

## **Community Care Package**

Council is committed to caring for everyone in the community, making sure people feel safe, supported and included. Our focus is to ease the impacts of social distancing and isolation, reduce feelings of anxiety and make sure our community has access to important social support services.

Our Community Care Package features a range of measures to maintain social connection, continue delivering essential Council services and take a leading role in coordinating local community support services providing essential services and support to the community.

### **Connecting community**

Council is a trusted and well-connected source of information for the community. With many community gatherings and events cancelled and with the closure of our community and cultural facilities, Council recognises there is an increased risk of people becoming disconnected.

We will address the issue of social isolation through a number of actions, including:

### **Library services**

- Ensuring the operation of library services through as many venues as possible to give the community access to resources, facilities and a chance to connect with people outside the home.
- Implementing safe non-contact ways to ensure the Home Library Service continues and expands as needed.
- Continuing new services like Library2U to ensure library members in isolation within the LGA can get a delivery of books in a safe non-contact way.
- Making borrowing easier by extending loan periods for the duration of the COVID lockdown period.
- Increasing the cap on accumulated fees to enable people to continue to borrow.
- Continuing courier services between branches, ensuring customers have access to the full library collection.
- Promoting library membership and the range of online services currently available.
- Reviewing opportunities to increase availability of online content including increasing the number of simultaneous titles available online so there are no wait times.

In this evolving situation, Council is continually reviewing our service offering especially in relation to the closure of our libraries and our focus will be on ensuring our customer's needs are met and that we can provide support to some of the most vulnerable people in the community.

## **Community Centres**

Council's community centres are officially closed to all activities as per the NSW Health Orders.

The exceptions to this are essential services such as child care and direct community programs that provide support for homelessness and other high welfare needs in the community.

## **Volunteering**

- Reaching out to stay in touch with our large volunteer group who cannot perform their normal roles during this period.
- Implementing ways to capture volunteer opportunities that are available and connect volunteers with organisations that are continuing to provide essential services to the most vulnerable people in the community.
- Providing information and coordination support to volunteers and community groups offering assistance.
- Exploring new ways of connecting with special interest communities, such as the arts and environmental communities through digital platforms, such as on-line chat forums, virtual galleries and webinars.
- Contacting our database of community groups, religious organisations and cultural groups to identify how Council can assist their communities stay connected.
- Distributing information via Council's numerous networks and inter-agencies.
- Promoting information on community support programs such as mental health, meal services, essential services and where to get financial support.
- Ensuring regular and open communication to ensure the community is well informed and connected to local agencies.
- Supporting community groups that can no longer meet in person to move to digital platforms such as video conferencing so they can still 'virtually' meet, especially youth groups

### **Essential Council community services**

Council will continue to deliver some direct community services with modifications to our current delivery practices. This is to ensure the safety of staff and the community. Continuing programs include:

- **Meals on Wheels.** This service targets the most vulnerable people in our community, including people with dementia, disabilities and our aged community. Demand for this service has increased and is anticipated to continue to rise in view of the current health situation, especially as some of our vulnerable community members seek to self-isolate for long periods of time.  
On advice from the State Meals on Wheels Association and Department of Health, additional social distancing and hygiene measures have been put in place for home deliveries. Wellbeing Checks have been implemented on each delivery and follow up will be provided by staff to ensure additional support requirements are identified, referred and actioned. In line with other Meals on Wheels services, Community Lunches have been cancelled, however a social phone check-in service has been implemented to ensure social connection continues. If required, staff will be redeployed to ensure this essential service continues.
- **Adolescent & Family Counselling Service.** This service has moved to phone and online counselling sessions. It is essential it continue in some form as these are very vulnerable young people and families, and overall community stress is adding to that vulnerability.
- **Children's Services.** Council is continuing to provide long day care, pre-school, family day care and vacation care to our community to support workforce participation, in line with the most current NSW Health Orders. There are a number of children with additional needs and from vulnerable families who will continue to be supported across Council's childcare services.

### **Community events and activities**

Community events and activities keep our community healthy and connected. While many events and activities have had to be cancelled or postponed, some have moved online or other COVID-19 safe formats.

Check Online - **What's On** and **Community Noticeboard** for initiatives, helpful resources, services and events during the COVID-19 lockdown.

### Coordination and support of community services

Council will continue to support the delivery of community services in the face of growing uncertainty and increasing demand. We have established an internal working party to coordinate outreach to not-for-profit and charity organisations that provide direct community services.

This will provide a coordinate response to understanding the areas of need, the gaps and how Council can assist in ensuring our community is well supported and cared for at this time. We have identified and will work with the following service providers in this initial phase of response:

- Meal and essential support services
- Social housing and crisis accommodation
- Services for victims of domestic violence
- Homelessness services
- Mental health support
- Youth & family support services
- Services for seniors and people with disabilities
- Services for new migrants
- Services for vulnerable community members
- Employment and financial support services

The latest Northern Beaches Seniors Directory 2021/22 is available on Council website, with hard copies being distributed to key locations across the Northern Beaches. Copies are also available by contacting Council's Customer Service. The Seniors Directory provides useful information about local services, activities and housing available for our older residents.

We will develop a strategic response to new and emerging needs, such as grief and loss support as well as social connection programs.

Council will identify trends and develop actions to assist in supporting the range of community services and their vulnerable clients. We will play an active role in looking at a range of actions to support our local community, including:

- Using digital platforms for suicide prevention Community Gatekeeper training with over 200 community members having been trained to date, with a current focus on training key members of all surf clubs and sporting associations across the Northern Beaches.
- Council's Community Grants programs are ongoing to assist community organisations in providing much needed services and programs.

The health and wellbeing of our community is our priority and by working with local service providers, we will ensure we continue to support and care for our community at this critical time of need.