

CASE STUDY CITY OF ROCKINGHAM COVID-19 - RESPONSE & RECOVERY

BACKGROUND

This document is a brief case study detailing the response and recovery measures implemented by the City of Rockingham (the City) as a result of a world-wide pandemic caused by the outbreak and spread of a novel coronavirus disease now commonly known as COVID-19. At the time of writing, the City was in the third phase of a four-stage approach to response and recovery.

The COVID-19 pandemic emerged in Western Australia during the first quarter of the 2020 calendar year. The Executive were quick to recognise and acknowledge the threat posed by the disease and by mid-March 2020 had committed resources to focus specifically on developing and implementing response strategies.

Strategies were swiftly developed to focus response actions and counter the direct and consequential impact of COVID-19 on the City. The plans, initiatives and actions implemented to give effect to these strategies were in sync with, but in some cases in addition to, the state-of-emergency risk mitigation directives of the Western Australia State Government (the State Government).

Multiple communication channels have been utilised throughout the pandemic to keep stakeholders informed and to aid compliance with the risk mitigation measures employed. Language was recognised as important in encouraging a calm, timely and measured approach and to this end a decision was made at the outset to describe the City's response to COVID-19 as 'managing a major incident' rather than 'dealing with a crisis'.

Although the State Government is leading recovery in Western Australia, local governments across the state have been integral in the timely support of local level community recovery efforts. In May 2020 the City established a Local Recovery Coordination Group, two months prior to the release of the COVID-19 State Recovery Plan.

The pandemic is far from over and the overlap of response and recovery actions is likely to continue for months and possibly years, until a vaccination is developed and administered to the population. This is unique in terms of major incident response and recovery, with the overlapping of response and recovery functions usually confined to days and occasionally, a week or maybe two.

The longevity of the incident has created further challenges for the City as there are many signs that generally speaking, people are already COVID weary. This version of fatigue appears to be more related to people yearning to 'move on' and put the COVID-19 scenario behind them rather than the more commonly known incident fatigue caused by continuous duty or exposure to extreme conditions. Consequently, maintaining a disciplined approach to the City's health and wellness risk mitigation initiatives implemented to counter the spread of COVID-19 will be an on-going challenge that will need to be closely monitored.

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PHASED APPROACH TO RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

Stages

The City employed a phased approach to respond to, and recovery from, the COVID-19 pandemic, consisting of four stages.

- *Stage One - Monitor - Response* describes the period from when the City's Executive first commenced monitoring the evolving COVID-19 situation and began making decisions and instigating actions in response.
- *Stage Two - Response* commenced when a Business Continuity Team was appointed to develop and implement response strategies.
- *Stage Three - Response - Recovery* denotes the phase of response when recovery actions were commenced in parallel with response.
- *Stage Four - Recovery* will commence when response is complete and only recovery remains.

The stages referred to above were established for internal use by the City and are not to be confused with the roadmaps of response and recovery employed by the various other entities including the World Health Organisation (WHO) or federal and state governments.

Drawing a distinction between *Stage Two Response* and *Stage Three Response - Recovery* was considered important as it clearly signalled the move from response to the response - recovery phase.

This report details the City's actions from *Stage One Monitor - Response* through to *Stage Three Response - Recovery*.

At the time of publication of this case study, *Stage Three Response - Recovery* was still underway.



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RESPONSE – Strategy One – Health and Wellbeing

COVID-19 Response Strategies and Actions

For the purpose of Business Continuity the City has given affect to two strategies to respond to the threat posed by COVID-19. The objective and scope of strategy one is as follows.

Strategy One – Minimise the risk to the health and wellbeing of City staff, councillors and community members that have physical interaction with the City during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Response Strategy One – Health and Wellbeing - Actions

The following information graphic illustrates the theme of risk mitigation actions taken to implement Strategy One to minimize the risk to health and wellbeing.



1. City of Rockingham COVID-19 Health and Wellbeing Risk Mitigation Activities

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RESPONSE – Strategy Two – Service Delivery

COVID-19 Response Strategies and Actions

For the purpose of Business Continuity the City has given affect to two strategies to respond to the threat posed by COVID-19. The objective and scope of strategy two is as follows.

Strategy Two - Minimise the risk of disruption to the City's ability to perform its function and deliver services to the community during the COVID-19 pandemic, within the terms allowable given Federal and State Government restrictions.

Response Strategy Two – Service Delivery - Actions

The following information graphic illustrates the theme of risk mitigation actions taken to implement Strategy Two and minimize the risk of disruption to service delivery.



2. City of Rockingham COVID-19 Service Delivery Disruption Risk Mitigation Activities

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RECOVERY – PEAK COMMITTEE

COVID-19 Local Recovery Coordination Group

The City of Rockingham COVID-19 Local Recovery Coordination Group (LRCG) has been formed in accordance with the City's Local Emergency Management Arrangements. The LRCG is focused on supporting community recovery from the impact of COVID-19 in the City of Rockingham from the perspective of (1) Social Wellbeing and (2) Economic Wellbeing.

The functions of the LRCG are:

- Assess recovery requirements based on COVID-19 community impacts to Social Wellbeing and Economic Wellbeing (see context statements below)
- Provide a central point of communication for entities involved in delivering or contributing towards COVID-19 recovery strategies
- Facilitate the provision of services and information exchange relevant to COVID-19 recovery strategies
- Facilitate the development of local initiatives to support Federal and State COVID-19 recovery initiatives
- Provide advice to the State Government to ensure their COVID-19 recovery programs and services meet the needs of the community
- Monitor the progress of recovery from COVID-19

FOCUS OF CITY OF ROCKINGHAM LRCG

Social Wellbeing Context

For the purpose of the LRCG, Social Wellbeing is targeted at community recovery from the impacts of COVID-19. This includes the consequential impacts on the more vulnerable groups along with the broader community impact caused by the cessation of sport, many leisure activities and community events.

Economic Wellbeing Context

For the purpose of the LRCG, Economic Wellbeing is targeted at community recovery of local development, tourism, industry and business impacted directly by COVID-19.

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RECOVERY – SUBCOMMITTEES

COVID-19 Social Wellbeing Subcommittee

The functions of the Social Wellbeing Sub-Committee are to support the LRCG by:

- Assessing recovery requirements based on COVID-19 Social Wellbeing impacts on the local community within the City of Rockingham LRCG context.
- Recommending priority areas, projects, initiatives and events to assist with the COVID-19 Social Wellbeing recovery process
- Identify opportunities and initiatives for the impacted community to leverage State and Federal Government stimulus
- Identify opportunities for information exchange relevant to COVID-19 Social Wellbeing recovery strategies
- Provide advice to the LRCG related to the progress of COVID-19 Social Wellbeing recovery of the community

COVID-19 Economic Wellbeing Subcommittee

The functions of the Economic Wellbeing Sub-Committee are to support the LRCG by:

- Assessing recovery requirements based on COVID-19 Economic Wellbeing impacts to the local community within the City of Rockingham LRCG context.
- Recommending priority areas, projects, initiatives and events to assist with the COVID-19 Economic Wellbeing recovery process
- Identify opportunities and initiatives for local tourism, industry and business to leverage State and Federal Government stimulus
- Identify opportunities for information exchange relevant to COVID-19 Economic Wellbeing local recovery strategies
- Provide advice to the LRCG related to the progress of COVID-19 recovery for local development, tourism, industry and business
- Provide advice to the LRCG on the appropriateness and relevance of State and Federal Government economic recovery strategies and initiatives

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RECOVERY – ORDER OF BUSINESS

The LRCG initially focused on assessing the impact of COVID-19, communication, sharing information and local initiatives to aid recovery.

Once the WA Recovery Plan (the Plan) was released, the groups focus turned to identifying what initiatives had been approved or authorised or were available to people in the City of Rockingham.

Then, using the 21 priority areas recognised in the Plan, the committees undertook the process of identifying additional initiatives to support recovery in the City of Rockingham. Proposals were formulated as a result of this work and the Chair of LRCG then corresponded with the Premier providing a full list of additional initiatives that could enhance recovery.

The two spreadsheets created as a result of these processes (D20/146998 and D/20/146750) are provided.

Recovery Webpage

A Rockingham Recovery Webpage has been established as a 'one stop shop' for community members to access information and resources about the WA Recovery Plan and the City of Rockingham COVID-19 Local Recovery Coordination Group members and activities.

<https://rockingham.wa.gov.au/your-city/rockingham-recovery>

Community COVID-19 Disaster Resilience Workshop

In September 2020, the City and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services jointly hosted a whole of community based Disaster Resilience Workshop using the evolving COVID-19 situation as a focus. The workshop was very well attended by a large cross section of the community.

Evaluation

Given the on-going threat of COVID-19 response and recovery strategies continue in parallel. The City will consider formal evaluation of the approach taken and the lessons learnt at an appropriate time, but there are many indications that the approach taken has been successful.

In August 2020 the results of a state-wide community resilience survey looking at how the community is coping with impacts of COVID-19 was released, with feedback from residents in the City of Rockingham placing the City's COVID-19 response in the good-to-excellent range with a score of 78 (compared to the state average of 68).