



WELCOME

Welcome to this special edition newsletter regarding the COVID-19 virus (the virus). This is an uncertain time in all of our lives and we are taking measures to protect your safety and the safety of our workers and volunteers.

Some of you may already be aware of some of the changes we've made to delivering your services. Please rest assured that we are doing everything possible to make sure you receive the services and supports that are important to you.

It's amazing how quickly things change. Just as we were on the path of emerging from the drought and its impact with plans for social and economic recovery, we are faced with the challenge of COVID-19. This is a complex situation, that we are coming to realise how this will be significantly impact rural and regional Australia.

The Gloucester and surrounding communities are no strangers to major disruption, but there is no doubt that our resilience and our resources are being stretched to new limits.

We are also exploring ways to ensure we continue to stay connected, share our insights and skills, and continue to understand evolving needs.

We have moved to a skeleton staff in the office to support basic administrative functions such as phone reception and mail, with some of our team working remotely with full email and phone message access.

This is business as usual, so we expect that it won't look or feel very different to most of you. In the event that we **may** temporarily shut down the office and move to entirely to remote operations, I want to assure you that our team will still be contactable and we will be operating as usual. There may be some slight delays in our responsiveness and we ask for your patience if this occurs.

I want to reassure you that we are here and will continue to support you.

Finally, if there's anything that you think we could do to support you or your family within the community to navigate through this situation, please do let us know.

Anna Burley
CEO



RECOGNISING THE SIGNS

As we come into the flu season, it may become difficult to recognise the signs of COVID-19 and the common flu. The following signs and symptoms to look out for are from the Department of Health:

- Fever (may be absent in the elderly)
- Shortness of breath
- Fatigue
- Worsening of a chronic condition of the lungs
- Dry cough
- Coughing up phlegm or mucus
- Increased confusion
- Loss of appetite
- Sore throat
- Aches and pains
- Nausea
- Diarrhoea
- Red, swollen or watery eyes
- Headache
- Chills
- Nasal congestion
- Coughing up blood

If you have symptoms, it is important that you seek medical advice. Gloucester Medico can be reached on 02 6558 1604, or you can call the National Coronavirus Helpline on Ph: 1800 020 080.



PROVIDING YOUR SERVICES & SUPPORTS

You may have already noticed that some changes have been made to how we deliver your services and supports. The following procedures have come into effect as of Monday 30th March:

Aged care services

1. Support workers will now be phoning you before each service. You may have already experienced this. It is a safety precaution that helps protect support workers and yourselves. Support workers will ask you a short list of questions about your health and if you have any symptoms, about whether you've been tested for the virus, and about who you've been in contact with since their last visit. If you answer 'yes' to any of the questions, the Aged Care Team Leader, Kylie Tull, will phone you to talk to you about this further before your service goes ahead. Please note that there may be instances where it is deemed too risky for the support worker to provide your service.
2. We are looking at ways to minimise the use of cash and are encouraging everyone to use electronic transfers instead of cash. We understand that this isn't always possible, so if you need to use cash, please phone us before coming into the office to pay your account.
3. You may experience changes to your regular service, such as a change in your regular day, time or support worker. We will make every effort to maintain your regular service, however, there may be instances where this isn't possible, such as if your regular support worker is sick.
4. Our support workers have increased the use of their Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), such as gloves. This is an extra precaution we are taking to prevent the spread and infection of the virus.
5. Shopping services have been suspended until further notice. Instead of taking you to the supermarkets, a support worker will do your shopping for you.

Disability services

1. Our Disability Services Team Leader, Felicity Whittaker, or the Senior Support Worker, Katrina Dangerfield, will be phoning participants or their families before each service to ask a short list of questions about the participant's and their families' health and any you have any symptoms, about whether anyone in the household has been tested for the virus, and about who you've been in contact with since the participant's last visit. If you answer 'yes' to any of these questions, we may ask the participant to cancel services for the day. This is to ensure the health and safety of our support workers.
2. Individual support is still going ahead, but out of town trips have been cancelled until further notice.
3. Short term accommodation (respite) has been cancelled until further notice.

Do you need extra services?

If you need extra services, such as Meals on Wheels or someone to do your shopping for you, please call us on 02 6558 2454. A Meals on Wheels menu is included in this mailout. Please note hot meal deliveries are restricted to a 5km radius of Gloucester.

CHANGES TO THE BWNG OFFICE

BWNG has made the following changes for the office:

- If you need to come into the office to see a member of staff, please phone ahead first to make an appointment. Where possible, some staff are working from home.
- Only one person allowed in the reception area at a time. There are chairs set up outside the office where you can sit and wait.
- All brochures and other reading material have been removed. If you would like more information about any services available, please ask at reception.
- If you need to make a payment, and electronic transfer is most preferable. Otherwise, you may use the EFTPOS machine available at reception. Cash is the least preferred method.



PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF INFECTION

There are many things everyone should be doing to prevent the spread of the virus. The following advice is from the Department of Health:

- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water for 20 seconds, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze. Use your inner elbow, not your hands. Where possible, cough or sneeze into a tissue, throw the tissue in the bin straight away and wash your hands
- Stay at home and avoid contact with people who are sick or have recently been overseas
- Clean things that are regularly touched, like doorknobs and light switches, with a cleaning spray or wipes



GET A FLU VACCINATION

Getting an annual flu vaccination is recommended for all people aged six months and over, particularly if you fit into any of the at-risk groups listed below.

To meet the anticipated demand for seasonal influenza vaccines in 2020, the Australian Government will be securing the largest ever supply of seasonal influenza vaccines. For the people most at risk of complications from influenza, vaccinations are provided through the National Immunisation Program (NIP).

In 2020, influenza vaccines funded through the National Immunisation Programme are available at no charge to the following groups.

- All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged six months and over
- Pregnant women (during any stage of pregnancy)
- All people aged 65 years and over
- People with medical conditions which increase the risk of influenza disease complications.
- All people aged six months to less than five years of age (this cohort is newly eligible in 2020)

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

If you, or someone you know, is struggling to cope with the stress and anxiety that many people are feeling during this time, please reach out to one of the following services:

- Lifeline Australia
13 11 14
- Beyond Blue
1300 22 4636
- National Sexual Assault, Domestic Family Violence Counselling Service
1800 RESPECT
(1800 737 732)
- Carers Australia
1800 242 636
- Headspace
1800 650 890
- Relationships Australia
1300 364 277
- National Debt Helpline
1800 007 007

NATIONAL COVID-19 HELPLINE

The Department of Health has created a helpline for the COVID-19 virus. For information and advice, please call

1800 020 080



SCAM ALERTS

Unfortunately, scammers are taking advantage of the spread of COVID-19 to exploit and play on the fears of consumers across Australia. The following information and advice is from the Australian Competition & Consumer Commission:



Common types of scams:

- Emails and phone calls impersonating entities such as the World Health Organisation, government authorities, people confirmed to have the virus, and legitimate businesses such as travel agents and phone companies
- People receiving misinformation about the virus, being sent by text message, social media and email
- Products claiming to be a vaccine or cure for the virus
- Investment scams claiming the virus has created opportunities

Protect yourself

- Be aware of fraudulent emails claiming to be from experts. For the most up to date information, visit the Department of Health on www.health.gov.au and the World Health Organisation on www.who.int
- Be careful of fake online shopping website asking for unusual payment methods such as money orders or wire transfer
- Don't let anyone pressure you to make quick decisions. Take your time and consider who you are dealing with
- No vaccine or cure presently exists for the virus
- Don't click on links from sources you don't know. They could download viruses onto your computer or device
- Don't respond to messages or phone calls that ask for personal or financial details – just press delete or hang up.

Granny Square Christmas Tree Project

We are putting a call out for people stuck at home to contribute to a group project, aiming to reduce the isolation people are feeling during this time. If you have any spare yarn at home, we would like to ask you to create a 20cm x 20cm knitted or crocheted square in whatever pattern or colour you'd like. Once this is all over, we will collect the squares, put them together and create a Christmas tree, symbolising the single but group effort of our wonderful community in this time of isolation.



NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE SERVICES

In accordance with public health directives our Neighbourhood Centre Staff and volunteers are working from home, but are continuing to provide essential services in the following ways;

- Information and referral services can be provided over the phone for issues such as homelessness, domestic & family violence or drug and alcohol addiction.
- Assistance through the EAPA programme can be organised with our reception team who will then pass the forms on to Neighbourhood Centre staff.
- If you are experiencing a financial crisis we have donated food available in reception. (Please note that we do recommend you follow social distancing directives and only come to our office if urgent).

If you are experiencing a crisis and require Neighbourhood Centre Services please contact our team by calling 6558 2454 or by emailing reception@bwng.org.au