



19 March 2020

MEDIA RELEASE

SOUTHERN MALLEE PRIORITISES COMMUNITY, STAFF HEALTH WITH COVID-19 RESPONSE, IMMEDIATE TODAY

Effective immediately, the Southern Mallee District Council will implement a range of measures to its business operations, in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, to ensure the health and safety of its staff and the community, while providing the continuity of vital local services.

In line with most Australian local government organisations, this will include cessation and postponement of events, an increased hygiene regime within Council offices and facilities, closure of some community facilities, a move to virtual web-link meetings across Council and more.

Southern Mallee District Council Mayor Andrew Grieger said senior leaders met to consider the Council's COVID-19 response plan, and has taken the advice of key State, Federal and international health authorities, following best practice measures.

The decisions and changes made by Council are temporary and may be changed regularly. Council will continue to update the community regularly via social media, its website and through local press.

Key changes from today, include:

- **Events:** Council is working closely with community groups, encouraging all non-essential community events to be cancelled or postponed. Council is also working with those located in our community buildings to close until further notice. For example the Pinnaroo community gym and the Lameroo cinema have now closed (Council will waive any community rental for the period of closure).
- **Council offices:** The Pinnaroo and Lameroo offices will be closed to the public. Council staff are still working and residents can contact staff by email or telephone for enquires and payments can be made over the phone or online. Council's two depots are also closed to the public. This arrangement will be reviewed weekly.
- **Community libraries:** These are ultimately governed by the Department of Education and therefore we are taking the advice from the State Government on this. In the meantime, we would encourage everyone (where possible) to set themselves up with [OneCard membership](#) whereby they can access free online borrowing/reading.
- **Swimming pools:** The two Council-run swimming pools in Lameroo and Pinnaroo will be closed for the season, with opening dates for next summer to be outlined at a later date.
- **Transfer Stations:** Council will maintain usual transfer station opening hours however payment must be made online or by phone after an invoice is issued. Cash payments will not be accepted. Residents are also encouraged to minimise their use of the transfer stations.
- **Staff hygiene:** Council is providing its staff with the provisions needed to undertake work from home/remote locations in the event of unexpected health issues with children, elderly relatives or themselves. We have also increased extra cleaning/sanitising measures throughout our offices and are practising social distancing in our office, in line with health advice.
- **Public toilets and other facilities:** Council will keep all public toilets open and has increased the cleaning frequency of all facilities.
- **Health-related businesses in Council facilities:** Council rents some of its community building spaces to health-related businesses or essential services, such as the dentist and vet. These

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businesses are often essential to our community. Council will support these businesses to make case-by-case decisions about whether to remain open.

- **Formal monthly meetings:** Council held its March ordinary meeting on 18 March 2020. A decision will be made in early April about the next meeting scheduled for 15 April 2020. All other Council meeting activities will be cancelled, postponed, or will be done via virtual means, including web-link, email, online group discussions and phone.

The **Pinnaroo COGS and Lameroo COGS both remain open**. In line with national standards, staff have implemented changed practices to reduce risk to children, staff and community. State and Commonwealth advice will continue to be monitored. Further, the **Parilla accommodation facility remains open**. Staff have implemented new practices to reduce risk to guests, staff and community.

Council now has COVID-19 information on its website to direct people to key health updates from the relevant authorities. It will also continue to disseminate information via the Facebook page and in local media. Other information will be available over the phone or email should people require it.

“No doubt this is going to be one of our nation’s most challenging times on record, and I want the community to remain calm and rest assured that we’re doing everything we can to protect against the spread of Coronavirus in our community,” Mayor Grieger says.

“These are the initial and immediate measures we must take, but we are also focussed on ensuring we can deliver vital services to our ratepayers.

“We are now working overtime to bring these changes in to place – including developing a range of communication materials, providing information to hard-to-reach residents, contacting event organisers, and connecting with other key stakeholders likely to feel the immediate impacts.

“Our leadership team is taking regular advice from the key health and government authorities regarding any necessary changes. We will keep the community updated where we can, but encourage people to follow SA Health and reputable news sources on social media for regular updates.”

The Council is urging anyone who has travelled overseas to check the Australian Government’s self-isolation requirements online (www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert) and for the community as a whole to observe stringent personal hygiene practices.

“Adhering to the Government’s self-isolation measures - if you’ve been overseas or are experiencing symptoms - is vital to our community’s welfare,” Mayor Grieger says.

“Helping slow the spread of COVID-19 is now our highest priority and discussions will continue amongst our leaders each day on further measures to be taken.

“In the meantime, we want to encourage people, where possible to continue supporting local businesses and producers wherever they can. On top of the drought and bushfires, this pandemic is going to add to the significant strain on their operations, and if we can keep our money local, we can keep jobs secure until we overcome this.”

For more information on where to find details on how to deal with COVID-19, visit our website.

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