

City of Ballarat's Update on COVID-19

The COVID-19 emergency is an unprecedented event in recent history. The City of Ballarat has instigated its Response and Recovery Pandemic 2020 Plan for its staff, ratepayers, residents and the broader community.

The City of Ballarat is urging all residents to stay at home unless they need to go outside for food, medical care, exercise, work or education (when it cannot be done from home).

Indoor and outdoor gatherings are restricted to two people (except for members of your immediate household and for work or education). These restrictions are now being enforced in Ballarat, with on-the-spot fines of \$1,652 for individuals and \$9,913 for businesses issued to those who breach the restrictions.

NOTE: This is an extremely fluid situation and events are changing daily.

All information listed below is correct as at 3.30pm, Thursday 2 April but is subject to change. Please keep up-to-date by visiting ballarat.vic.gov.au

Rate Relief – City of Ballarat response

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the City of Ballarat has developed a series of measures to reduce the financial burden on our community and help generate future economic activity.

These include:

- A dedicated Economic Response Contact Centre team which can provide advice and support to business owners
- An automatic extension of some permits, registrations and licences for a six-month period. Details to come
- Consideration of bringing forward a new range of minor capital works projects to support local contractors and supply chains once any government restrictions on non-essential movement are lifted
- Streamlining planning permit assessment processes, including accelerated further-information requests and access to an online submissions system
- More information for businesses around what they can do to modify their usual practices in these changed circumstances
- Extension of final rate instalments for Ballarat ratepayers directly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, from 31 May 2020 to 30 June 2020 without penalty
- Free parking in the CBD and hospital precinct during the COVID-19 pandemic period

- Increase from a fortnightly to a weekly payment cycle to City of Ballarat suppliers, ensuring money flows back into the economy quicker.

However, it must also be stressed - residential and business rates are the City of Ballarat's main source of income. Without rate payments, the City of Ballarat would not be able to provide the 70 plus services it provides to the community. This is equivalent to the Federal Government's income tax. Rates are a tax, not a fee for service

During this very tough time, the City of Ballarat must continue to provide our essential services which are largely aimed at protecting the most vulnerable in our community, including Meals on Wheels and in-home care. This also covers waste collection and Environmental Health Services which ensures Ballarat is complying with all of the state and federal government regulations in relation to COVID-19.

Farmers' market update

With the advice from the federal and state governments in relation to limiting public gatherings to reduce the risk of COVID-19 virus, the City of Ballarat will not permit farmers' markets to be undertaken on Council land at this point in time.

Bike riding in Ballarat Botanical Gardens is prohibited

The community is encouraged to continue exercising during COVID-19 Stage 3 restrictions (while maintaining social distancing), however the City of Ballarat is urging everyone to abide by local laws.

City of Ballarat's Update on COVID-19

Over the past few weeks, the Parks and Gardens team have noticed an increase in cyclists using Lake Wendouree's shared footpath, as well as Ballarat Botanical Gardens – where riding is prohibited by Local Law.

The safety of the community is paramount and as such the City of Ballarat would like to remind cyclists to please use the bike lane around Lake Wendouree wherever possible and that no bikes are to be ridden anywhere in the Botanical Gardens.

Meals on Wheels

The City of Ballarat has seen an increase in demand for Meals on Wheels amid the COVID-19 stage 3 restrictions. The meal delivery service, coordinated by the City of Ballarat, is delivering an extra 200 meals a week, with numbers rising daily.

The Meals on Wheels program, normally run by volunteers, is now being delivered by City of Ballarat staff who have been redeployed from the Ballarat Aquatic Lifestyle Centre, Community Care and Maintenance areas.

The Meals on Wheels program is continuing to deliver meals to residents every day with heightened safety requirements to ensure the safety of workers and residents. Volunteers have been put on hold during this time.

Beware of phone Scammers

City of Ballarat is warning elderly residents of a current phone scam regarding Meals on Wheels. We are advising people that they should not, under any circumstances, give their banking details over the phone if they are contacted by anyone claiming to be from Meals on Wheels.

A number of residents have been contacted recently by a caller asking how many meals they require and asking for their bank account details.

The City of Ballarat would NEVER ask for bank details or payment over the phone.

Meals on Wheels recipients who receive such a phone call should contact City of Ballarat on 5320 5500.

Active Ageing team introduces new programs

The City of Ballarat's Active Ageing team has instigated several initiatives to maintain social connections and support the health and well-being of their Active

Ageing participants under the new COVID-19 Stage 3 restrictions.

A new program called 'Friendly Phone Calls' helps people connect in regular social group programs through their phones, iPads, laptops and other electronic devices.

The Active Ageing team is also working to develop a new program called 'Armchair Travel', for residents to connect face-to-face through technology and share stories and photos of their travels. The team will also create short videos featuring gentle exercises to help residents keep healthy and active. They'll also look at developing verbal crosswords and Sudoku.

The Active Ageing team will start making twice-weekly phone calls to program participants. These twice-weekly chats are designed to mitigate the loneliness and anxiety of home isolation. Each staff member will have a list of program participants who they'll call regularly to build up a good rapport and develop a relationship.

The City of Ballarat is calling on everyone in the community to look after our most vulnerable people during this uncertain time. People over 65 and people with pre-existing medical conditions are at a higher risk of experiencing severe illness from the COVID-19 virus. If you have a grandparent, parent, uncle, aunty, neighbour, friend, or anybody you know that is 65 years + please assist them so they can remain at home.

More than 2,800 people are registered with the Active Ageing program, with 900 in the social connection program. Anyone who is interested in joining the program can call 5320 5629.

Ordinary Council Meeting update

On Wednesday 1 April, the City of Ballarat held its first Ordinary Council Meeting under the COVID-19 Stage 3 restrictions currently enforced across Victoria. Under Stage 3 restrictions members of the public could not attend the meeting, they could lodge questions and submissions to be put to Council and then live-stream the meeting.

Council is seeking immediate exemption or changes via an amendment to the Local Government Act to allow Council meetings to lawfully proceed without a quorum of Councillors physically present in the chamber.

The next Ordinary Council Meeting is due to be held at the Town Hall on Wednesday 22 April.