

Community Bulletin

COVID-19 Information



FROM THE MAYOR

Last week we celebrated Library and Information Week - the theme for 2020 was Create. This provided an opportunity to reflect on the changed environment that has challenged us into a new way of thinking, working, communicating and behaving. Throughout these changes the most significant role we play is how we stay connected.



What a time to showcase all the ways our libraries have adapted to continue to support our local community in areas of work, school, events, entertainment and education. Whilst some restrictions have been eased, we still need to be reminded that life is not entirely back to normal.

Our libraries offer something for everyone - book borrowing is made easy with a home 'Click and Deliver' service and the launch of Council's Coast Connect YouTube channel is allowing parents and children to experience online what they would experience in-branch. Council's eLibrary also continues to provide much needed support and activities during this unusual time.

Council has also taken its popular free magazine for over 50s online with a huge take up in subscriptions for the new digital Growing Older And Loving Life! (GOALL). And with popular local events cancelled, another excellent initiative is bringing the Harvest Festival to you to watch from the comfort and safety of your own living rooms through Coast Connect YouTube.

Mayor Lisa Matthews
Central Coast Council

NEXT ISSUE

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YOUR COUNCIL

Innovative program delivery a hit

Central Coast residents have responded positively to the innovations COVID-19 shutdowns inspired us to make to some of our most popular community services and programs. As restrictions forced the closure of face-to-face meetings, workshops and other activities, we moved many services and programs totally online.

Our libraries are always busy and with residents required to stay close to home, their services were in great demand despite the doors closing to public access. During the past two months, almost as many new library members have joined each day as when the facilities are open.

One popular innovation was the new Click and Deliver service which enabled residents to reserve physical books online and have them delivered to their front doors. For some community members, the deliveries provided a welcome social interaction during a time of physical isolation.

During the past two months, we've also seen a huge increase in many of our online services:

- 219% increase in the use of the online Storybox Library
- 59% increase in the borrowing of eResources (i.e. eBooks, eAudio and eMagazines)
- 50% of our annual allocation of hours were used for the Studiosity tutoring service
- 38% increase in the Mango Language (language learning resource).

Beyond our libraries, many other Council programs offer face-to-face interaction, workshops and events. All of these have been cancelled during the COVID-19 closures. We've been able to continue delivering many of these programs through our new Coast Connect YouTube channel. We've set up a studio at Laycock Street Theatre and have been making workshops and other content available via the channel. Our Coast Connect YouTube library is constantly growing. It currently includes:

- Green Living workshops focusing on environmental education, including tutorials

on how to make worm towers, wicking beds and self-watering 'Olla' systems for plants

- Storytime series, with stories and sing-alongs for children by library staff
- performances from the 2020 Youth In Performing Arts (YIPA) program
- presentations from the Live Well Festival participants spanning the themes of Move, Think, Eat and Earth.

Some libraries now open, with service changes

Our Erina, Tuggerah, Bateau Bay and Umina Beach library branches have reopened to the public, from Monday to Friday, excluding public holidays, 10am-2pm. The new Select and Collect service will be available to ensure we maintain social distancing requirements.

With Select and Collect, you can reserve up to five items from the online catalogue or by phoning your local branch to request items for collection at your nominated pick up branch. All other library services, including browsing collections, study/reading area use, branch programs, printing and internet use, remain unavailable.

The online Click and Deliver service will continue. After hours return chutes will be closed this public holiday weekend.

To minimise the handling of notes, payments will need to be made by cheque, EFTPOS, Mastercard or Visa. Cash payments for rates and water charges can still be made at Australia Post and Westpac branches.

Council administration buildings and many major facilities remain closed for public access due to COVID-19 restrictions. However, we continue to provide essential services and have been able to adapt many other services for online or remote delivery. The next Council Meeting will be available for viewing on YouTube. Please visit centralcoast.nsw.gov.au/COVID-19 for more information.

Customers can contact us by phone on 1300 463 954 or online at centralcoast.nsw.gov.au

YOUR KINDNESS

Central hub to find the grant that's right for you!

We have launched Grant Finder, a new resource to help local businesses, community groups and organisations access financial support for projects during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The search engine tool can filter grants by location, industry and type of project, making it easy to find all relevant funding opportunities. Community members can also register to receive email alerts about new grants, save favourites and access tips on how to apply.

Grant Finder will help businesses find funding to support local jobs and economic growth, as well as assist groups and organisations who provide important services to vulnerable and at-risk community members.

Council's 'Working Together Staying Strong' Grant Program is one of the grants listed, which has allocated \$300,000 to support Central Coast groups providing frontline community services who are facing increased demand or operational difficulties.

Not-for-profit and community groups are encouraged to apply for the grant, particularly those with projects that directly support the physical health and mental well-being, social connection and safety of vulnerable and at-risk groups.

The program allows you to apply for funding between \$1,000 to \$10,000 in combined funding and in-kind Council services. It is open until 30 September or until all funds have been expended.

To find out what grants you can apply for, visit Grant Finder at centralcoast.grantguru.com.au

To view eligibility guidelines and apply for the Working Together Staying Strong program or any of Council's grants visit centralcoast.nsw.gov.au/funding.

YOUR HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Many of us may be feeling worried or anxious in the current environment, with financial or job security concerns, or wondering when things will return to normal.

It's important to reach out if you need help and, if you're able to, check in with others.

Our COVID-19 website pages include a comprehensive range of services available to provide assistance and support, including:

- easy read fact sheets
- free counselling and support - Beyondblue 1300 22 4636, NSW Mental Health Line 1800 011 511, Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800
- services for older people - COVID-19 Support Line for Senior Australians 1800 171 866, Meals on Wheels 4357 8444, Healthdirect 1800 022 222
- domestic violence support - counselling 1800 737 732, Central Coast Womens Health Centre, Wyong 4351 1152.

For many more services, including resources for men, young people, Indigenous residents, community centres, food support and more, visit centralcoast.nsw.gov.au/council/council-news/covid-19-information/where-to-find-help

YOUR COMMUNITY

Ready to welcome travellers

From 1 June, regional travel restrictions were relaxed across NSW and visitors are once again being welcomed to holiday on the Central Coast.

Many Council facilities including Gosford Pool, play spaces, outdoor fitness equipment and skate parks have already reopened, and others will open in stages to ensure community safety.

Some of our own facilities including libraries are beginning to open, with health precautions to minimise the transmission of COVID-19 in place. We are committed to ensuring both community members and our staff are safe, so some facilities may initially open with reduced services.

Businesses are now also able to host seated diners, within restrictions. However, some may choose to continue to remain closed or offer takeaway only.

We would like to thank our community for taking the COVID-19 situation seriously. Please continue to act responsibly and follow the Australian Government directions to help minimise the spread of COVID-19:

- practise social distancing, staying 1.5metres from other people at all times
- public gatherings must be no more than 10 people
- continue to practise good hygiene, including washing your hands before and after using any equipment.

Have your say on projects that matter

Community feedback is also an important part of Council's ongoing work. COVID-19 has meant that at the moment we cannot provide the workshops and consultation opportunities we usually have to highlight important upcoming projects.

All consultation has been moved to an online format, and we are encouraging residents to visit yourvoiceourcoast.com to view and comment on the following projects which are currently, or soon will be, open for feedback:

- Draft Central Coast Waste Resource Management Strategy
- Regional draft Local Strategic Planning Statement
- Mount Ettalong Reserve Masterplan
- Tunkuwallin Oval District play space
- Lake Munmorah Recreation Facility
- Floodplain risk management studies and plans
 - Killarney Vale / Long Jetty
 - Wallarah Creek
- Kibble Park Place Plan and Concept Design

HAVE YOUR SAY

YOUR BUSINESS

Tools to help businesses thrive

Council is actively working to help businesses recover from COVID-19 and thrive into the future.

We're working with many partners to initiate actions and resources to stimulate the economy.

Along with business groups and government agencies, we have established the Central Coast Economic Task Force.

The Task Force has created a business support hub where businesses can easily access important information and resources, such as what government support is available and how to access financial hardship measures with different companies. Find the business support hub at centralcoasteconomy.com.au

In addition, a workshop series provides guidance for businesses as they begin to navigate trading in a changed environment. The Low Touch Economy workshops provide resources and risk assessment tools for businesses so they can operate while respecting health guidelines to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Details: lowtoucheconomy.com.au

In addition, Council has partnered with local Business Chambers to set up the Bigger Backyard website and app. This provides a platform for businesses to pledge to buy and source equipment and supplies locally. In late May, more than 220 businesses had committed

to spending more than \$11million and locally, with an overall economic impact of \$35.5million for our economy. Details: biggerbackyard.ingoodcompanycentralcoast.com.au

Jobs lost, but we're in better position than most regions

Despite COVID-19 closures causing significant job losses across local industry, it appears that the Central Coast is doing much better than other areas of Australia.

As of the week ending 18 April, five weeks after Australia recorded its 100th COVID-19 case, Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows the Central Coast had recorded a 5.7% decrease in jobs, compared with 6.9% in NSW and a national decrease of 7.1%.

Locally-dominant industries such as construction and retail have been hit the hardest, followed by other big employers such as accommodation, food services and professional services. In total, around 10,000 jobs were lost across all industries between 14 March and 18 April.

Residential vacancies have remained relatively low across the Coast, and the impacts on the tourism industry have been similar to those experienced in other regions, with the situation likely to improve as the Central Coast is able to once again welcome regional travellers from this week.