



20 March 2020

Message to the Walcha Community re COVID-19

Dear Community Members,

The emerging issue and developing controls for the COVID-19 Virus Pandemic is certainly a moving feast. This time a fortnight ago we could never have predicted where we would be today, and what decisions we are having to make regarding our health. Council continues to monitor the NSW Health site www.health.nsw.gov.au and is liaising with government agencies and neighbouring councils to ensure a best practice response.

Introduced changes to Council services is not intended to isolate our residents, but to protect both you and our staff so that we can continue to provide essential services to our community. Council will use our website and Facebook pages as well as publishing in local media to report changes to services. While Council is temporarily closing some facilities and services, remember that all services are only a phone call or internet click away. As a service facility will do all we can to keep our community informed, safe and assured.

In a community like ours it is easy to become complacent, as we are a long way from the regions that are recording large numbers of cases. But we all know that anyone passing through our community or returning from outside the area will contribute to the increased risk of a case in our region. Once it reaches a community the chances of it spreading within that community are high.

NSW Health and Australia's Chief Medical Officer have acknowledged that this virus could be around until Christmas and that its spread through the country is inevitable. Taking preventative action now will help to slow the spread of the virus and will give our community and our country a better chance to manage the impacts. It will give our hospital system every opportunity to consistently provide the world class care that it is renowned for all patients in need.

Now is also a time when we need to reach out to our neighbours, friends and family that that will find these times extra challenging. The elderly and lonely are at heightened risk as a fear of contracting the virus in a public place may see them isolate themselves socially. A quick phone call or knock on their door to check they are ok can be life changing. When reaching out ask yourself, do they have access to healthy food, do they have wood if it turns cold and are they coping. If you do find that someone is struggling and you are not in a position to help, please contact Council and we will support them by putting measures in place.

We are all in this together and will support each other through this unprecedented time.

Wishing you safety and good health.

Eric Noakes

Mayor of Walcha