The value of D&D and Parents vouchers appeared to be more effective in influencing consumer behaviour than the value of the Stay vouchers.

Providing multiple D&D vouchers was appropriate to achieving the policy intent as consumers were encouraged to make separate transactions in order to get the full value.

Dividing the Parents program across five separate vouchers, and allowing pooling of vouchers, encouraged uptake and redemption among eligible residents. However, it may have affected the extent of additional out-of-pocket spending.

Given the low value of the Stay voucher, providing one Stay voucher did not encourage uptake among NSW residents.

The cliff marginal rate of reimbursement structure was aligned with other voucher programs. It was an appropriate structure given resident familiarity and experience with implementation.

This structure may have affected resident incentives, the programs' ability to achieve their policy intent, the effectiveness, and the efficiency of the programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In line with NSW Government evaluation guidelines, a program should be evaluated, and the evaluation findings should be communicated, before extending it. The evaluation should assess the extent to which the program will remain relevant for the duration of the extension period. Economic circumstances and public health restrictions changed quickly during the COVID-19 pandemic. This affected the feasibility and appropriateness of undertaking standard evaluation procedures at the time.

Accommodation businesses across NSW were affected by public health restrictions and changes in consumer behaviour following the onset of COVID-19. The original policy intent of Stay and Rediscover restricted support to eligible accommodation businesses in the Sydney CBD. Future programs should consider the equity implications of eligibility criteria based on geography.

Carefully consider a program's policy intent and the appropriate means of delivering on it.

Data collection for future voucher programs should include information on user income to inform evaluation and policy design.

Determine the value of vouchers in the context of the standard cost of the goods or services being targeted. Vouchers with a low face value relative to the typical purchase price are likely to achieve lower registration and redemption rates. Vouchers with a higher face value relative to the typical purchase price may result in lower out-of-pocket spending. Consideration of voucher value should take into account the potential multiplier effect on consumer spending.

Determine the number of vouchers provided and flexibility of voucher use in the context of the specific sectors being targeted having regard to consumer behaviour and spending patterns.

Examine different options for the marginal rate of reimbursement structure of future voucher programs, having regard to the policy intent and specific context in which the program is being designed.

IMPLEMENTATION

FINDINGS

Were there appropriate governance arrangements and processes to design, establish and implement the programs?	The rapidly evolving circumstances meant standard processes for designing a program were streamlined. The NSW Government perceived a need to roll the programs out quickly in order to encourage consumers to get out and about and spending in a COVID-safe manner. This was appropriate to the circumstances.
	The NSW Government considered and relied upon on relevant information and experience to develop the program. This included previous NSW Government experience in designing and administering voucher programs, and international uses of voucher programs to stimulate consumer spending during COVID-19.
	The NSW Government viewed that it was necessary to establish the D&D program quickly. The program was established through an expedited approval process. This was appropriate given the circumstances.
	Governance arrangements were appropriate, with advisory and oversight committees convened to help establish the programs.
	NSW Government processes to implement the voucher programs were adaptive and reactive to changing circumstances. In some instances, approval processes were expedited.
To what extent was the program implemented as intended? Was it implemented within intended timeframes and costs?	The voucher programs were implemented as intended. The NSW Government rolled out the voucher programs' technology successfully. It adhered to the inputs and activities as intended by the voucher program logics.
	The NSW Government worked collaboratively to design the voucher programs. NSW Treasury and Service NSW worked together closely to design and implement the voucher programs.
	Service NSW implemented the Parents program expeditiously and under capacity constraints. Parents vouchers had different eligibility criteria which affected the product build. Edge cases created implementation issues for the Parents voucher program. A Project Control Group was established when Stay and Parents programs were launched to help assess and address implementation issues.
	The programs were implemented within or close to intended timeframes and within committed budgets. Timeframes shifted for reasons including NSW Government capacity constraints and evolving health and economic circumstances.
To what extent was an appropriate data collection and evaluation framework established and implemented?	There was ongoing data collection and monitoring throughout each of the voucher programs. This assisted decision-making and facilitated evaluation.
	There were some gaps and access issues in relation to data collected and no formal evaluation framework was established.
	Given the circumstances, the level of monitoring was appropriate.
What is the degree of business and consumer satisfaction with the program's delivery?	Consultation and feedback received from businesses and consumers who participated in the voucher programs indicated a high level of satisfaction with the programs' delivery. Some issues were reported with registration and redemption but these were mostly mitigated early in the program's implementation.
Were risks identified and managed? Were there any unintended side-effects (positive or negative) of	The complaints monitoring element of the NSW Government's compliance framework did not work as intended. Few complaints were received from residents or businesses with respect to non-compliance in the programs.
	The NSW Government sought to measure non-compliance of businesses participating in the D&D program through mystery shopping exercises. Of those audited, many businesses were found to be non-compliant. 48% were accepting vouchers for takeaway and 15% were not adhering to QR code requirements. Limited action was taken to remediate this beyond warning letters.

implementing the program?	A consequence of the original design of the D&D program was that it incentivised consumers and businesses to dine out in a way that was contrary to NSW Health advice following the Delta outbreak. This was a known potential consequence of the D&D program as outbreaks of COVID-19 could not be foreseen. The NSW Government identified the incentive problem and reacted by changing the program's scope.
	An unintended consequence of the implementation of the programs was that it created more benefit for individuals or businesses with higher levels of digital literacy. Some action was taken to remediate, including making vouchers available to residents through non-digital formats.
	An unintended consequence of the design of the programs was that it created more benefit for individuals and businesses in metropolitan areas.
	The value of the Stay vouchers may have affected ability to redeem. Individuals with higher disposable incomes are more likely to be able to afford to pay the difference between the voucher value and the purchase value. This has equity implications.
To what extent was the program adapted to account for changing circumstances through its lifetime?	The NSW Government demonstrated its ability to adapt to changing COVID-19 conditions to ensure the voucher programs remained relevant and effective.
	The NSW Government demonstrated its ability to monitor and adapt to ongoing feedback to ensure the voucher programs remained relevant and effective.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Document key lessons, findings and processes for all voucher programs to inform future initiatives.
Efforts should be made to ensure relevant costs can be identified for large scale initiatives, to enable accurate and timely reporting, monitoring and evaluation.
When setting up data collection frameworks, be mindful of the potential need to share disaggregated program data to facilitate evaluation.
Privacy issues that might prohibit the collection or sharing of relevant program data for evaluation should be considered early. Where possible, this should be addressed in the monitoring and evaluation plan created during the program's design.
Dedicate resources to detecting and addressing non-compliance. Where compliance issues are identified, carefully consider the need for program changes, communications (broad or targeted) to program users, and stronger action to remediate.
Ensure terms and conditions are clearly communicated to program users. Where possible, communicate to the public the measures that will be taken to detect, investigate and action non-compliance by all program users.
In designing policy interventions, policymakers should be cognisant of how accessibility, awareness and take-up in different demographic groups may be affected by mechanism design. Consider tailoring mechanism design, such as incentives and support structures for regional or remote areas, to account for geographical differences and ensure equitable outcomes.

EFFECTIVENESS

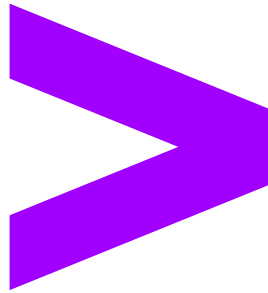
FINDINGS

To what extent did the program reach intended audiences, both businesses and individuals? To what extent did audiences access the program?	<p>Awareness of the D&D program was high among NSW residents, particularly at the start and end of the D&D program. The NSW Government rolled out a dedicated marketing campaign for the D&D program.</p> <p>Awareness was relatively low for the Stay program according to survey data. The Stay program did not have a dedicated marketing campaign but received more media attention relative to the other programs. A dedicated marketing campaign may have contributed to higher awareness the Stay program.</p> <p>People with school-aged children were more likely to be aware of the Parents program. Among the general population, awareness of the Parents program was low.</p> <p>The D&D program exceeded its registration and redemption targets set by the NSW Government.</p>
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<p>To what extent did reach and access vary between groups with different geographic, demographic and socioeconomic characteristics?</p>	<p>The degree of reach and access varied with geographic and demographic factors. D&D registration and redemption was higher in metropolitan areas than regional and remote areas. Older people and people with a disability were less likely to register for and redeem D&D vouchers. While culturally and linguistically diverse residents were less likely to register for the D&D program, they redeemed their vouchers at a higher rate.</p> <p>The Stay program failed to meet its registration and redemption targets. The key reason for this was a lack of awareness, followed by insufficient voucher value. This is despite the Stay vouchers receiving more media attention relative to the other vouchers. Some residents reported a lack of available businesses at which to redeem vouchers and/or no interest in travel.</p> <p>Older people and people with a disability were less likely to register for Stay.</p> <p>The Parents program did not meet its registration target but did meet its redemption target.</p> <p>Most eligible survey respondents were aware of the program. Some residents had difficulty registering.</p> <p>Parents living in major cities were more likely to redeem their vouchers than parents living in regional or remote areas. Parents who were younger (40 years old or younger) and those who spoke English as a first language were more likely to report having redeemed any vouchers.</p> <p>There is no clear relationship observed between voucher redemption and income at the LGA level.</p> <p>Individual level data was not available to enable a detailed assessment of the effect of socioeconomic factors on reach and access.</p> <p>The extent of reach and access to the voucher programs by businesses is difficult to examine with the data available. Some businesses reported having difficulties registering for the voucher program. Service NSW provided resources and assistance to help businesses register for the programs.</p>
<p>To what extent did the program result in increased consumer spending?</p>	<p>Mobility data indicates some correlation between the voucher programs and getting people out and about. However, other factors contributed to mobility over the life of the voucher programs. It is unclear to what extent the voucher programs caused people to go out based on footfall traffic.</p> <p>Survey respondents reported that they went out more as a result of the three voucher programs. They reported spending more money as a result of the Stay and Parents voucher programs than they would have otherwise. Less than half reported spending more money as a result of the D&D program.</p> <p>Some residents who redeemed their vouchers would have gone out and spent money without the vouchers. Around 50% of those surveyed under the age of 65 reported that they went out more because of the D&D vouchers. Evidence indicates that elderly residents were more hesitant to go out and redeem their vouchers due to ongoing COVID-19 concern.</p> <p>It is unclear to what extent the vouchers themselves got people out and spending compared to the easing of restrictions and increased vaccination rates.</p>
<p>To what extent did the program result in increased business revenue?</p>	<p>The voucher programs resulted in increased consumer and business revenue in targeted sectors. The total value of transactions for Dine vouchers was high, but Dine vouchers were associated with low additional consumer spend (\$0.59 per dollar of voucher redeemed) relative to other vouchers. Discover vouchers were associated with \$0.76 of additional spend for every dollar of voucher redeemed. Parents vouchers were associated with \$1.33 of additional spend for every dollar of voucher redeemed. Stay vouchers resulted in the greatest increase in consumer spend (and business revenue) with \$2.53 of additional spend for every dollar of voucher redeemed.</p> <p>Additional spending for Dine was concentrated in metropolitan areas of NSW and was highest in inner Sydney LGAs. For Discover, Stay and Parents vouchers, additional spending was more widely dispersed across the State.</p> <p>Voucher programs which target spending in sectors associated with infrequent and higher value purchases appear more likely to drive additional expenditure, compared to highly frequent purchases like dining out.</p> <p>The value of vouchers redeemed for each program as a proportion of total industry spend in the associated sectors was generally low. The total transaction value where a Parents voucher was used over the life of the program was less than 1% of total expenditure on recreation and culture and</p>

	<p>accommodation. The total value of transactions where a Dine or Discover voucher was used represents around 1.2% of total expenditure in the targeted sectors. The total value of transactions where a Stay voucher was used represents approximately 5.5% of total spending.</p> <p>The D&D program was most effective at encouraging spending in its first months of implementation. In May 2021, the proportion of D&D voucher transactions to total spend on food and beverages was relatively high (3.4%). The value of vouchers redeemed as a proportion of total spending increased at the end of each program's life as people used their vouchers prior to their expiry.</p> <p>Dine vouchers were redeemed at a variety of hospitality venues including cafes, restaurants, pubs and clubs and takeaway businesses. Survey data indicates that 59% of Dine vouchers were redeemed at cafés and restaurants.</p> <p>Discover vouchers were redeemed at businesses including cinemas, zoos, aquariums and amusement parks. 50% of Discover vouchers were redeemed at cinemas.</p> <p>77% of Stay vouchers were redeemed at hotels or motels. Stay vouchers were also redeemed at accommodation providers such as caravan parks and holiday rentals.</p> <p>Over 70% of Parents vouchers were spent at Discover businesses rather than Stay businesses.</p>
<p>To what extent did the program result in people confidently and safely getting out and about and spending in a COVID-safe way?</p>	<p>The voucher programs influenced some residents' decision to get out and about and spend in a COVID-safe way. In a survey of NSW residents, respondents reported that the voucher programs made them feel confident that it was COVID-safe to go out and/or travel, when restrictions permitted.</p> <p>Residents and businesses were generally compliant with COVID-safe regulations and observed COVID-safe practices when redeeming their vouchers. It was more difficult for residents to be COVID-safe in instances where businesses did not do best-practice integration or comply with QR code requirements.</p>
EFFICIENCY	
FINDINGS	
<p>Benefits of the programs</p>	<p>The total value of transactions where a voucher was used was \$1.34 billion, of which \$759 million was paid for using vouchers funded by the NSW Government.</p> <p>The voucher programs may have stimulated spending in transactions where a voucher was not used. This additional spending cannot be quantified. Difference-in-difference modelling is a common analytical technique for evaluating the impact of policy interventions like the voucher programs. However, program data and methodological limitations prohibited the evaluation from relying on difference-in-difference modelling results.</p> <p>The total value of consumer surplus across the programs is \$798.4 million.</p> <p>Dine supported more consumer surplus than any other program (\$377.8 million), followed by Discover (\$266.5 million), Parents (\$120 million) and Stay (\$45.2 million).</p> <p>The total value of producer surplus across the programs is \$182.8 million.</p> <p>The Dine program supported the highest amount of producer surplus (\$66.2 million), followed by Discover (\$59.7 million). The Parents program supported \$36.1 million in producer surplus. Stay supported the lowest total producer surplus, at \$20.8 million.</p> <p>The voucher programs created a range of benefits for the broader community (these benefits have not been quantified in the cost-benefit analysis result).</p> <p>The programs encouraged people to get out and about and spend in a COVID-safe way, while reinforcing compliance with Public Health Orders.</p> <p>The voucher programs instilled a level of confidence among consumers and businesses which is likely to have influenced their spending decisions.</p> <p>Some Parents voucher users reported feeling supported by the NSW Government as a result of the vouchers in line with the policy intent.</p>

<p>Costs of the programs</p>	<p>The D&D voucher program incurred higher costs for the NSW Government to implement than the Stay or Parents programs. Dine vouchers cost \$340 million and Discover vouchers cost \$247 million. This reflects the relatively high redemption of D&D vouchers among the NSW population. The D&D program was more costly to implement and operate than Stay or Parents. This reflects the D&D program being the first of the three voucher programs to be stood up, and its relatively long duration.</p> <p>In addition to the costs incurred by the NSW Government, the voucher programs created broader costs that are not quantified. The programs created opportunity costs associated with allocating government resources to the voucher programs and foregoing other initiatives. Consumers and businesses also reallocated resources towards the voucher programs, which may have been inefficient. There was a degree of inequity in the distribution of benefits associated with the voucher programs. Businesses incurred costs to participate in the voucher programs such as implementing COVID-safe measures, integrating the voucher technology and acquiring the tools and skills required to accept vouchers.</p>
<p>To what extent did the benefits of the programs outweigh the costs?</p>	<p>The benefit-cost ratio (BCR) for each voucher program is calculated based on two counterfactuals: one where all spending associated with the vouchers is additional, and one where no spending is additional. The result is presented as a range. It is likely that some proportion of spending associated with the vouchers would have occurred in the absence of the voucher programs. As such, the BCR is likely to fall somewhere within the range.</p> <p>The BCR for the Dine program is between 0.83 and 0.98. The BCR for the Discover program is between 0.83 and 1.01. The BCR for the Stay program is between 0.78 and 1.14. The BCR of the Parents program is between 0.82 and 1.06.</p>
<p>Distribution of consumer surplus</p>	<p>Consumers in metropolitan areas received more benefit from the voucher programs relative to other areas of NSW. Consumers in metropolitan LGAs received a higher share of each program's total consumer surplus than consumers in regional or remote LGAs. Metropolitan LGAs received between 77% and 83% of the total consumer surplus. Consumers in metropolitan LGAs received a slightly higher share of consumer surplus for Dine, Discover and Parents relative to their share of the population. Consumers in remote LGAs received a lower share of consumer surplus (3%) for Dine, Discover and Parents relative to their share of the population (4%).</p> <p>The distribution of consumer surplus associated with Stay voucher was more even across NSW. Consumer surplus from Stay vouchers in regional and remote LGAs represented 19% and 4% of the total consumer surplus for the Stay program, respectively. This is closely proportionate to the spread of the NSW adult population which is approximately 18% regional and 4% remote.</p> <p>Across all areas, Dine and Discover vouchers were associated with the highest average consumer surplus, followed by Parents and Stay vouchers.</p>
<p>Distribution of business surplus</p>	<p>Businesses in metropolitan areas received more benefit from the voucher programs relative to other areas of NSW. Businesses in metropolitan LGAs received a higher share of each program's total producer surplus than those in other parts of NSW. Discover businesses in metropolitan LGAs received 88% of the total producer surplus for Discover. Businesses in remote LGAs received just 1% of Discover's producer surplus.</p> <p>Producer surplus supported by the Stay program was relatively evenly distributed between metropolitan and regional LGAs. Businesses in metropolitan and regional LGAs received 59% and 37% of the total producer surplus for the Stay program, respectively. This reflects the redemption of Stay vouchers being more evenly distributed across the State.</p>



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