



MAYORAL MINUTE: COVID-19 Update

AUTHOR: Mayor
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To the Council
Ladies and Gentlemen

Office of the Mayor
Civic Administration Building
Church Street, Dubbo

Council has been preparing for, and responding to, the COVID-19 pandemic within Council as it evolves. This Mayoral Minute provides an update to both Councillors and members of the public on some of the measures that have been considered to date, and to plan for the safety of the community and staff going forward.

Council first addressed this pandemic internally; steps were taken to increase cleaning and implement social distancing, staff were encouraged to eat at their desks and employ other risk minimising practices. Council installed signage and additional hand hygiene stations at external points of the building and to outdoor Officers.

Councillors and Senior Staff were briefed on the pandemic and Council's Business Continuity Plan was enacted. Council has formed a COVID-19 Management Team; this team is working towards meeting the State and Federal Government directives as they are announced, and ensuring delivery of Council's essential services being waste, water and sewer, and cemeteries.

A number of directives have been made at an operational level of Council, including all travel outside of the LGA be suspended and there is a freeze on new recruitment until further notice. All non-essential in person meetings have been cancelled or amended to video conference or tele conference.

IT provisions have been made to significantly increase the number of staff who can work from home at one time. Approximately 25 Officers are working from home today and 2 x Customer Experience staff are trialling Council's phone system from external locations.

All community events have been cancelled or postponed in accordance with Government Directives. Council effectively closed the Dubbo Regional Theatre and Convention Centre following the initial announcements regarding indoor gatherings (as it has a seating capacity of 500). Cancelled events include Dubbo Eisteddfod, Under Western Skies, Mud Run, Red Hot Summer, Oriscon Cross Cultural event, Dubbo Athletic Masters, Cars and Coffee, Dubbo and Wellington Shows, Rotunda Markets and more.

Council is exploring options where the existing staff from those closed services can be utilised to support the delivery of essential services and contribute to community initiatives i.e. Council is exploring an Essential Services portal for local food businesses to support home

delivery of meals and/or library books to continue to provide some services to families, the elderly and interested community members as a council initiative.

Given the latest Government direction to close non-essential services such as Pubs, Clubs, Cinemas and Gyms, Council has examined its services in relation to tourism and high traffic operations in an effort to reduce risk to the community. Accordingly, it is proposed to close the following services at 5pm on Wednesday 25 March:

- Dubbo and Wellington Aquatic Leisure Centres
- Wellington Caves
- Western Plains Cultural Centre
- Old Dubbo Goal
- Macquarie Regional Library and all associated branches

As the situation progresses, Council will observe directives from State and Federal Governments and continue to implement provisions for the safety of our community. A further round of closures will be considered as the matter progresses, such as Rainbow Cottage Childcare, Family Daycare and Council's Customer Experience facility.

Members of the public are encouraged to contact Council, including the Customer Experience team via phone and online to reduce the risk to all persons involved. Services can be completed electronically or with the assistance of Council delivery.

Like many businesses in the Aviation industry, Dubbo City Regional Airport has been, and will continue to be significantly impacted by unprecedented changes in aviation and the travelling public. As endorsed by the Airport Technical Advisory Committee today it is proposed a freeze on all Landing fees for RPT Airlines from tomorrow until 30 June 2020. Dubbo Regional Council has only received a request from one Airline - Rex Airlines, with a request for 70% off landing fees until December 2020. However the Committee believe all Airlines should be provided the same support, and greater immediate support with a view to Council playing its role in supporting essential travel for our regional community. This level of support will be reviewed in June 2020. The Committee recommends that any Airline receiving this waiver of landings fees should continue to operate in good faith with our community including appropriate management of any outstanding debt to Council, in addition to a responsible approach to refunds or credits for our travelling community as schedules and services change.

Furthermore the Committee is recommending that there be no increase to passenger landing fees nor security charges in the forthcoming budget.

Council estimates from the recent closures relating to the COVID-19 Virus that the Region has suffered a loss of approximately 600 employees from food services and sport and recreation services (gyms, cinemas and alike). This is a significant impact on our economy that if left unsupported could see a decline in our Regions overall spend and economic profitability and sustainability.

Consumers have a role to play in this crisis, if every family in the LGA commits to at least one commercially purchased family meal a week in addition to their usual spend we can weather this storm and maintain profitability.

If we do nothing, this virus will cost the economy \$13.15M in direct spend each month, by comparison if we band together as a community and spend an additional \$50 a week on food services, direct spend will reach \$14.26M, which is an extra \$1.1M flowing through our economy every month, we will save jobs and salaries and overall profitability of the Region will be maintained.

In support of this important industry, Economic Development and Marketing are already undergoing an information pull from industry to support a locally targeted marketing campaign to further the buy local message and support the changes businesses are making to meet health regulations and consumer needs. In addition, I am proposing a program to investigate how council can alleviate the challenge of connecting customers with businesses who may not have access to home delivery options and need to be in kitchens and have been forced to close under the Government health regulations relating to COVID-19.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1. That Council resolve to close down the following facilities in an effort to reduce risk to the community at 5pm Wednesday 25 March 2020:**
 - **Dubbo and Wellington Aquatic Leisure Centres**
 - **Wellington Caves**
 - **Western Plains Cultural Centre**
 - **Old Dubbo Goal**
 - **Macquarie Regional Library and all associated branches**
- 2. That Council offer subsidised landing fees at Dubbo Regional Airport until 30 June 2020.**
- 3. That the Mayor, in consultation with the CEO, be authorised to close or make further restrictions to Council services between Council meetings.**
- 4. That the Chief Executive Officer be authorised to investigate a direct service provision for library books and resources and local café and restaurant support of home delivery services.**

Councillor Ben Shields
Mayor