

## Supporting the community through the COVID-19 crisis

### Council's rapid response

Council events and some services and beaches have been closed or restricted to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus. This is a changing situation as Council, State and Federal Governments announce protective actions we all need to undertake - the community, business and all organisations.

For our services that remain open we have increased cleaning routines and promoted hygiene awareness. Our Customer Service Centres are available by phone and online.

On 24 March 2020 Council approved two packages to support our local community and economy through the pandemic. These packages extend into 2020/21 and additional support is also provided in the budget.

### Community Care Package

Our priorities are to maintain social connection, safety, essential services and support the vulnerable in our community.

Essential social services continue such as Meals on Wheels, all childcare and vacation care. Adolescent and family counselling continues online and by phone. We have developed a 'check on your neighbour' campaign to stay connected.

We're helping local community, cultural and charity groups with actions plans and staying connected. Together we're distributing 100 boxes of fresh fruit and vegetables every weekday to vulnerable residents.

While libraries are closed, the Home Library Service is expanded and our Library2U service is available, with resources delivered safely to your door. Loan periods have increased, there are reduced 'hold' fees on items, and an increased cap on accumulated fines before borrowing ceases.

As demands on community service providers increase, Council will help to fill the gaps, especially for charity and not-for-profit groups. Initially this is focused on services for the vulnerable, as well as youth and family, seniors, disabled, new migrants, and those experiencing employment or financial issues.

### Free Childcare for Families Package

In partnership with the State and Federal Government, our childcare centres and preschools will provide free services for up to six months from 6 April 2020. This guarantees the continuity of early education particularly for families experiencing financial difficulties.

### Rates, fees and charges package

Under s356 of the Local Government Act, \$4.3 million in financial assistance will be offered to all ratepayers through a subsidy of the equivalent of 50% of the 2020/21 increase in rates and domestic waste charges.

The standard domestic waste management charge in 2020/21 is \$446 per year based on the cost of the service. Applying the subsidy a ratepayer will pay \$425.50.

The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) has determined rates in 2020/21 may increase by a maximum of 2.6%. Applying the rate peg along with the 50% subsidy, ratepayers will collectively pay 1.3% more in rates in 2020/21.

Ratepayers will also have more time to pay the first rates instalment. The due date for payment will be deferred to 30 September 2020 instead of 31 August 2020.

Other fees will remain at 2019/20 pricing for the first three months of the financial year. Deferring increases in fees until 1 October 2020 provides savings of \$0.7 million for the community.

### Business Support Plan

To reduce the impact of COVID-19 on the local economy, \$0.5 million support will be provided to business via temporary waiving of the fees:

- Outdoor Dining fees, up to 30 September 2020
- Footpath Merchandising fees, up to 30 September 2020
- Fire Safety annual fees, up to 30 September 2020
- Environmental Health Inspection (annual fees and first inspection fees), up to 31 August 2020

Our enforcement actions will focus on imminent risks to public or environmental safety, while allowing more flexible operations to local businesses:

- Restaurants/ take-aways: allow take-away service without development consent, and relax the timed parking requirements to allow for pickups.
- Supermarkets and food/ beverage premises: no enforcement of trading hours or delivery times

Other initiatives:

- Local Business Support webpage and Beaches Biz News
- Helping businesses build digital and social media capacity
- Rates and Charges Hardship Policy for eligible small business ratepayers

### Council tenant support package

Targeted support of up to \$1.1 million for Council tenants experiencing financial hardship as a result of the Government mandated closures to stop the spread of COVID-19. Eligible tenants may receive:

- Annual rentals or fees waived, discounted or deferred for up to six months (backdated to commence at 1 April)
- Extension of leases/licenses by six months, where agreements are due to expire within 18 months.

### Keep updated

Our response will continue to evolve. See our webpage '[Managing the Risk – Information on COVID-19](#)' for the latest on Council services, support and information from all levels of government.

## Impact of COVID-19 Crisis on Council's operations

Our financial position in 2020/21 will be temporarily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and result in a projected operating deficit before capital grants and contributions of **\$6.3 million**.

The financial impact of COVID-19 is anticipated to be **\$12.3 million** in 2020/21. Of this, **\$6.6 million** is for supporting the community through various packages detailed in this section.

A further **\$5.7 million** are losses from closed and impacted services:

- **\$2.3 million** car parks, pay and display and other parking related income
- **\$1.6 million** aquatic centres
- **\$0.7 million** development assessments and related income
- **\$0.4 million** community centres
- **\$0.7 million** others including Glen St Theatre and Lakeside Holiday Park