

An aerial photograph of a city skyline, likely Melbourne, showing a dense cluster of high-rise buildings. The buildings are illuminated by warm, golden light, suggesting late afternoon or early morning. The sky is clear and blue. The text "ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN 2020" is overlaid on the bottom half of the image in a white, sans-serif, all-caps font.

# ECONOMIC 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.

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# 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 *Economic 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

### Population

81,189



### Age



0-17  
22.6%



18-34  
23.3%



35-59  
35.6%



60-84  
16.1%



85+  
2.3%

In 2016, 45.9% of Willoughby City's population were aged under 35



52%

couples with children



23%

couples without children



8.4%

one parent families



4.8%

group household



20%

lone person



40%

of residents speak a language other than English at home

5.5%

other

### Vulnerable persons

2,536

people with a need for assistance in the Willoughby area



### Volunteering

1 in 6

people regularly volunteer across Willoughby City with approximately

650

people volunteering with Council

## OUR PLACE

### Access to health facilities<sup>3</sup>



**11**  
hospitals



**296**  
General  
Practices



**48**  
pharmaceutical  
retailers

### Access to open space



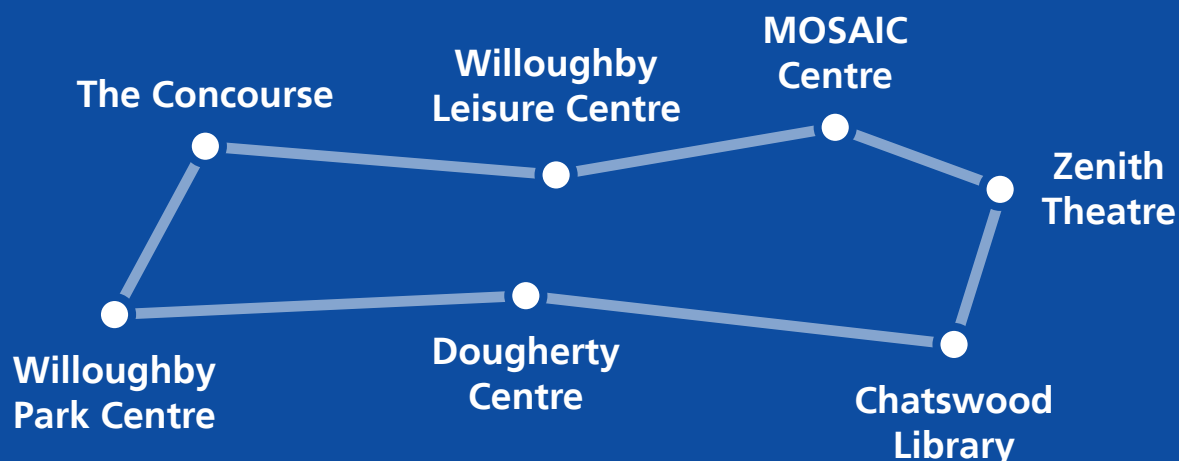
**330ha**  
of bushland and  
nearly 20kms of  
harbour foreshore

**41**  
playgrounds



**60**  
sports grounds

### Key community locations



## OUR ECONOMY

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GRP  
**\$11.51b**



Largest  
industry

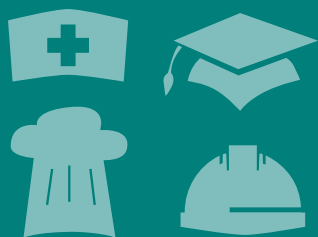


health care and  
social assistance



**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 *Willoughby Economic 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 the community is most concerned about five issues:

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

This *Economic Recovery Plan* concentrates on the last focus area, with the first four covered by the *Community Recovery Plan*

### ECONOMIC IMPACTS

- Gross Regional Product is forecast to fall by -3.2% in the September Quarter 2020. This fall was lower than the state average<sup>1</sup>
- Local Jobs are forecast to fall by -3.0% in the September Quarter 2020. This equates to a fall of 2,238 local jobs. In the absence of JobKeeper payments, the employment fall is estimated at -3.4% (2,522 jobs)<sup>1</sup>
- The impact on employed residents (-2.0%) was lower than the local job impact<sup>1</sup>
- Overall the economic impacts on Willoughby are less than those experienced by Greater Sydney, NSW, and Australia

### COVID-19 impacts by Region, Sept 2019 to Sept 2020



Source: National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR) Version 2.1 (Sep 2020).  
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**.id** the population experts

<sup>1</sup> <https://economy.id.com.au/willoughby/covid19-quarter-impacts>



- The shift to working from home reduced the number of people coming into Chatswood on weekdays by 55%<sup>2</sup>
- There are significant impacts on key sectors of the local economy<sup>1</sup>:

SECTOR	LOCAL JOBS	OUTPUT
Accommodation and Food Services	▼ 1,115	▼ \$50m
Retail Trade	▼ 683	▼ \$20m
Information Media and Telecommunications	▼ 471	▼ \$33m

- It is estimated that 37% of local businesses have applied for JobKeeper support, with businesses eligible for JobKeeper experiencing a decline in revenue of at least 30%<sup>3</sup>
- Business Confidence has risen from a historic low in April, to around 20% lower than it was on average in 2019<sup>4</sup>
- The key findings of the Covid-19 Business Survey<sup>5</sup> canvassing the views of business across the northern Sydney area, including Willoughby were:
  - 93% of businesses are still operating
  - 75% stated the impact has been negative
  - 27% would like more support with marketing and promotion, and 24% require further access to grants
  - Reducing operating hours, working from home, and laying off/standing down staff were the three most common actions that businesses had to undertake.
- JobSeeker and Youth Allowance recipients have increased<sup>6</sup>:

	NUMBER	% OF 15-64 YEAR OLDS
March 2020	581	1.1%
August 2020	2,202	4.1%

- It is anticipated that economic impacts will be felt most strongly by a younger workforce<sup>7</sup> with the youth unemployment rate in the North Sydney area at 9.3% in July 2020.

### 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.

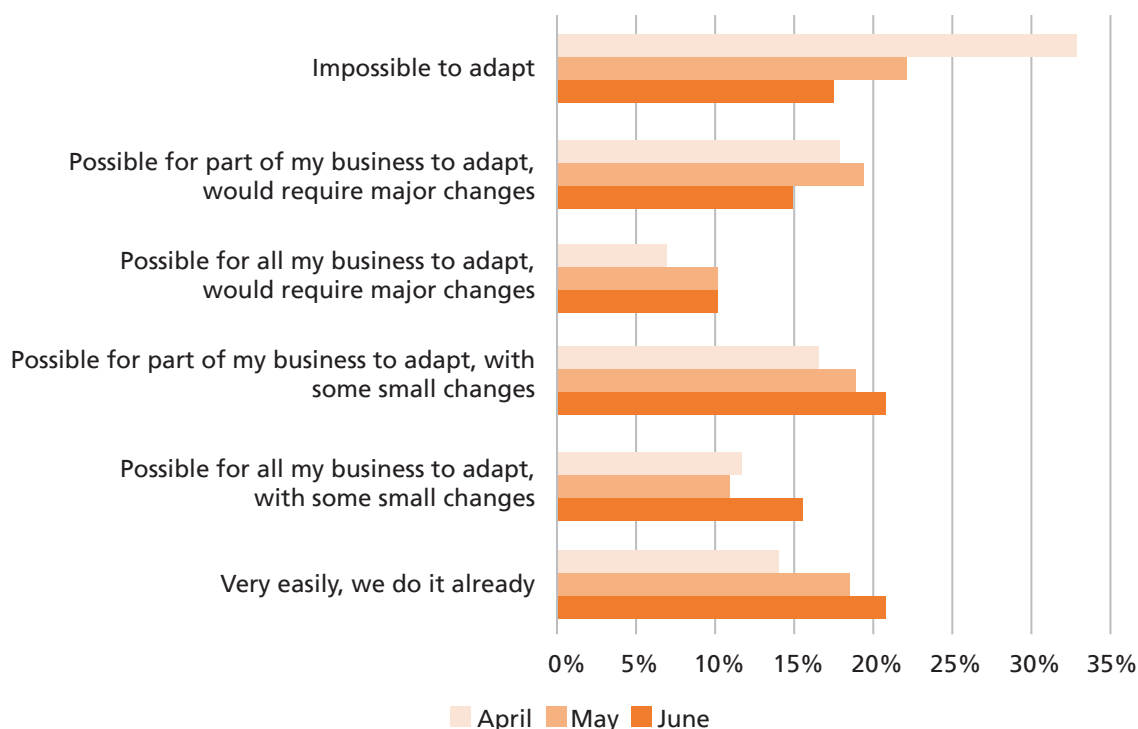
In response, all levels of government introduced a range of support for businesses:

- At the Federal level the assistance focussed on the JobSeeker and JobKeeper schemes to assist business and employees to maintain livelihoods and business continuity.
- At the NSW State level the COVID-19 Recovery Plan<sup>8</sup> focusses on infrastructure approvals and investment, investment in future education, together with digital adaptation and restructuring supply chains.
- Willoughby City Council approved an initial six month Covid-19 Business Support Plan. It included the relaxation of penalties, the waiving of fees for environmental health inspections, fire safety, footway dining and advertising, rental assistance for council leases, and reduced fees for Chatswood Mall Market stallholders.

The combination of the efforts of the three levels of government provided some mitigation to the economic impacts of the health declarations to limit the spread of COVID-19, but the impacts are still significant and ongoing.

Since March, there has been a noticeable change in businesses ability to adapt to new operating environments<sup>9</sup>. In April, a third of businesses indicated that it would be impossible to adapt their business. This reduced in May and again in June when only 17.5% of businesses from across Australia indicated that they would be unable to adapt to new requirements.

How easily can you adapt your business to operate in the current environment (work from home, online delivery of services, physical distancing, etc)?





COVID-19 has, and will continue to, have an impact on the local economy. It is likely that business recovery will commence prior to job numbers increasing, and the corresponding decrease in unemployment which may take many years to reach pre-COVID-19 levels.

The current available data indicates that the areas of highest concern are:

- Businesses in the
  - Accommodation and Food Services
  - Retail Trade, and
  - Information Media and Telecommunications sectors
- Businesses located in Chatswood CBD where visitation has decreased by around 55% from pre-COVID-19 levels
- Under 35s who are concerned about their immediate and long term financial security. This age group also have a high proportion working in the Hospitality and Retail sectors.

As a result, we will prioritise the following;

- Building confidence in the local economy
- Providing support to businesses in the key sectors of Accommodation and Food Services, Retail Trade, and Information Media and Telecommunications and select demographics to specifically target youth unemployment
- Undertaking activities to Increase the level of activity in the Chatswood CBD.



## 4. WHAT WE WILL DO (ACTION PLAN)

STRATEGIC FOCUS	ACTION	COUNCILS ROLE
Building confidence	Publish an Annual Statement of Business Activity in Willoughby showcasing the state of the local economy	Leadership
	Establish an Annual Mayors Business Forum to bring together all the key players in the local economy to report back, discuss, and plan for the following year	
	Create a Business Toolkit improving access to information on business services such as grants, training, fees, compliance requirements, business information, and research	
Business support	Approve a new Business Support Package to include provisions for the waiving of fees for environmental health inspections, fire safety, footway dining and advertising	Delivery and Leadership
	Create a Buy Local Program to build local supply chains and retain expenditure within the local area	Facilitator
	Provide Rent Relief for council commercial tenants based on reduced levels of trade	Delivery
	Extend the Community Grants scheme to include provision for a Local Business Economic Development Grant	
	Introduce 7 Day invoice paying by council for all local businesses	Leadership
	Establish "Doing Business with Council" training sessions to enable local businesses to be proficient in applying for council contracts	
	Establish a range of Business Training Sessions for local businesses in the targeted sectors and targeted demographics	Facilitator
Increase CBD Activity	Increase the impact of local events and activities at key locations and extend opening hours	Delivery
	Continue to extend and improve the Chatswood Mall Market and increase promotional activities to encourage more stalls and greater visitation	
	Extend the Chatswood Mall Market fee reduction scheme	
	Create a Local Food and Drink promotion campaign focussing on the availability and quality of outlets in Chatswood	Facilitator
	Examine the provisions for outdoor dining to provide more flexibility for outdoor dining, drinking and seating arrangements	

## 5. DATA SOURCES

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1. Willoughby City Council economic profile  
<https://economy.id.com.au/willoughby/covid19>
2. Transport Performance and Analytics (TPA)  
<https://opendata.transport.nsw.gov.au/dataset/train-station-entries-and-exits-data>
3. REMPLAN  
[https://app.remplan.com.au/public/jobkeeper;m=2;r=1;z=au2018lga\\_18250](https://app.remplan.com.au/public/jobkeeper;m=2;r=1;z=au2018lga_18250)
4. Roy Morgan Research: Australia & COVID-19 The Economic Story So Far (August 2020)  
<http://www.roymorgan.com/findings/8494-australia-during-covid-19-economic-story-so-far-202008180428>
5. Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (NSROC) Business Covid-19 Research - October 2020
6. Willoughby City Council community profile  
<https://profile.id.com.au/willoughby/job-seeker?EndYear=202003>
7. Stollznow: COVID-19 The Australian Reaction The First 22 Weeks Report (August 2020)
8. COVID-19 Recovery Plan  
<https://www.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-07/covid-19-recovery-plan-nsw-government.pdf>
9. Australian Business Economic Impact Survey (ABEIS)  
<https://www.remplan.com.au/blog/2020/08/covid-19-economic-impact-analysis-june-update/>



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ADDRESS

Level 4, 31 Victor Street, Chatswood, NSW 2057  
PO Box 57 Chatswood, NSW 2057

PHONE

02 9777 1000

EMAIL

[email@willoughby.nsw.gov.au](mailto:email@willoughby.nsw.gov.au)