

COVID-19 Coronavirus update

24 March 2020



COVID-19 Stage 1 shutdown restrictions announced by the Prime Minister and Victorian Premier have impacted our service delivery. We have closed some facilities and services. This includes customer service centres, visitor information centres, recreation centres, caravan parks and libraries. These closures are outlined in this newsletter.

We have the health and wellbeing of our customers and staff at the core of any decisions we make to change service levels or temporarily close services, as guided by the Department of Health and Human Services and national guidelines.

On Monday 23 March, it was confirmed that East Gippsland had one case of COVID-19. We ask the community to follow social distancing and hygiene practices to help prevent further spread.

During this time, we also encourage everyone to consider conducting council transactions online or by telephone. You can make payments and complete a number of forms on our website.

During these uncertain times, we ask that you are considerate and respectful to our staff and your community.

Closures to services and facilities

Following restrictions and advice from government, council has taken measures to close some facilities and services.

Customer service centres

Our customer service centres listed below are closed in the interest of public health and follow advice from the Victorian Chief Health Officer to follow social distancing requirements.

We will be providing our services through telephone, email and website.

Our contact centre remains open from 8.30 am – 5.00 pm.

You can complete many of our forms online at www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/forms Payments and other transactions are encouraged via the telephone or through our website.

Centres closed to walk-in customers:

- Corporate Centre, Bairnsdale
- Bairnsdale Business Centre
- Bushfire Recovery Centre (by appointment only)
- Lakes Entrance
- Mallacoota
- Omeo (Bendigo Bank and Centrelink services by appointment only)
- Orbost
- Paynesville

These arrangements are in place until 30 April or until otherwise revised.

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Arts and leisure

The following facilities are closed until 30 April 2020 when they will be reviewed.

- Bairnsdale Aquatic and Recreation Centre
- Lakes Entrance Aquadome
- Children services
- Forge Theatre
- Orbst Outdoor Pool (closed for season)

Libraries

All libraries are closed until 30 April 2020 when they will be reviewed.

We will still be offering electronic programs and are investigating possible systems to allow the community to access to books.

Visitor Information Centres

Visitor Information Centres are closed until 30 April 2020 when they will be reviewed.

Customers can contact 1800 637 060 or 5152 3444.

Council-operated caravan parks

Council operated caravan parks are closed.

Patrons who have made bookings for Mallacoota Foreshore Holiday Park and Eagle Point Caravan Park have been contacted regarding their bookings.

New bookings are not being taken.

Our free parks remain open at the moment to support travellers.

Decisions to close caravan and camping parks operated by private businesses are not made by council.

What is open?

The following facilities and services remain open. Best practise social distancing guidelines must be observed in all public spaces.

- Marinas
- Planning
- East Gippsland Livestock Exchange, only people essential for a sale to proceed are permitted
- Waste sites and kerbside waste collection
- Aerodromes
- Raymond Island Ferry - casual fees are suspended for all vehicles to allow social distancing
- Public toilets - council is working to replenish stocks after thefts of toilet paper from public toilets.
- Local Laws will continue animal collection and the operating of the pound.
- Health officers will continue to work
- Immunisation sessions are an essential service and will go ahead. Due to social distancing requirements please expect longer wait times. If you are showing symptoms, please do not come to an immunisation session

Council social distancing

Council is conducting all meetings via Skype or other online mediums, including staff meetings and meetings between staff and external parties.

How is COVID-19 spread?

It is spread through close contact with an infected person. Keeping a distance of 1.5 metres from other people is recommended.

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Close contact means greater than 15 minutes face-to-face or the sharing of a closed space for more than two hours with a confirmed case.

A close contact could include any person meeting any of the following criteria:

- Living in the same household or similar setting (for example, a boarding school or hostel)
- Direct contact with the body fluids or laboratory specimens of a confirmed case
- A person who spent two hours or longer in the same room
- Face-to-face contact for more than 15 minutes with the case in any other setting not listed above.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Many people who contract COVID-19 will suffer only mild symptoms. However early indications are that the elderly and people with pre-existing medical conditions are more at risk of experiencing severe symptoms.

The most common coronavirus symptoms reported include:

- Fever
- Breathing difficulties such as breathlessness
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Fatigue or tiredness

If you feel unwell

You need to call ahead **before** visiting your doctor or emergency department. This allows the medical centre to put infection control measures in place.

The Department of Health and Human Services also has a self-assessment chart to help you decide if you should be tested.

New stage 1 shutdown measures

On Sunday 22 March the Prime Minister announced stage one shutdown measures which are now in place. The Victorian Premier also announced these Stage 1 shutdown measures on Monday 23 March.

The measures are detailed below:

- International travel is not advised. You cannot enter Australia unless you are: an Australian citizen, a permanent resident, a New Zealand citizen usually residing in Australia or an immediate family member of an Australian citizen or permanent resident.
- If you return from overseas you must self-isolate for 14 days. Under the State of Emergency, a person who ignores this direction may be fined up to approximately \$20,000, or up to approximately \$100,000 in the case of companies and other bodies
- All non-essential travel should be avoided. This includes domestic flights
- Businesses closed due to the Stage 1 shutdown include pubs, clubs, nightclubs, and licensed venues in hotels and pubs. It also includes gyms, indoor sporting venues, places of worship, cinemas and entertainment venues. Restaurants and cafes are only allowed to provide delivery or takeaway services.
- Victoria Police has a coronavirus enforcement squad of 500 officers to ensure containment measures are followed.
- Organising, attending or allowing non-essential outdoor mass gatherings of 500 or more people is prohibited
- Organising, attending or allowing of non-essential indoor mass gatherings of 100 or more people is prohibited.

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- All non-essential indoor gatherings of less than 100 people must have no more than one person per 4sqm.
- Anzac Day ceremonies, events and marches should be cancelled
- School holidays across Victorian have been bought forward, starting on Tuesday 24 March. Schools will resume as normal for term two unless Premier directs otherwise
- Aged care facilities should implement a range of specified measures for restricting visitors
- Stop hoarding supplies – this is putting pressure on supply chains

More information on COVID-19

Visit the Department of Health and Human Services website for the latest advice and updates on the response to COVID-19:

www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus

If you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19, please contact your GP or call the dedicated hotline on 1800 675 398.