



COMMUNITY RECOVERY PLAN 2020

OCTOBER 2020



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional inhabitants of the land on which we stand, the Aboriginal People, their spirits and ancestors. We acknowledge the vital contribution that Indigenous people and cultures have made and still make to the nation that we share, Australia.

Contents

Community Recovery Plan

1. Introduction	4
2. Our research and learnings	8
3. How we changed and our new priorities	10
Health and Wellbeing	11
Mental Health.....	12
Isolation.....	13
Under 35s.....	14
4. What we will do (Action Plan)	16
5. References	18

INTRODUCTION

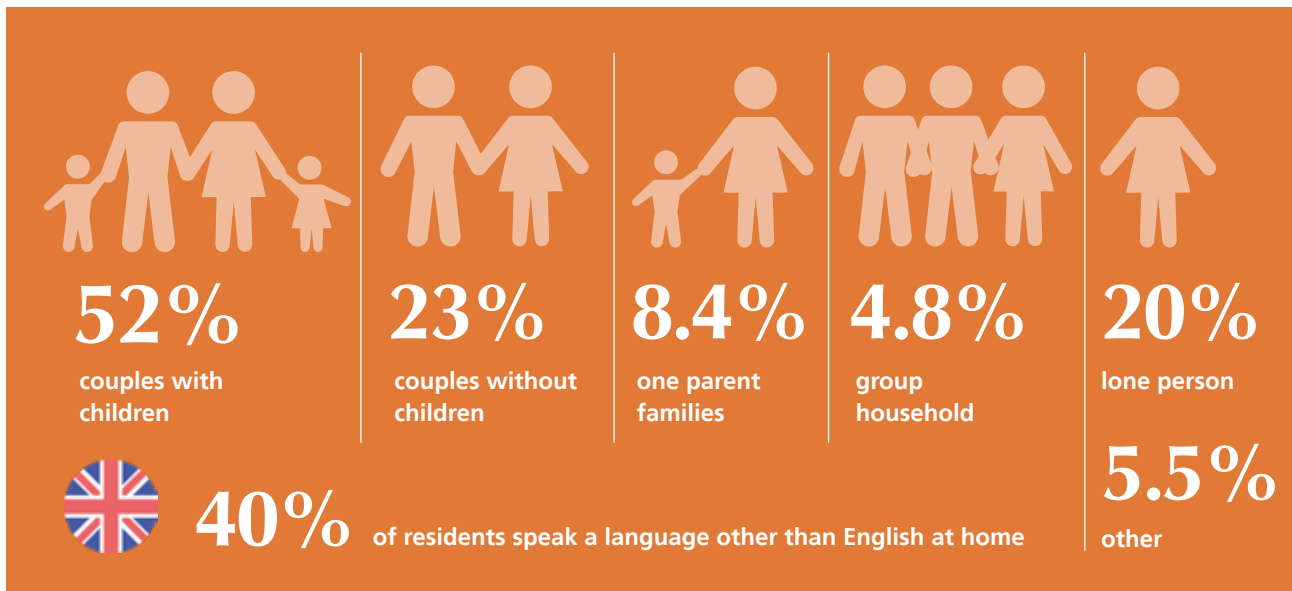
Since the beginning of 2020, we've navigated our way through the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. It has impacted all our lives – how we live, how we relax, and where we work.

Willoughby City Council has prepared a *Community Recovery Plan* and an *Economic Recovery Plan* to respond to the impacts the pandemic has had on our community and economy.

This Plan has a 6-month lifespan and is subject to review at the end of this period. Our actions outlined in the *Community Recovery Plan* will be delivered within Council's current capacities and resources.

First we must look back – this was Our Community, Our Place and Our Economy in March 2020.

OUR COMMUNITY



OUR PLACE

Access to health facilities³



11
hospitals



296
General
Practices



48
pharmaceutical
retailers

Access to open space



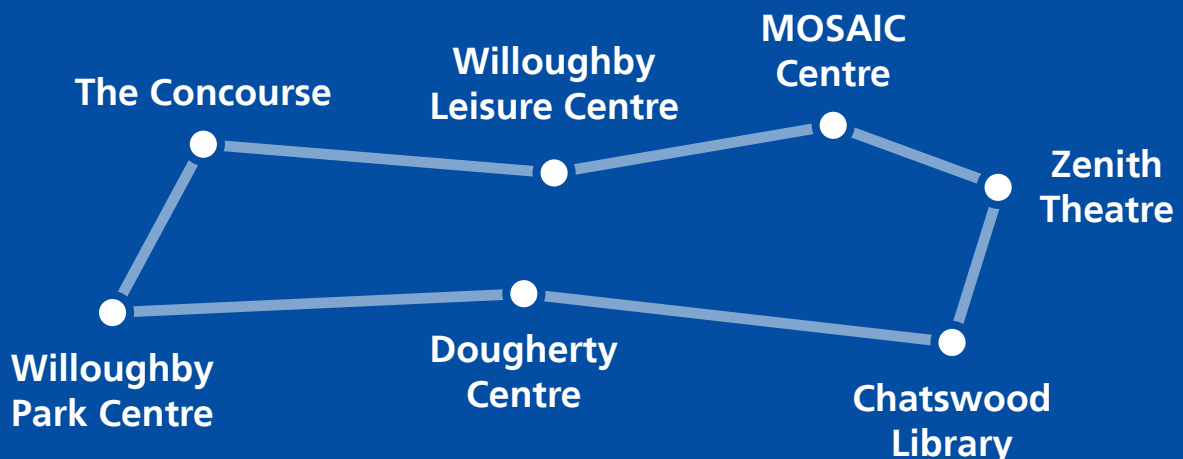
330ha
of bushland and
nearly 20kms of
harbour foreshore

41
playgrounds



60
sports grounds

Key community locations



OUR ECONOMY

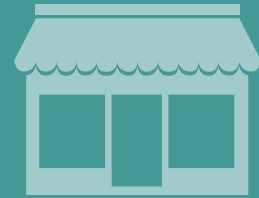
GRP
\$11.51b



Largest industry

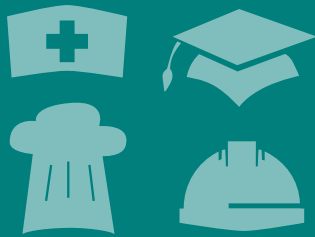


health care and social assistance



12,908
local businesses

Employment



74,049
jobs



44,149
employed residents



3.1%
Unemployment Rate

581
NewStart
(JobSeeker) claimants



centrelink

2. OUR RESEARCH AND LEARNINGS

In identifying where and how Willoughby City Council should act, we have analysed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our community and our economy.

This *Community Recovery Plan* takes into account information from a range of sources, including surveys, community pulse checks, government data, mobility records, and direct responses from community members and businesses.

From evidence-based research, and subsequent conversations with the community, we learned that the community is most concerned about five issues:

- Health and Wellbeing
- Mental Health
- Isolation
- Impact on Under 35s
- Economic Impacts

The *Community Recovery Plan* addresses four of the above focus areas, with the last covered by the *Economic Recovery Plan*.



Health and Wellbeing

- People are concerned that regular health services may not be available and that they may not be able to obtain necessary medication^{1,12}. There is particular concern about the health and wellbeing of elderly people².
- People are delaying diagnosis or treatment of chronic health issues⁸.
- There has been an increase in alcohol and drug use¹.
- Increases in queries regarding domestic violence services indicates an increase in domestic and family abuse.
- Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities have reported an increase in discrimination¹⁰.

Mental Health

- People are concerned about the long-term impacts of the pandemic on mental health, with more than half of NSW concerned about future anxiety and stress¹.
- There is a reported decline in quality of life. People reporting very good or excellent quality of life dropped from 70 to 50 per cent between February and September 2020¹.
- People are worried about the impact of COVID-19 on their family or friends¹².
- Older people, people with underlying health issues and people who contract the virus are more vulnerable to the psychosocial effects of the pandemic⁶.

Isolation

- Physical distancing and quarantines have been necessary measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, however these have also led to elevated levels of loneliness and social isolation^{6,12}.
- Disruption of day to day services has made normal service activities challenging to deliver.
- Border restrictions have reduced visits to/from family and friends.
- Already isolated segments of the population are experiencing exacerbated loneliness and social isolation⁶.

Impact on Under 35s

- Economic impacts will be felt most strongly by the younger workforce. 18 to 34 years olds are therefore more likely to feel that their job is at risk as a result of COVID-19².
- Young people are concerned about the future.
- Young people are feeling lonelier and socially detached².
- Young people feel they are not being consulted with and included in Council processes (Australia-wide).
- Since the lockdown, people under 35 have been engaging in self-development activities more frequently².



3. HOW WE CHANGED AND OUR NEW PRIORITIES

To deal with the public health risk of COVID-19 and its possible consequences, Public Health Orders and restrictions were introduced by the NSW Government in March 2020. This impacted the way we live and the way community services could be carried out.

Responding to these changes, Council and local organisations have had to adapt the way that local services are delivered.

Here are some ways in which we adapted:

- Council and local organisations increased in home support, transport services and wellness checks, especially to older people and people living with disability.
- Mental health services increased telehealth and online support services.
- Youth organisations amplified support through social media and delivered programs through online platforms.
- Council encouraged neighbours to check in and support one another.
- Council regularly published up to date information and resources for local stakeholders.
- Council moved workshops, meetings and community engagement events online.
- Council, local organisations and businesses increased cleaning regimes and adapted premises to COVID Safe standards.
- Council increased outdoor lighting as a response to more people using outdoor spaces at night.
- Libraries provided Click and Collect services and increased loan periods.
- Volunteer roles were adapted to continue to provide volunteering opportunities.



From evidence based research, and subsequent conversations with the community, we learned and will prioritise the following:

Health and Wellbeing

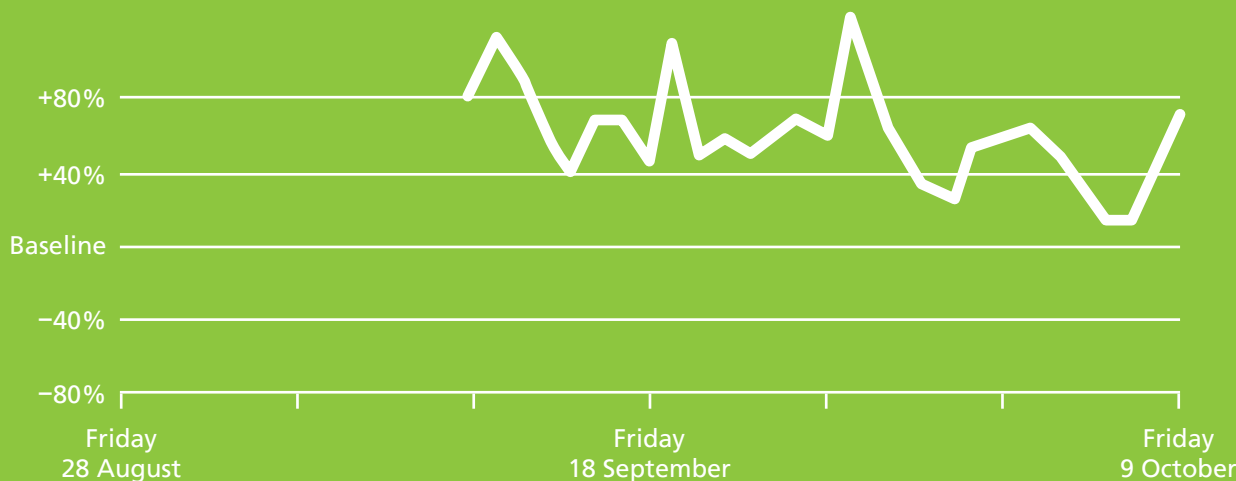
Local services tell us:

- Elderly people and people living with disability are more likely to find it difficult to access medical services or obtain medication.
- Clients were reluctant to access services throughout the pandemic, including in home services.
- There are cultural differences in how people access health and wellbeing services.
- Local parks and open space in the Willoughby area are being used more than ever for recreational activities.
- Increases in queries regarding domestic violence services indicates a possible increase in the incidents of domestic and family abuse.
- Residents are concerned about the cancellation of events and travel plans.

Local agencies expressed greatest concern about the impacts of COVID-19 to the health of the elderly and people living with a disability, domestic and family abuse, community access to health services and medication, and access to correct and up to date information.

Use of parks in Willoughby Area

+72% compared to baseline in September 2020
(Google Mobility Report – 9 October 2020)



As a result, we will prioritise the following:

- Improving access to and awareness of local community services and events.
- Support access to reliable sources of health and wellbeing information, ensuring information about COVID-19 is accurate and accessible.
- Collaboration with service providers to ensure support for vulnerable community members.
- Identify the needs of different CALD groups in relation to health and wellbeing.
- Promoting the use of local parks, open space and active transport, e.g., walking and cycling, for recreation and general wellbeing.

Mental Health

Local services tell us:

- Increased feelings of social isolation were particularly felt by older people and people living alone.
- Certain cultural groups are less willing to engage in mental health support services.
- Restrictions on family visits in aged care facilities affected mental health during lockdown.
- School pressures and friendships/sense of connecting are impacting young people.
- The lack of face to face services have increased feelings of anxiety and isolation felt by community members.

As a result, we will prioritise the following:

- Promoting local mental health services, especially to young people.
- Continuing support to older people, people living with disability and people living alone.
- Improving access to and awareness of mental health services, including culturally appropriate information.

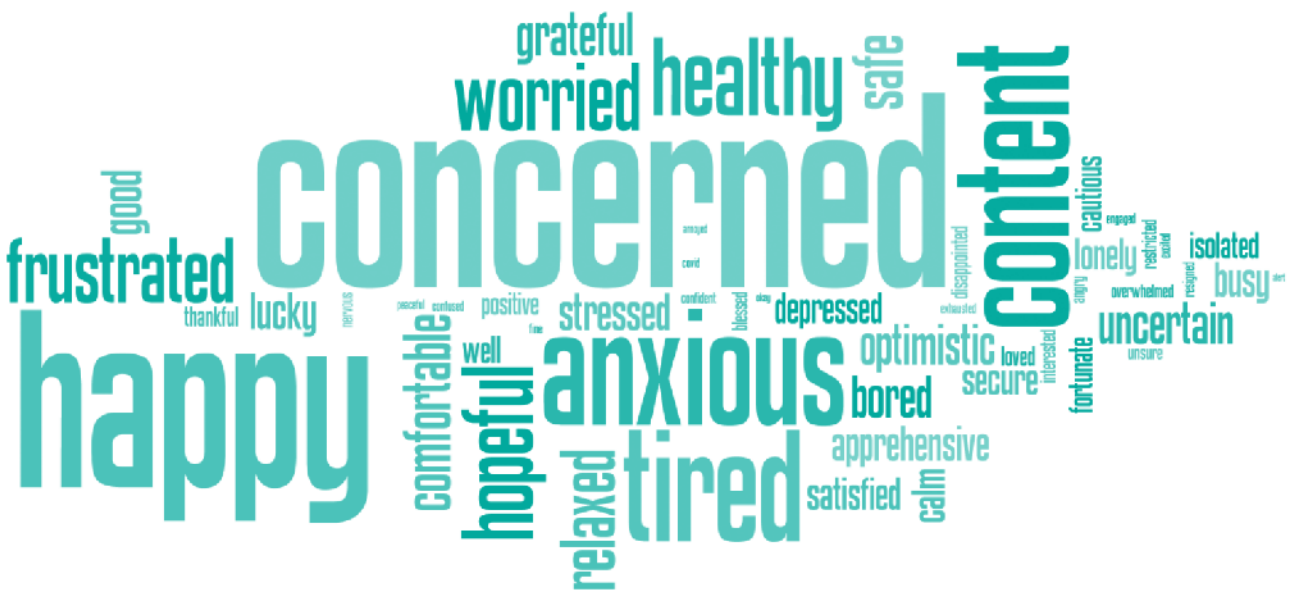


Figure 2: Words people are using to describe how they feel at the moment¹.

Isolation

Local services tell us:

- There has been a loss of social connection due to physical distancing, closure of community facilities, the cancellation of events and community groups, loss of volunteering opportunities, and restrictions on cultural and religious practices.
- There have been increased experiences of social isolation by the general community, and particularly from older people, people living with a disability and CALD people due to the cancellation of social support groups and services.
- Older adult's dependence on family members or community support services make them more vulnerable to social isolation and loneliness.
- Reduced access to food and essential services, as well as computer literacy, is a challenge for older people and people living with disability.
- National and international border closures are keeping some families apart.

As a result, we will prioritise the following:

- Provision of COVID safe community spaces, services and facilities to support community life.
- Ensuring safe, affordable and equitable access and participation to support our most vulnerable community members.
- Community access to online support networks and the promotion of digital communities in which residents can connect.
- Funding of community grants projects that focus on engagement and connection for our residents.

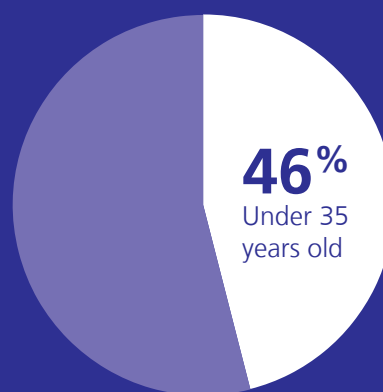


Impact on Under 35s

Local services tell us:

- Young people are more likely to be employed in the local retail and hospitality sectors, which have experienced significant downturn.
- People under 35 are less likely to know their employment rights and are asking for mentoring and transition to workplace opportunities.
- Added pressure to schooling and friendships is affecting the mental health of young people.
- Young people would like to be better informed and included in local decision making.
- There has been an increase in reports of young people committing violence and family abuse.

Youth organisations are concerned about the impact of COVID-19 to mental wellbeing, employment, income loss, disruption to education and reduced social opportunities.



46% of people living in the Willoughby area are under the age of 35.

As a result, we will prioritise the following:

- Ensuring youth mental health services are readily available and accessible.
- Collaboration with local schools to ensure social and study support for young people.
- Stimulating the local economy to reinstate local employment opportunities.
- Promoting online support networks to connect young people to youth organisations.
- Supporting skills development of people under 35.



4. WHAT WE WILL DO (ACTION PLAN)

STRATEGIC FOCUS	ACTION	PRIORITY AREA	COUNCIL'S ROLE
Health and Wellbeing	Continue to provide COVID-19 information and updates via Council's website and social media services	Information & accessibility	Facilitator
	Create links to a directory of services to increase access and awareness of local health and wellbeing services	Information & accessibility	Facilitator
	Develop and implement <i>COVID Safe Summer Plan</i>	Recreation & leisure	Leadership
	Chatswood Library and community centres operate with COVID safe protocols	Recreation & leisure	Delivery
	Willoughby Leisure Centre continues to operate with COVID safe protocols		
	Dougherty Centre, Meals on Wheels and At Home with Willoughby services continue with COVID safe operations	Aged and disability	Delivery
Mental Health	Promote mental health support services such as Beyond Blue and Headspace through Council's social media platforms	Information & accessibility	Facilitator
	Advocate for multilingual mental health support services	CALD persons	Advocate
	Create opportunities for people of all ages to connect in a COVID safe environment through the provision of community events and activities	Recreation & leisure	Delivery



Isolation	Prioritise community grants that increase community engagement and address social isolation	Grants/funding	Leadership
	Facilitate capacity building workshops with the community sector and community led organisations to support their planning for the reopening and/or increasing of their services	Service providers / Community groups	Facilitator
	MOSAIC Centre continues to offer a mix of COVID safe and online programs	CALD persons	Delivery
	Promote volunteering opportunities	All	Facilitator
	Activate NextDoor platform to increase digital communication between WCC and local neighbourhoods		
Impact on Under 35s	Chatswood Youth Centre continues to offer a mix of COVID safe and online programs	Young People	Delivery
	Continue to collaborate with youth organisations and local service providers to meet the needs of young people		Facilitator
	Council to investigate opportunities to employ young people through traineeships, apprenticeships and graduate programs	Young People/ Workforce Support	Leadership
	Provide links and facilitate information about employment rights, workplace opportunities and skills development	Under 35s	Leadership
	Continue to support local community housing providers and advocate for further affordable housing in the Willoughby area	All / Under 35s	Facilitator / Advocate



5. REFERENCES

- 1 Micromex Research: Community Pulse Surveys (September 2020 and March 2020)
- 2 Stollznou: COVID-19 The Australian Reaction The First 22 Weeks Report (August 2020)
- 3 Willoughby City Council economic profile <https://economy.id.com.au/willoughby/covid19>
- 4 Australian Bureau of Statistics Census Data (2016)
- 5 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare: Social isolation and loneliness (2019)
<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/social-isolation-and-loneliness>
- 6 Australian Council of Social Service: Australia's community sector and COVID-19: Supporting communities through the crisis. Cortis, N. & Blaxland, M. (2020)
- 7 Roy Morgan Research: Australia & COVID-19 The Economic Story So Far (August 2020)
- 8 ABC News (May 2020) <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-05-14/coronavirus-medical-testing-delays-could-lead-to-future-sickness/12241812>
- 9 Google Community Mobility Report (9 October 2020)
- 10 Local Government Multicultural Network: NSW 2020 CALD COVID-19 Summit Draft Report (August 2020)
- 11 Willoughby City Council community profile <https://profile.id.com.au/willoughby>
- 12 Micromex Research: Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils: Community COVID-19 Research (September 2020)





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