



SPECIAL EDITION

Singleton Edit

COVID-19 RESPONSE





HOME-GROWN *response*

As people are told to stay home to help control the spread of COVID-19, Mayor of Singleton, Cr Sue Moore says it's more important than ever to support each other

“

We're all in this together,
and we will all get through
this together

The COVID-19 pandemic has wrought extreme and rapid changes in our daily lives, with tight controls over how we interact and dramatic shifts in how we work and do business, conduct transactions and even do the shopping.

For Mayor of Singleton, Cr Sue Moore, it meant no restaurant dinner or hugs from the grandkids for her birthday. A new grandson arrived last month, and the few times she has seen him included strict social distancing.

"I haven't even got to hold him," she said. "Yes, it's disappointing. However, better to be sure than sorry."

It's no different in households across the Singleton local government area, our State, our nation, and our world.

Governments are making unprecedented decisions to close down entire industries, ban public gatherings and encourage everyone to stay home. If we have to go out for essential services only, we must maintain a 1.5 metre separation from each other at all times. Handshakes and hugs are outlawed.

As well as severe economic impacts, the ramifications of COVID-19 have also included postponing local government elections scheduled for September 2020 to 2021.

Cr Moore said that meant Council could plan for the next 12 to 18 months to support the community through the crisis and help to lead the recovery in the aftermath.

Measures announced in Council's Community Support Package to be formally endorsed at this month's Ordinary meeting include an extension of the payment for the fourth quarter rates installment from May 31 to August 31; waiving of cancellation fees at Council's long daycare centre and OOSH; and a review of all fees and charges with the objective to find opportunities for relief for households and businesses.

"I'm very pleased the Minister for Local Government made the decision quickly to reschedule local government elections so we can bunker down to make decisions about what our community needs now and in the short-term," she said.

"Council's role is to support the needs of the community, and never is that more vital than in times of crisis. We have announced the Community Support Package to offer relief and assistance to people across the local government area, and Council staff are looking at any and all options to help our community and business sector.

"We are fortunate to be in a position where we can support proposals such as \$475,000 to help businesses and residents across our local government area, as well as build on partnerships with Singleton Business Chamber, industry groups including the Hunter Valley Wine Tourism Association, and community organisations to make sure we're doing everything we can for people in our entire community to get the help they need.

"Yes, we're avoiding all face-to-face interactions, dialing in for meetings and even preparing for a virtual Council meeting, but far from putting our feet up at home, we are and should be working harder than ever."

With no knowing how long the COVID-19 pandemic and consequential government restrictions on closures and social distancing will continue, Cr Moore said what is certain is the need for continuation of the provision of services – no matter what – and ongoing strategic planning.

"We need to make sure Singleton is well positioned to take advantage of government assistance as and when it becomes available, as well as any opportunities that arise to benefit our community, particularly in the recovery phase," she said.

"There is no one in our community who is not affected by COVID-19 in some way: people have lost jobs, businesses have closed, and children are being told to stay home from school. And the impacts are even greater for people in our community who are already vulnerable.

"We have an amazingly strong community, however this is an unprecedented situation and some people may need extra support.

"I'm proud and pleased to continue in the role of mayor to see this disaster behind us, and to support our community in any way I can. If you need help and don't know where to find it, give me a call on 0407 w029 341.

"What's most important right now is to stay at home and only go out for essential shopping, work or study, and medical appointments. Be mindful of social distancing. But above all, look out for each other. We're all in this together, and we will all get through this together." ■



IN THE LINE OF *duty*

With a greater emphasis on essential services in response to COVID-19, Council's operations have taken on even more significance to rally the community

For an organisation that focuses primarily on bringing the community together, decisions to ban events and close facilities such as libraries and playgrounds in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic may have caused a ripple in its identity.

But in fact, the crisis has strengthened Singleton Council's purpose and brought about innovations in the delivery of services in a new era of social distancing and isolation, as well as affirm a long program of work to digitise many aspects of Council's business, including online development applications.

General Manager Jason Linnane said Council was acutely aware of its role during the COVID-19 crisis to provide ongoing essential services as normally as possible, while remaining flexible and looking for new ways to foster community connection – even as approximately half of Council's workforce was working remotely in line with the Federal Government's biggest directive to stay at home.

"The response to the COVID-19 pandemic has seen some very hard decisions, such as closing the Visitor Information Centre and Library, stopping face-to-face enquiries at our Administration Centre and putting a halt on household waste at the Waste Management Facility," he said.

"As we are all painfully aware, we find ourselves in unprecedented circumstances and must follow the directions of the NSW and Federal governments and health authorities to avoid as much direct contact with other people as possible to overcome this crisis.

"But social isolation doesn't mean disconnection.

"Our Customer Service team is answering calls as usual, or you can use webchat or email for any enquiries you have. Our website and Online Services are a great source of information and round-the-clock access to Council business. Our Library and Youth Services teams are working hard behind-the-scenes on new ways to deliver programs, and you can take advantage of our online collection – it's simple to use and free for members.

"Our planning team is still processing development applications (DAs) as usual and that's because we implemented a paperless system 18 months ago that means you can lodge your DA electronically during this period. In fact, we encourage you to do so to help your project be shovel-ready when this crisis is over."

In the meantime, Children's Services is operating as usual (albeit with strict social distancing measures and increased cleaning) as Council continues to monitor government regulations.

While householders can no longer take that load of rubbish to the Waste Management Facility in keeping with government directives to stay home, kerbside collections will continue as usual and tip vouchers will be extended by four months. At this stage, the bulk waste collection remains scheduled for November.

Ranger services are ongoing, and although playgrounds, skate parks and outdoor gyms are currently off-limits, crews are making sure they're in tip top condition for playtime to resume as soon as the situation changes.

"The reality is we don't know how long this crisis will last, and it's essential our local government area is still maintained for the safety and function of our community – even during a pandemic," Mr Linnane said.

"Apart from the shut down of construction of Broke Skate Park because our contractor is from interstate, our capital works program is still powering along including the museum upgrade, road rehabilitations and new playgrounds at Bulga and Townhead Park that will be ready for fun when this crisis is over.

"We also have some big ticket infrastructure projects happening in Water and Sewer, including the \$4 million major sewer pump station upgrade project that began last month, the water main renewal project and the continuation of the new Gowrie Reservoir.

"And we know the criticality of providing good quality water and being able to flush the toilet, especially in the situation we find ourselves in. So our Water and Sewer team are on deck responding to your calls and operating the treatment plants."

Mr Linnane said without a precedent to follow in the current circumstances, Council was continuing essential operations in adherence to government advice and regulations and encouraging the community to do the same.

"We can't solve the world's problems, but we can all work together to do our bit to try to stop the spread of COVID-19. And the easiest way to do that is to stay at home," he said. ■

FACILITIES + SERVICES UPDATE

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>✗ Administration Building CLOSED to face-to-face enquiries</p> <p>✗ Singleton Visitor Information Centre CLOSED</p> <p>📶 Customer enquiries, including planning, are available by telephone, email, Online Services and webchat</p> <p>✗ Singleton Waste Management Facility CLOSED</p> <p>✓ Kerbside waste collections operating as usual</p> <p>✗ Singleton Public Library CLOSED</p> <p>📶 Members may access the online collection on Council's website and keep-up-to date with programs via Facebook</p> <p>✗ Singleton Youth Venue CLOSED</p> <p>✗ Singleton Civic Centre (including Mama's Kitchen): CLOSED</p> <p>✗ Mobile Preschool: CLOSED</p> | <p>✓ Colleen Gale Childrens Services and OOSH operating as usual (in keeping with social distancing and increased hygiene)</p> <p>✗ Singleton Gym & Swim and the Heights Sports Centre CLOSED</p> <p>✗ All playgrounds, skateparks and outdoor fitness equipment CLOSED</p> <p>✗ All public toilets CLOSED with the exception of Burdekin Park (24 hours), Townhead Park (daytime hours) and toilets in villages</p> <p>✗ Council buildings (including 74 George Street and the Museum) CLOSED</p> <p>✓ Development application lodgment as usual via the online portal on Council's website. For assistance, contact Council</p> <p>✓ Building certification services LIMITED. Where possible, Council certifiers will undertake inspection of building work under construction to support the local economy</p> <p>✓ Animal Management Facility operating as usual, however contact Council for collection options for impounded animals</p> <p>📱 In instances of dog attacks, please contact the Police</p> |
|--|--|

WE'RE HERE TO HELP

T 02 6578 7290 | E council@singleton.nsw.gov.au | W singleton.nsw.gov.au



FULL LIST OF FACILITIES + SERVICES AND TO KEEP UP-TO-DATE

singleton.nsw.gov.au/covid19

NEW APP TO GET YOUR WASTE SORTED

A new app is under construction to help optimise waste and recycling information with a single click.

The new Singleton Waste App will let you know when to put your bins out, when the bulk waste collection will take place, and what you can and can't put into your kerbside collection bins.

It also makes it simple and easy to report damaged or lost bins or a missed collection service.

Mark Ihlein, Council's Director Planning and Infrastructure Services, said most importantly the app was also environmentally-friendly, containing loads of information that is currently printed and distributed to almost 10,000 households across the Singleton local government area.

THE SINGLETON WASTE APP INCLUDES:

- a personalised waste calendar
- bin collection reminders
- a bin guide of what goes in which bin

- an A-Z list of items and how to dispose of them correctly
- forms to report damaged bins or missed collection services
- information on local recycling centres, bulk waste collection, illegal dumping and waste education resources

"This is a project we've been working on for a little while now and it's exciting to be at the stage where we're putting on the final touches before roll out in the next few weeks," Mr Ihlein said.

"The app will be an important tool for how we communicate news and information about waste services with our customers.

"It's also another example of how Council is continually looking to add value to our services to make life easier for our customers, and we're already looking at how we can expand the app to other parts of Council."

The app will be free to download from the app store and google play for iOS and Android devices.

E-LIBRARY DOORS WIDE OPEN

It might be temporarily closed to the public, but the doors to adventure, learning and knowledge remain open at Singleton Public Library with a host of movies, music, e-magazines, e-comics and e-books available online to members.

Anthony Egan, Council's Director Business and Community Services, said the Library team was working hard to provide options for members to connect with services, including home delivery and Storytime live via Facebook that is making headlines across NSW.

It is also a great opportunity for people to sign up at singleton.nsw.gov.au/librarymembership

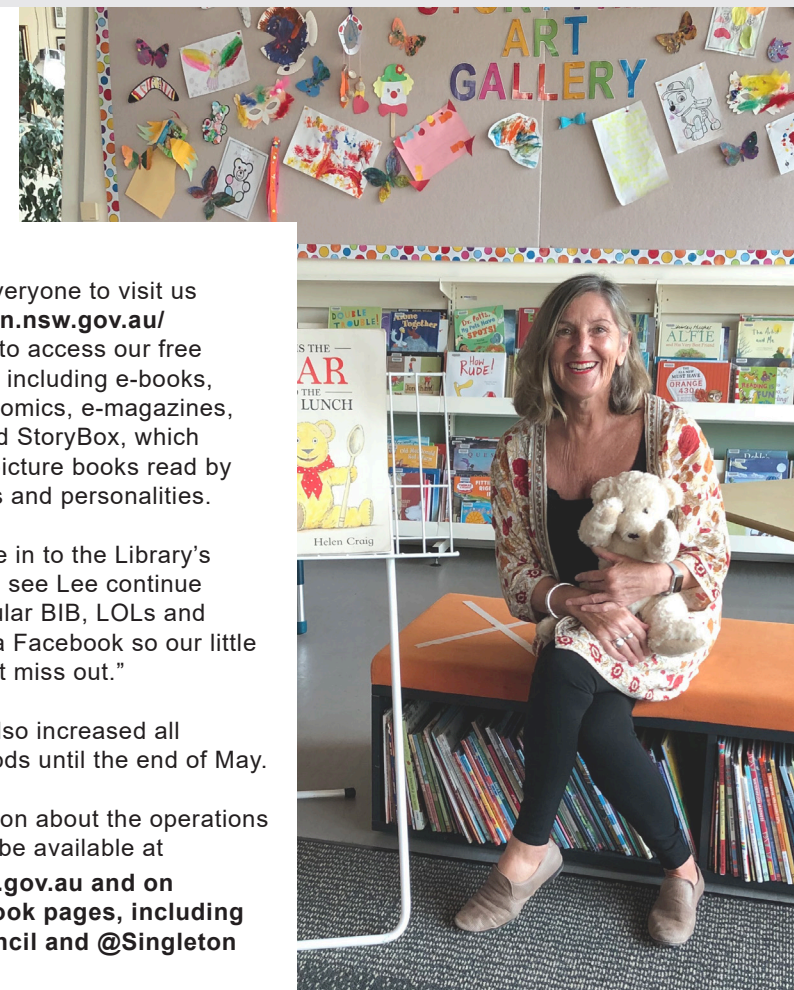
"The COVID-19 situation is changing almost daily, and the team is dreaming up new ways to continue to engage with our members digitally through our website and Facebook page," he said.

"We encourage everyone to visit us online at singleton.nsw.gov.au/onlinecollection to access our free digital collections, including e-books, e-audiobooks, e-comics, e-magazines, movies, songs and StoryBox, which has hundreds of picture books read by Australian authors and personalities.

"You can also tune in to the Library's Facebook page to see Lee continue to deliver our regular BIB, LOLs and Storytime slots via Facebook so our little library lovers don't miss out."

The Library has also increased all existing loan periods until the end of May.

Any new information about the operations of the Library will be available at [W singleton.nsw.gov.au](http://W.singleton.nsw.gov.au) and on Council's Facebook pages, including @Singleton Council and @Singleton Public Library.



COMMUNITY SUPPORT PACKAGE

DELIVERING SUPPORT + RELIEF IN THE COVID-19 CRISIS

ACTIONS SINGLETON COUNCIL ARE TAKING NOW TO SUPPORT OUR COMMUNITY



\$475,000 for economic development and social programs** to provide immediate, on-the-ground support for small businesses, community organisations and vulnerable sectors of the community. The programs are currently in development and more information will be announced as it becomes available.

Community Partners: Singleton Business Chamber, Singleton Interagency



RATES EXTENSION for the fourth quarter instalment from **31 May to 31 August with no interest applied** to provide cash-flow relief for property owners and residents. This will be reviewed as the COVID-19 crisis unfolds and more announcements may be made.



EXTENSION FOR THE MAY INSTALMENT of **Singleton Water and Sewer bills** to provide cash-flow relief for property owners and residents. Further information will be provided in May.



2019/2020 HOUSEHOLD WASTE VOUCHERS extended in accordance with the duration of the **Waste Management Facility** closure to honour Council's commitment of service to the community.



CANCELLATION FEES for Colleen Gale Children's Services** waived to support families to make the best decision for their needs in response to COVID-19.



REVIEW OF ALL COUNCIL FEES + CHARGES** to seek opportunities for further **relief for residents and businesses**, with announcements to be made when information is available.



REVIEW COUNCIL'S PROCUREMENT POLICY** to seek opportunities to provide greater **support for local suppliers** to promote economic stimulus.



RENT RELIEF FOR TENANTS OF COUNCIL-OWNED BUILDINGS** to provide cash-flow **relief for small businesses** and other **organisations** operating in these premises.



EXPANDED DELIVERY OF SERVICES to be developed on an ongoing and as-needed basis in keeping with the changing situation. **Announcements will be made as information is available.** Alternative and innovative provision of remote service delivery, including **Library and Youth services** to continue to promote a socially connected community.