

COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND WELLBEING PACKAGE

INTRODUCTION

In the rapidly changing COVID-19 pandemic and the imminent recessionary impacts expected to follow, Council has introduced this initial Community Support and Wellbeing Package of measures to direct immediate responses to support and as far as possible, provide early stimulus to Isaac communities and businesses. Council's priority is to take considered and progressive action to do what it can to keep its 17 communities and many small to medium businesses as strong as possible in the weeks and months ahead.

Further measures will continue to be identified and considered by Council as the pandemic progresses and its consequences are better understood.

PACKAGE DETAILS

The Community Support and Wellbeing Package includes the following measures:

1. COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY

Customer contact

- Maintain delivery of phone-based service via 1300 ISAACS 24/7 (in-house and Peak Services) with contingency planning for business continuity, including redeployment of staff where required
- Develop opportunities for video conference appointments with departmental subject matter experts in lieu of face-to-face meetings

Libraries

- Activation of regionwide wifi network through library sites to enable residents to access free wifi in public spaces 7am-7pm seven days (ie Town Square and hotspots around all libraries)
- Promotion of online library membership (accessible via Council website) to utilise array of online resources and learning tools – Borrowbox, Freegal, RBDigital, Kanopy, Lynda.com
- Increased investment in library e-resource collection from FY2019-20 budget to meet increased demand
- Development of webinar-style delivery for library programs and activities
- Extended return times for physical library resources

Online community engagement

- Deploy *Bang the Table* online community platform (currently in pre-launch configuration) to

- Strengthen online community connections without “white noise” of social media
- Position Council as a listening organisation by providing forum for community conversations, information gathering and response to FAQs
- Develop contact list of registered users for ongoing community communications including newsletters to keep residents and stakeholders informed
- Direct community members to reliable sources of information (Council and other)
- Implement My Community Directory (website and app) in Isaac Region as a shared online information resource for community organisations and residents
- Bring forward implementation of SMS messaging platform to FY2019/20 (originally FY2020/21) as a direct communication and engagement tool for organisation and LDMG

Shared virtual and distant experiences

- Develop shared experiences which can be enjoyed in a social distancing/social isolation environment to maintain and strengthen community spirit
 - Walking trails
 - First 5 Forever Storybook Trail
 - Isaac couch choir
 - Youth blogs
 - Digital hangouts/meeting places

2. COMMUNITY WELLBEING

Strengthen connections

- Maintain organisational visibility in the community to show care and support
- Keep community stakeholders informed and celebrate good news in uncertain times
- Undertake scheduled welfare checks with community stakeholders (clubs, groups, not-for-profits) to maintain and enhance community linkages
- Report community intelligence and emerging issues back to IRC and LDMG
- Share information in relation to Federal and State assistance programs, in addition to private sector initiatives, to aid resilience of community groups.

Virtual connectivity

- Facilitate teleconferencing for stakeholder groups to maintain continuity of meetings and decision making in social isolation (Zoom, Telstra VRM)

Capacity building

- Deliver small scale professional/community development and/or mentoring opportunities via webinar/virtual conference model.
- Identify existing offerings (RSDC) which could be re-rendered for online delivery.

3. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Grants

- Suspend remainder of Major (Round 15) and Minor Community Grants for FY2019-20 and redirect funds (approx. \$125,000) to provide targeted support for community organisations at-risk of collapse due to inability to deliver programmed functions and fundraising.
- Develop guidelines for special emergency grants to allow financial supplement to be paid to qualifying organisations to assist with recurrent operating costs – ie rent, fuel, insurance, loan payments – currently ineligible expenses under Community Grants Guidelines for approval under delegation to CEO in consultation with Mayor and Councillors to expedite implementation.

Rates and lease fees

- Continue moratorium on charging rents for community leases to not-for-profit community groups under stress for FY2020/21.
- Extending rate concessions to Not for Profit organisations under the existing policy to 100% relief on all charges effective 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020.

Additional assistance

- Connect community groups under stress to Federal and State assistance programs, in addition to private sector offerings.

4. VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES

Wellbeing

- Partner with grassroots agencies across region to identify at-risk groups and individuals
- Undertake regular check-ins and ensure parties are connected with required support services
- Build networks with schools (particularly rural/remote small schools) and day care facilities

- Develop neighbourhood/locality self-support models to build community capacity and resilience
- Redeploy surplus staff and volunteers for regular welfare checks