

restart

PORT STEPHENS

Restart Port Stephens Plan

COVID-19 pandemic



PORT STEPHENS
COUNCIL

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Introduction

The impacts of the COVID -19 pandemic present an unprecedented challenge for Port Stephens Council both in the immediate future and for many years to come.

As a first line of contact within the community, Council has a unique opportunity to lead the Port Stephens community during this time. In the response phase we have adapted our service delivery, whilst maintaining essential services to the community. Through the restart phase, Council will look to ways to best support the rebuilding of socially and economically impacted areas of our community.

Restart Port Stephens provides a coordinated framework to manage the short and long term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and map the response of Council. This will be achieved by understanding the local impacts, coordinating priorities across the LGA, collaborating with other stakeholders, communicating clearly and adopting a community led approach.

This plan sets the vision, objectives and details initiatives we have undertaken during the response and planned for during the phased restart. It is a living document that is updated as the local situation evolves.



Purpose

Support the wellbeing of our community through a measured response to address the economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic to drive the immediate and long term rebuilding of Port Stephens

Pandemic Impacts Assessments

The aim of Impact Assessments is to identify economic, social, infrastructure and environmental impacts on communities. They provide the data to inform prioritisation of physical and financial resources needed for initiatives within the plan.



Social impact Assessment: numbers accessing services, housing stress, Emergency relief



Economic indicators: Unemployment rate, business statistics, vacancy rates in town



Tourism indicators



ABS data: Remplan



Community Engagement: survey capturing local insights



Recovery Governance and Partnerships

Restart Port Stephens requires a whole of organisation approach to ensuring the best outcomes for business and communities across the LGA. We will also work closely with our government, business and community stakeholders to get the right information and align with the bigger picture.

Responsibility	Role	Response Phase	Restart Phase
Project Control Group	Provide advice and develop Restart Port Stephens	Weekly meetings to develop plan	Monthly meetings to review implementation
Executive Team	Endorse Restart Port Stephens Plan	Weekly communications via ET	Monthly review of Delivery Plan
Mayor and Councillors	Endorse Restart Port Stephens Plan	Endorse Plan	Support delivery of plan Monitor Implementation
Emergency Management Coordinator	Communicate with Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC)	Weekly meetings to develop plan	LEMC committee meetings
Senior Leadership Team	Review operational and financial priorities Control delivery of Restart Port Stephens Action Plan	Advice and recommendations via Business Continuity Team	Review Plan as part of monthly SLT meetings 6 monthly major reviews
Business Units / Coordinators	Implement Restart Port Stephens Action Plan	Provide input into delivery plan	Deliver initiative
Local Emergency Management Committee	Provide advice and alignment with other local agency response	Provide advice	Provide advice
Destination Port Stephens	Provide data and information relating to impacts on tourism industry	Fortnightly communications with PSC	Fortnightly communications
Economic Development Advisory Panel	Provide data and information relating to economic impacts	Quarterly meetings with PSC	Quarterly meetings with PSC



Principles

Council will focus on the following principles which will guide the success of the Plan.

Community and Partnership Focus

Initiatives will be driven by community needs and led with our partners, stakeholders and community members, engaging local people and business affected by the event.

Leadership and Coordination

Community is supported by effective management structures and processes to enable the coordination of recovery efforts by relevant council business units, the community and other stakeholders, including response agencies.

Informed Decision Making

Actions are clearly stated and based on the best available information, data and identified community needs. The local context and experience is varied and complex.

Communication

Community is supported by clear, timely and reliable two way communication with the community and stakeholders

Capacity building

Financial and human resources within Council are directed to drive identified actions, support the community to lead the rebuilding. Individuals and communities have inbuilt strengths, resources and assets which we will actively engage



Priorities

Involving and consulting with our community in the planning process ensures we understand our complex community needs, unique impacts and their vision for the future. This process can also work to rebuild lost community connection and build resilience in future emergencies. A total of 1581 responses have been received on five key questions (up to June 2020).

Top reported impacts

1. Interruption to routines like sport and clubs etc. (59%)
2. Sense of disconnection (49%)
3. General feeling of uncertainty or anxiety (36%)
4. Confusion around accurate information (24%)

Top priorities:

1. Improve open spaces, park, pathways and community facilities
2. Support local business through programs and funding
3. Focus on funding for big infrastructure projects
4. Support community providers to help vulnerable

782 respondents said they had seen positive impacts like; more time, quality family time, community spirit and quieter places.

Top issues facing Port Stephens (open comments)

1. Tourism Sector recovery and impacts
2. Bringing tourists back – fear of virus spread and attraction
3. Supporting business - particularly hospitality and small business
4. Getting back to 'new normal' safely – including health challenges
5. Job loss and unemployment
6. Social behaviour – respecting social distancing



Our Priorities

Priorities	Outcomes
Support community members most impacted and vulnerable	Community wellbeing supported Needs of vulnerable groups are addressed Community has ownership to rebuild
Reduce risk to public health	Spread of virus is limited in accordance with health guidance
Provide leadership and advocate for our community	The community is aware of Councils role in emergency management Council represents the community's interests to other levels of government
Support and identify emerging economic opportunities	Business have access to support Diverse economic activity is supported
Provide opportunities for the community to be connected and access timely information	Community aware of the management process Community has social networks to support them Improved resilience to cope with future disasters
Attract visitors and increase visitor spend	Visitor numbers return
Make business recovery and growth easier	Local business networks grow and adapt
Support place based programs to activate our town centres and public spaces	Local centres recover Community feels safe and secure to return to public spaces



Approach

Phase	Indicators
Phase One: Immediate Response Actions characterised as being responsive to State and Federal Government led response to pandemic <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Retaining strong communications• Facility closures• Collaboration with stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community fear and uncertainty• Restrictions on social and mass gatherings• Restrictions on all travel• Requirements to work from home where possible• Government requirement to stay at home• Schools closed• Large majority of business closed
Phase Two: Restart Initiatives characterised as being data led, responsive to changing restrictions as well as focus on longer term planning. Phased lifting of restrictions. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Programs to maintain social connection,• Easing immediate financial pressure• Rebuild and reconnect our affected community and activate our town centres.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gatherings with social distancing requirements• Intrastate travel allowed.• Reopening of business and community facilities (phased)• Ongoing restrictions on mass gatherings, with phased allowance of events• International travel restrictions remain with plans for potential easing• Community wellbeing improving• Business hardship still apparent



Restart Port Stephens Action Plan

Initiatives	Partnerships	Council Role	Response	Restart
Support community members most impacted and vulnerable				
Coordinate the community sector support, partnership projects and social impact assessment	Department Communities and Justice (DCJ)	Coordinate/ Deliver	✓	✓
Provide an easy to use online platform for individuals and businesses to register financial hardship claims on rates, licences, fees and leases	Business, tenants, community	Deliver	✓	✓
Realign and deliver grants program to fund programs that support individuals and organisations through the COVID-19 crisis.	Business, community	Deliver		✓
Work with housing support service to provide temporary housing for vulnerable residents	Housing providers DCJ	Coordinate	✓	
Consider recovery projects to receive funding through Mayor and Ward funds.	Councillors	Deliver	✓	✓
Deliver Community Connections – Seniors Social Inclusion program (grant funded)	Community sector, community, DCJ	Deliver/ coordinate		✓
Investigate the provision of 1 additional free kerbside pickup for Green Waste	Community	Deliver	✓	



Reduce Risk to Public Health

Remove public access from relevant Council facilities such as Administration Building, Visitor Information Centre and Libraries	NSW Department of Health	Coordinate	✓	
Close all parks, beaches and recreational facilities until health restrictions are lifted	NSW Department of Health	Coordinate	✓	
Close boat ramps during peak holiday periods to reduce non-essential travel	NSW Department of Health	Deliver	✓	
Close holiday parks to all non-essential travel until health restrictions are lifted	NSW Department of Health	Deliver	✓	
Phase opening of public facilities in accordance with public health orders	NSW Department of Health Federal Government	Deliver		✓
Modify Community engagement program to adapt to government restrictions and ensure access and participation.	Residents	Delivery	✓	✓
Supply, install and service soap dispensers in 13 targeted amenities	Residents	Delivery	✓	

Provide leadership and advocate for our community

Develop and deliver the Port Stephens 2020/2021 Advocacy Priorities in consultation with key stakeholders	NSW Government agencies Federal Government Agencies	Deliver & Advocate		✓
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Write to the NSW Premier and Minister for Planning regarding the Planning Acceleration Program	Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE)	Advocate	✓	
Advocate for a range of improvements to the planning system for local development				
Identify and support emerging economic opportunities				
Reduce payment terms to ensure faster receipt of invoices for local business	Suppliers	Deliver	✓	
Work with local employment agencies to align programs with gaps in local business	Business	Coordinate	✓	
Support the NSW Governments work in the development of a Special Activation Precinct in Williamtown	NSW Government	Advocate	✓	✓
Provide information for state and federal support programs via website, newsletters and social media	Community service sector	Coordinate	✓	✓
Provide opportunities for the community to be connected and access information				
Develop and deliver a Pandemic Communications Plan	NSW Department of Health	Deliver	✓	✓
Deliver the Port Stephens kindness project	Community service sector	Delivery	✓	✓
Volunteer support and redeployment program		Delivery	✓	✓



Implement online and outreach library programs		Delivery	✓	✓
Attract visitors and increase visitor spend				
Support the Port Stephens Visitor Economy Start House	The Business Centre	Delivery	✓	✓
Boost destination marketing campaigns in Sydney, Regional NSW and Melbourne to drive domestic visitation	Destination NSW (DNSW) Destination Port Stephens (DPS)	Delivery		✓
Attract more people to our town centres through place activation programs	Business & Residents	Delivery		✓
Create localised place based activity to support the launch of the new Port Stephens branding campaign	DPS	Delivery	✓	✓
Increase funding to attract and support events	Event providers	Delivery		✓
Support the development of a local, place based community event in Port Stephens	Business & Residents	Coordinate		✓
Attract Business Events to Port Stephens	DNSW, DPS	Coordinate		✓
Develop a Holiday Parks Marketing Plan (post COVID-19)	DPS	Deliver	✓	✓
Develop a strategy to recover international visitation to Port Stephens	DPS Tourism Australia	Advocate		✓



Develop an event attraction campaign	DNSW	Deliver	✓	✓
Support local business				
Allocate resources to the Small Business Support Service	Tomaree Business Chamber, DPS	Deliver	✓	
Support the delivery of education and training programs for business across Port Stephens including resilience training, event marketing and digital marketing workshops	Business	Deliver	✓	✓
Add an extra 10% weighting towards local businesses through Council's procurement process until 30 June 2021	Business	Deliver	✓	✓
Commit to pay local Port Stephens supplier invoices within 7 days	Business	Deliver	✓	✓
Expand the Port Stephens shop local campaign	Business	Coordinate		✓
Drive awareness of investment opportunities in Port Stephens	NSW Government	Delivery		✓
Extend the planning acceleration program to Port Stephens.	Department Planning, Industry and Environment	Advocate		✓



Support place based programs to activate our town centres and public spaces

Deliver Better Space Better Place funding program	Business and residents	Delivery/ Coordinate	✓
Realign infrastructure delivery to enhance social connection, recreation and town centre renewal (Eg. Smart parking Nelson Bay, Shared spaces grant, pathways program)	Residents	Deliver	✓

