

Office of Local Government



COVID-19 COUNCIL UPDATE

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8 April 2020



Police to enforce Stay Home orders over Easter

The Traffic and Highway Patrol Command is reminding the community that travelling for holidays is not considered 'essential' travel and officers will be out in force over the Easter long

weekend to ensure compliance.

The NSW Premier and the NSW Health Minister have outlined orders under the Public Health Act that state a person must not leave their home without a reasonable excuse.

Officers will be checking number plates for interstate travellers and questioning motorists if they appear to be outside their home without a valid reason.

Councils can access social media tiles reinforcing the Stay Home message by visiting [this page](#).

These rules do not prohibit people from going to the supermarket and pharmacy, going to and from work if you cannot work from home, going to medical appointments, or leaving for some brief exercise in your own neighbourhood.

Operation Tortoise, a state-wide road safety operation over the Easter long weekend, will see officers targeting speeding, mobile phone, seatbelt and motorcycle helmet offences; all of which will attract double demerit points.

Double demerit points will commence from 12.01am on Thursday 9 April and be in force until 11.59pm on Monday 13 April.



Achieving financial targets in the face of COVID-19

As COVID-19 continues to impact communities throughout NSW, OLG understands that many councils will face difficulties in balancing their budgets and achieving their financial targets.

These are unprecedented times for councils and OLG will work to ensure that the audit process acknowledges the challenges councils face and that financial performance will inevitably be affected.

OLG understands that councils are facing additional expenses, significant reductions in revenue, and challenges in ensuring the ongoing delivery of important community services.

Financial management strategies will need to be flexible and adaptable and OLG will take a pragmatic approach to council performance this year. No council should be considering reducing services or staffing just to demonstrate compliance with financial benchmarks.

In the coming months, as councils respond to the COVID-19 pandemic they should continue to make sound financial decisions which includes continuing to meet ongoing financial obligations.

The NSW Government is currently considering how best to support and sustain the local government sector during this difficult time. Meanwhile, any council that is concerned with its financial position should contact OLG.

Caravan park and camping ground exemptions in amended Public Health Order

Heading into the Easter long weekend and school holidays a reminder for



councils as to the amended rules in relation to caravans and camping grounds.

Under the amendments caravan parks and campgrounds are to be closed except to accommodate:

- permanent residents of the caravan park or camping ground
- overnight travellers
- persons working in the local area
- other persons who have no other place of permanent residence or whose primary place of residence is temporarily unavailable and,
- persons who are visiting those who meet the above criteria

To read the amended Public Health Order in full, please [click here](#).



Planning and Assessment for Councils FAQs now online

Councils can now access a comprehensive Frequently Asked Questions document detailing a range of issues relating to Planning and Assessment.

The FAQ includes clarification on essential services, managing planning functions, managing planning proposals and planning instruments, exemptions and change of use provisions, and more.

The FAQ can be accessed [here](#).



Information and resources

[Older person food delivery fact-sheet](#)

The Commonwealth has announced a range of measures to support older people experiencing difficulty acquiring food and basic household items

due to isolation. A fact sheet detailing these measures and more information can be downloaded [here](#).

[Online survey reminder](#)

OLG is reminding councils to complete an online survey each day to make it easier to report their needs and issues. Council can access the online survey [here](#).

Data on COVID-19 cases

Councils can access the latest data on the number of COVID-19 cases by local government area and by local health district on the NSW Health website [here](#).

Quicklinks

Councils can access the latest information and resources about COVID-19 on the [NSW Government](#), [NSW Health](#) and [Commonwealth Government](#) and [Commonwealth Department of Health](#) websites. The [Office of Local Government](#) also has a COVID-19 section on its website.

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