

Councils supporting their communities during COVID-19

Victoria's 79 councils are working hard to support their communities through the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Alongside their own rapid adjustment to the Victorian Government's Emergency Directions, councils have continued to provide essential services necessary to the health, amenity and safety of their communities.

Support for businesses and communities

Support for businesses

Economic stimulus packages

Multi-million dollar support packages for local businesses and communities

Permit approvals

Prioritising business applications, 9,528 YTD processed, worth \$2.45 billion

Business collaboration and networking

Brokering contacts between businesses to share staffing and other initiatives

Business liaison

Establishing Supermarket Liaison Officers to address delivery barriers

Mentoring

Supporting a Volunteer Business Mentor program

Professional development and training

Provision of online training resources and free access to online training services

Tendering opportunities

Alerting local businesses to government purchasing and tendering opportunities

COVID-19 hardship policies

Business-specific hardship policies introduced

Rent reductions

Rent relief for council commercial and community tenants and licensees

Support for communities

Assistance for vulnerable people

Establishing relief packages and expanding eligibility criteria for in-home and other support services

Rates deferral options

Compassionate waivers and rates deferment due to COVID-19

Relaxed enforcement of parking infringements

Relaxed enforcement near business areas and free parking to enable people to quickly obtain required items

Rent reductions

Rent and lease reductions for impacted sporting, community and hospitality venues. Fees waived for winter sports grounds

Information provision

New signage in public places. Information booths established at supermarkets, GPs, pharmacies and petrol stations

Domestic animal registration flexibility

Temporary stop to following up unpaid animal registrations

Establishing community networks

Leading coordination of local community networks with NGOs and volunteers

A small selection of council case studies

Ballarat City Council

Be Kind campaign bringing people together in spirit and encouraging kindness and support during the unprecedented health crisis

Bayside City Council

Social connection telephone program established to connect with senior residents

Darebin City Council

\$11.3 million recovery fund for immediate, short and long-term needs

Glen Eira City Council

Lending scales to families with babies with special needs to monitor weight at home and reduce risks of vulnerable infant face-to-face exposure

Hobsons Bay City Council

Offering a youth mental health online counselling service

Hume City Council

Streaming free at-home group fitness classes through Facebook

Melbourne City Council

Partnering with Women's Health West to provide face-to-face support for women experiencing or at risk of family violence

Mildura Rural City Council

Providing library members with up to three hours of free music streaming per day

Mornington Peninsula Shire Council

Established a community network with 800 volunteers willing to provide services to vulnerable members of the community

Murrindindi Shire Council

Providing short video update each day on local impacts

Nilumbik Shire Council

Commissioning Art in the Time of COVID-19 for exhibition

Whitehorse City Council

Engaging theatre and arts audiences with art challenges

Wodonga City Council

Supporting local retailers with interactive map for residents

Wyndham City Council

Offering free childcare to families working in health or other essential services

Councils & COVID-19 (two months in)

Revenue ↓

COVID-19 hardship policies funded and implemented

Sudden loss of income from aquatic facilities, galleries, public facility hire

Significant downturn in charges and fees, including parking

Sudden loss of revenue due to 4th quarter rates deferrals

Childcare service revenue reduced by Federal Government

Loss of income due to rent and lease reductions

Refund of permit fees to businesses, eg alfresco dining

Costs ↑

Immediate service redistribution to residential areas

Increased waste, recycling and illegal dumping

Maintaining staff without user fee income

Increased subsidising of public health regulatory activities

Increased demand for in-home support services

Increased subsidising of domestic animal registrations

Increased IT costs to support staff working-from-home

Other new pandemic activities

Virtual meetings for councillors introduced

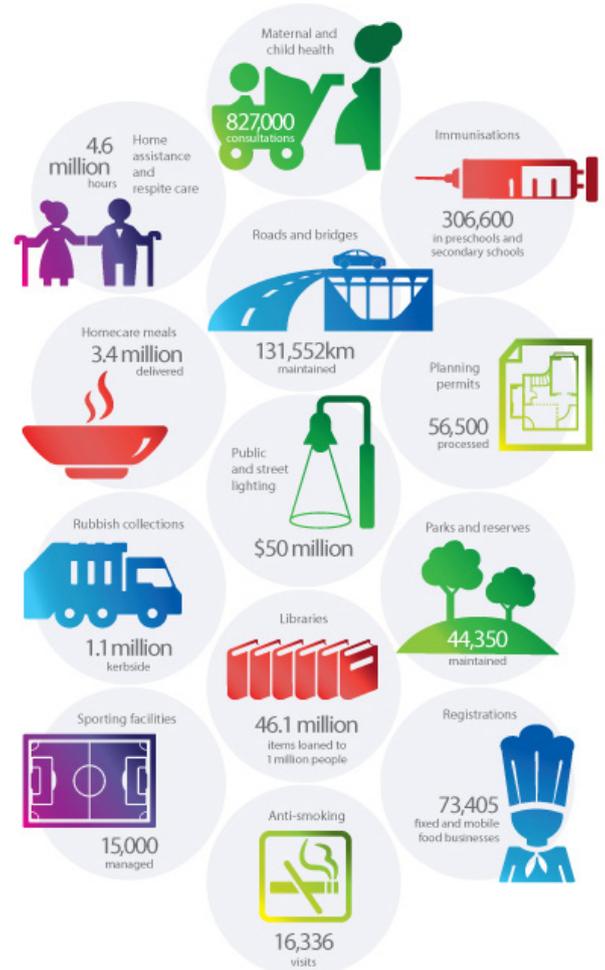
New arrangements for public accessibility

Recruiting new volunteers to support community relief

Supporting State Government relief efforts

Redirecting library staff to support NGO provision of new digital and telecommunication devices to low income families and older people

Maintaining essential services



Annual activities

Supporting the Victorian Government's Emergency and Relief Response

- Municipal emergency management plans and pandemic plans activated
- Local agencies brought together to coordinate relief and recovery activities, including food and other assistance to people severely impacted by COVID-19. To date, councils are receiving no funding because the pandemic is not an eligible emergency under the Natural Disaster Funding Assistance program
- Victorian Government communications disseminated to the community via local channels and networks
- Councils provide twice-weekly status reports to the Victorian Government
- Redeployment of MAV staff to support participation in the Victorian Government emergency management committees which meet multiple times per week
- Bushfire-impacted regions are rebuilding as their communities recover from the devastating bushfires, and now COVID-19

Recovery efforts in bushfire-affected regions

The six councils affected by the State of Disaster declaration in January are supporting individuals, communities and businesses through recovery, including through rate and fee relief, supported by funding provided through the Victorian Government's Council Assistance Fund and the Commonwealth Government.

The most affected councils of East Gippsland, Towong and Alpine Shire Councils have undertaken significant impact assessments, with support from councils from across the state, to make sure properties are made safe and people's needs are registered and being addressed. Rebuilding is underway.

The social and physical distancing required due to COVID-19 has made recovery particularly challenging for the affected communities. On top of bushfire recovery activity, councils are providing COVID-19 relief assistance to isolated households and other people in need of food and other relief services.

"We have been dealt a tough hand of late. Working together, we are sowing the seeds for a return to East Gippsland where we all love to live, work and invest."

Cr John White, East Gippsland Shire Mayor