

Gannawarra Connect

May 2020 Edition



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FROM THE MAYOR

Welcome to the first edition of the *Gannawarra Connect* community newsletter.

This newsletter promotes what we, as a Council, are doing in the community.

The launch of this brochure is timely, particularly with the challenges we face with managing the spread of Coronavirus.

It is important that we all observe the recommended preventative measures to stop the spread of Coronavirus. These include undertaking good hygiene practices, being mindful of social distancing and looking out for our older friends.

Kind regards,
Mayor Lorraine Learmonth



COMMUNITY SUPPORT DURING CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Council is working to support the community during the current Coronavirus pandemic.

A new policy – *COVID-19 Hardship* – was adopted at the April Ordinary Council meeting, which recognises the financial hardship local businesses and employees are experiencing.

This new policy enables Council to hold interest on all outstanding debts during the Coronavirus pandemic and hold off on legal action of rates and charges, with the hold date beginning from the declaration of the State of Emergency on 16 March 2020.

This hold date will stay in place for six months, with the policy to be reviewed by 16 September 2020.

The policy is part of a raft of support measures Council is implementing to help the community deal with and recover from this pandemic. These measures include ceasing debt collection at this time, paying creditors within seven days and increasing the weighting of local spend criteria, as outlined in Council's *Procurement* policy.

"Council will continue to assess the situation and implement changes as needed." Mayor Lorraine Learmonth said.

"I encourage residents and business owners who cannot pay any outstanding bills they have with Council at this time to phone (03) 5450 9333 and discuss their situation with our friendly staff."



CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE

CUSTOMER SERVICE

CENTRES CLOSED

As part of efforts to stop the spread of Coronavirus, Gannawarra Shire Council's Cohuna and Kerang Customer Service Centres are currently closed until further notice.

"The closure of Council's Customer Service Centres is one step Council can take to assist with social distancing during the Coronavirus pandemic," Mayor Lorraine Learmonth said.

"It is still 'business as usual' for Council, with customers able to phone either of our Customer Service Centres direct regarding their queries or interact with staff online."

Residents can communicate with Council in the following ways:

- Phone Cohuna Customer Service Centre on (03) 5456 5222 during business hours;
- Phone Kerang Customer Service Centre on (03) 5450 9333 during business hours;
- E-mailing council@gannawarra.vic.gov.au at any time;
- Visit www.gsc.vic.gov.au and chat live with a staff member during business hours;
- Lodging a request form at www.gsc.vic.gov.au/request at any time; or
- Writing to PO Box 287, Kerang VIC 3579.

MEALS ON WHEELS ARRANGEMENTS

Council will continue to provide its popular Meals on Wheels program to residents during the current Coronavirus pandemic, but with alternative arrangements.

Until further notice, the delivery of fresh and frozen meals will occur on Mondays and Thursdays, with the number of volunteers utilised reduced.

Council thanks the community for their understanding at this time.

IMPACTED SERVICES

The following services will also be impacted by the Federal and State governments' decisions to recommend the closure of non-essential services:

- The Kerang Exercise Pool is closed until further notice;
- The Gannawarra L2P Learner Driver Mentor Program will be postponed until further notice;
- The Gateway to Gannawarra Visitor Centre is closed until further notice;
- Council will not be taking bookings for any of its indoor or outdoor venues until further notice; and
- Gannawarra Library Service branches at Cohuna, Kerang, Leitchville and Quambatook are closed until further notice.

"External book chutes at Gannawarra Library Service branches will remain open, with all overdue fines suspended," Mayor Lorraine Learmonth said.

Residents will still be able to access Gannawarra Library Service's online resources during this time. This includes Beamafilm, BorrowBox and Story Box. Details on all of these resources are available at www.gsc.vic.gov.au/libraries.

For more information regarding Coronavirus and Council's efforts, please visit www.gsc.vic.gov.au/coronavirus

COMMUNITY CARE SERVICES CONTINUE

Council continues to provide its important Community Care services to residents during the current Coronavirus pandemic.

Staff provide more than 24,000 hours of care to residents through the Commonwealth Home Support Program, Home and Community Care Program for Younger People, National Disability Insurance Scheme and Veterans Home Care.

"Services offered by Council's Community Care staff include domestic care, personal care, meal delivery and property maintenance, just to name a few," Mayor Lorraine Learmonth said.

Residents receiving any services provided by Council's Community Care team are asked to phone (03) 5450 9333 if their health circumstances change at this time. This includes:

- If you are feeling unwell;
- If anyone in your home is feeling unwell; and
- If you, or anyone else in your home, is recommended to self-isolate.

"People will continue to receive these services if they are feeling unwell, but our staff need to be aware and prepared," Mayor Learmonth said.



Get the latest
COVID-19 advice



Visit www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus
If you have questions, call 1800 675 398



2020/2021 PROPOSED BUDGET

Residents are encouraged to have their say on Council's 2020/2021 Proposed Council Budget, which outlines a \$15 million investment in capital works and a rates increase that complies with the State Government's Fair Go Rates System.

The draft version of Council's key financial document for the coming 12 months was approved at the April Ordinary Council Meeting to be placed on public display, with residents able to submit their comments up to 5pm on Monday, 25 May.

The 59-page document outlines how Council will spend the \$36.08 million of revenue generated through rates, charges and grants during 2020/2021, with a \$6.720 million surplus predicted.

"Council is proud to be able to deliver a budget that maintains current services, looks after Council's assets and delivers projects that will benefit both residents and visitors to the area," Mayor Lorraine Learmonth said.

"Council is proud to be able to deliver a budget that brings to fruition funding for several long-term projects that will benefit residents and visitors. The projects are contained in Council's enhanced \$15.297 million capital works program, which relies on partnerships with other government bodies to minimise the impact on ratepayers.

"This budget also complies with the State Government's Fair Go Rates System, which states that the total revenue raised through municipal rates cannot increase by more than 2 per cent compared to the previous year."

The existing differential rates structure remains in operation, with the average rates increase per category being 2 per cent for all sectors – residential, commercial/industrial, farm irrigation district, farm dryland, and properties classified for cultural/recreational.

The municipal charge will remain at \$100, whilst waste management charges will increase by \$7 for those whose property use a 120-litre general waste bin and \$10 for properties that rely on a 240-litre bin for general waste. Green waste bin charges will rise by \$1.

"Please note that this budget was prepared prior to the Coronavirus pandemic, with the community encouraged to provide feedback. Council will consider the impact of Coronavirus on the community during the public submission period," Mayor Learmonth said.

Copies of the 2020/2021 Gannawarra Shire Council Proposed Budget are available to view online at www.gsc.vic.gov.au/budget

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

- \$533,500 in funding for grants and project funding, including \$250,000 for the Major Community Project Fund and \$83,500 for Council's Community Grants Program;
- Close to \$5 million for road, bridge and footpath improvements, including Stage 2 of the Appin South Bridge replacement project (\$290,000);
- \$3.056 million for tourism opportunities, including the Cohuna CBD Waterfront Development (\$1.693 million)* and Kerang to Koondrook Rail Trail – Stage 1 (\$733,000)*;
- \$1.3 million for the expansion of the Tate Drive Industrial Estate, Kerang;
- \$350,000 for the expansion of the Koondrook Levee Bank; and
- \$2.188 million for parks and recreational facilities, including the Cohuna Skate Park redevelopment planning (\$600,000)* and Koondrook All Abilities Play Space (\$520,000).

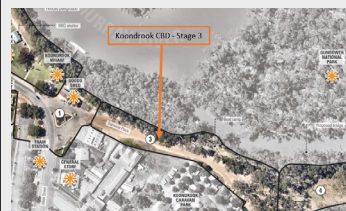
* Pending funding approval

WORKS UPDATE



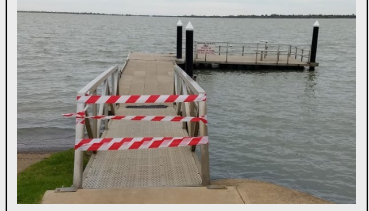
Stage 1 of the Cohuna Waterfront Project has started, which involves improvements to facilities for visitors to Apex Park.

Stage 3 of the Koondrook CBD Redevelopment is underway, which will connect the township to the Koondrook Nature Based Tourism Hub.



Works to improve school crossing access and kerbing at the intersection of Boundary and Mitchell streets, Kerang is continuing.

Works are occurring to remove the pontoon located at the northern end of Kangaroo Lake to protect the safety of users of this facility.



HEALTH SERVICES UPDATE



NDCH



HEALTH SERVICES PROVIDE A UNITED FRONT DURING COVID-19

Our Health Services have been working in partnership to provide the best possible care and support to our Gannawarra community.

We have all noticed the care our community members are taking to stay at home, practice social distancing and in keeping hands clean and practicing good hygiene – and we thank you! It all makes a difference to slowing down and decreasing the spread of COVID-19 so our health services can cope.

We ask that you continue to be kind to each other and to our front line workers, nurses, doctors, police, supermarket staff and receptionists, to name a few, who are all working hard to support our community.

We also need to expect that COVID-19 will reach our communities, perhaps our neighbours, work colleagues and possibly our loved ones. When it does, we are encouraging everyone in our community to take a 'no blame' approach. COVID-19 spreads easily via person to person contact which is why such strict measures are in place to slow it down, however blaming others only adds to the pressures being felt by our community. We ask that you show each other empathy, support and care. Be kind.



GETTING YOUR MEDICINES

Call your pharmacy to ensure you have a good supply of your medications and prescriptions.

Many local pharmacies can deliver these to your home and pharmacies are now able to post most medications to clients for free via Australia Post.

Some conditions apply, so please phone ahead to find out more information.

RESOURCES

If you or someone you know needs extra support during this period, please make contact with the relevant services below:

Beyond Blue - 1300 22 4636

Life Line - 13 11 14

Headspace (12-25 years) - 1800 650 890

Kid Help Line - 1800 55 1800

Men's Helpline - 1300 78 99 78

1800RESPECT - 1800 737 732

MEDICAL CLINICS IN THE GANNAWARRA

Doctors at the **Northern District Community Health Medical Clinic**, **Kerang Medical Clinic** and **Ochre Clinic Cohuna** can now offer phone or video appointments as well as some in clinic appointments, which are all currently bulk billed.

Please take care of your overall health. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has our attention make sure you continue to access your GP and health care professionals for your general health and wellbeing.

Get your check-ups, GP and Chronic Disease Management Plans and health issues seen to, they are still important.

Screening and Assessment Clinics: COVID-19 swabbing can occur at the **Northern District Community Health Medical Clinic**, **Echuca Regional Health** or **Swan Hill District Health**. Please call NDCH on 5451 0200 for further information.

X-RAY AND ULTRASOUNDS

X-Ray and Ultrasound appointments are still available at both Kerang District Health and Cohuna District Hospital, although services have altered due to the COVID-19 situation.

COHUNA VILLAGE – RESPECT AND BAPTCARE NORTHAVEN COMMUNITY VISITORS

Both aged care facilities have a 'Welcome Window' where community members can talk with their loved ones through a window. Skype services are also available.

Please still try and connect with residents this way as we are sorry, but both facilities currently have strict criteria for visitors for resident safety.



INFLUENZA SHOTS

Influenza shots are very important and all community members are encouraged to get them now.

This is especially important during the current Coronavirus pandemic as having two viruses circulating together increases the risk of complications.

Those most at-risk include people aged 65 years and over, children aged six months to five years, those with pre-existing medical conditions, pregnant women and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

While getting vaccinated against the flu won't protect against Coronavirus, it will help protect against the most severe influenza virus strains expected to circulate in the community.

Residents can book in to be immunised against influenza by contacting their local general practice or health clinic, pharmacies in Kerang and Cohuna or by contacting Council on (03) 5450 9333.

IMMUNISATION EVIDENCE

As of 15 April 2020, Glenarm staff will be asking all visitors to complete an immunisation declaration on arrival which will include the date and location that you had the Influenza vaccine administered.

As of 1 May 2020, both the Glenarm and Cohuna District Hospital - Aged Care staff will be asking all visitors on arrival to provide evidence of their influenza immunisation status.

Evidence includes, a statement or record from a health practitioner or immunisation history from Medicare.

If your influenza immunisation is not current you will be denied entry.

NORTHERN DISTRICT COMMUNITY HEALTH

While we are all practicing social distancing it is important to look after your own physical and mental wellbeing.

We are encouraging you to practice the 5 Ways to Wellbeing. These include connecting, being active, taking notice, keep learning and giving.

NDCH are regularly sharing 5 Ways to Wellbeing tips, exercise at home and tips on how to support your children to study at home on our Facebook page.

HOSPITAL VISITING HOURS

Kerang District Health has closed general access to the hospital after hours and on weekends.

Cohuna District Hospital has closed access at all times to protect vulnerable consumers and patients.

Those wishing to access both hospitals when closed are able to use the intercom system at their main entrances.

VISITING HOURS FOR ESSENTIAL VISITORS ONLY

Kerang District Health: 3-4 pm

Cohuna District Hospital: 2-3pm and 6-7pm

Families and friends are asked to consider phoning, FaceTime or Skype to connect with their loved ones during this time. Kerang District Health has purchased another iPad to support this communication for its Glenarm residents.

STAYING CONNECTED

To keep up to date with the latest news, please connect with the following Facebook pages:

Cohuna District Hospital

www.facebook.com/cdh.vic.gov.au



Kerang District Health

www.facebook.com/kerangdistricthealth



Northern District Community Health

www.facebook.com/ndchvic/





RESILIENCE GRANTS PROGRAM

Despite some extra planning required to maintain social distancing, the Lake Charm community has worked over the April school holidays to create a community mural.

The community-led arts installation was an initiative of the Lakes Arts and Cultural Association and has been funded through the Gannawarra Community Resilience Grants Program.

Well done to local artist Paul Oswin and all community members who have been involved!



TACTICS FOR TOUGH TIMES

Tactics for Tough Times is considering new ways to support our communities.

Hit LIKE on the Northern District Community Health Facebook page for news and information, as well as some great ways to keep busy while in isolation.

Stay tuned for our Tactics for Tough Times You-Tube video session which you and your team, family or household could watch for some advice or professional development.

NDCH also has Zoom facilities for virtual sessions.

For more information, phone (03) 5451 0200 or visit www.ndch.org.au/t4tt

DROUGHT COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Gannawarra Shire residents involved in farming and those who work within the rural sector of the municipality are eligible to apply for support from the Federal Government's Drought Community Support Initiative.

Overseen locally by The Salvation Army, the Drought Community Support Initiative provides financial help for farmers, farm workers and suppliers/contractors facing hardship due to drought.

"Despite the current Coronavirus pandemic, the ongoing drought continues to impact on our local farming families, farm workers, suppliers and contractors," Mayor Lorraine Learmonth said.

"Drought support remains available for residents involved in agriculture who are impacted.

"More than \$26 million of funding has been distributed through the Drought Community Support Initiative to around 9,000 drought affected households since 21 November 2019."

People over the age of 18 who either live and/or work within the Gannawarra Shire and have not received this payment since 21 November 2019 are eligible to apply for a one-off payment of up to \$3,000.

"The maximum amount a household can receive is \$3,000. If more than one eligible household member resides in the same residence, the total assistance provided to the household cannot exceed \$3,000," Mayor Learmonth said.

"Payments can cover numerous expenses such as groceries, vehicle maintenance, energy and utility bills as well as health and medical expenses as examples."

To apply, please visit www.salvationarmy.org.au/drought or phone 1300 551 030.

For more information regarding other drought support available, please visit www.gsc.vic.gov.au/drought

Access the latest information using the Dairy Industry COVID-19 Directory

DAIRYAUSTRALIA.COM.AU/C19



FarmHub takes the hard work out of finding drought relief and assistance and support programs.

The website lists off assistance available through the Victorian Government, Federal Government and charitable organisations.

For more information, go to www.farmhub.org.au/



ABOVE: Mayor Lorraine Learmonth (right) helped promote Council's Community Engagement Survey.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SURVEY SUCCESS

Council would like to thank the more than 300 people who took time to complete the Community Engagement Survey during February and March.

The survey was available to complete online, with hard copies available for collection at Council's Customer Service Offices and Gannawarra Library Service branches.

Residents also completed surveys at four Listening Post sessions at Cohuna, Kerang and Koondrook.

All feedback received will assist with the development of Council's Community Engagement Strategy 2020-2025, with a draft of this document to be open to public comment later this year.

NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSES

There are three Neighbourhood Houses operating within the Gannawarra Shire located in Cohuna, Kerang and Quambatook.

Neighbourhood Houses offer many support services to the local community, ranging from information to food relief through relationships with Foodbank.

Community newsletters in these three communities are also coordinated by the Neighbourhood Houses. These publications offer localised information for each township, including details regarding many of the support services available in the current climate of social isolation and potential unemployment.

If you would like to subscribe for digital or physical community newsletters within Kerang, Cohuna or Quambatook, or would like to explore the services that these centres have to offer, please get in touch with your local Neighbourhood House.

Cohuna Neighbourhood House

Phone: (03) 5456 4666

Email: nhcohuna@bigpond.com

Web: www.nhcohuna.org

Kerang & District Community Centre

Phone: (03) 5452 2522

Email: coordinator@kdcc.org.au

Web: www.kdcc.org.au

Quambatook Community Resource Centre

Phone: (03) 5457 1220

Email: gqrc@bigpond.com

YOUR LIBRARY ONLINE

Gannawarra Library Service members can still access online resources whilst its branches are closed as part of social distancing measures. To access these services, visit www.gsc.vic.gov.au/libraries Story Time sessions have also gone digital, with staff filming the reading of stories, which are broadcast via Facebook and accessible at any time.



IMMUNISATION SESSIONS MAY 2020

Wednesday, 6 May

Kerang
(10.30am – 12 noon)

Wednesday, 20 May

Cohuna
(10.30am – 12 noon)
Kerang
(4pm – 5.30pm)

COMMUNITY NOTICES

YOUR COUNCILLORS

AVOCA WARD



**Cr Charlie Gillingham
(Deputy Mayor)**

0457 719 874
charlie.gillingham@gsc.vic.gov.au

MURRAY WARD



Cr Steve Tasker

0438 531 271
steven.tasker@gsc.vic.gov.au

PATCHELL WARD



Cr Jodie Basile

0409 439 269
jodie.basile@gsc.vic.gov.au



Cr Jenny Fawcett

0400 804 488
jenny.fawcett@gsc.vic.gov.au



Cr Brian Gibson

0408 171 476
brian.gibson@gsc.vic.gov.au

YARRAN WARD



Cr Andrew Gibbs

0488 668 114
andrew.gibbs@gsc.vic.gov.au



**Cr Lorraine Learmonth
(Mayor)**

0429 103 180
lorraine.learmonth@gsc.vic.gov.au

COUNCIL MEETING

The next Ordinary Meeting of Council will be held on Wednesday, 20 May 2020 at 6.30pm at the Kerang Senior Citizen Clubrooms.

The agenda will be available two days prior to the meeting at www.gsc.vic.gov.au/meetings

NOTE: Measures are currently in place to support efforts to stop the spread of Coronavirus and comply with government directions:

The changes, which are effective immediately until further notice, are:

- Only time-critical matters will be considered by Council;
- Meetings will be live-streamed via Council's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/gannawarra);
- Limited spaces will be available for the public in accordance with Coronavirus social distancing guidelines; and
- Question Time will not be held.

Alternative options are available for residents who want to ask a question to Council. These options are listed in the Contacting Council section of this newsletter.

Council will advertise when these arrangements change.

CONTACTING COUNCIL

IN PERSON

Cohuna Customer Service Centre

21-23 King Edward Street

Kerang Customer Service Centre

47 Victoria Street

BY PHONE

(03) 5450 9333 during business hours

BY EMAIL

council@gannawarra.vic.gov.au

BY MAIL

PO Box 287

Kerang VIC 3579

ONLINE

Lodge a request at www.gsc.vic.gov.au/request

SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook – www.facebook.com/gannawarra

Twitter – www.twitter.com/GannawarraShire