Hi everyone,

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the priority partnerships and relations that we, the Department of Communities (Communities), has with the community sector and Aboriginal peoples. The Director General's Cultural Council will provide overarching guidance in all actions, and Debra Zanella (CEO, Ruah Community Services and President, WACOSS) and Rob Wilton (Director, Parkerville Youth Care Inc) have been seconded into a **community response team** for their key skills.

We want communications with the sector to go through the Peaks initially, who will then pass back the responses, queries and questions they receive from the sector to the community response team via sectorsupport@communities.wa.gov.au

We are listening and working with you.

Actions to date:

Critical/essential services
The sector has asked for clarity about the term essential services within the community sector as it normally related to power, water and electricity.

The work done by the community services sector is essential in this pandemic. We are working to come to a common understanding of essential services.

We are currently working as **critical services**, defined below. If there is change in Federal direction, we will keep you updated.

This means that any service provider working with people who are vulnerable and would not be able to meet their own needs (activities of daily living) without support, cannot meet their basic needs of food, shelter and safety and prevent people from escalating into emergency departments falls into a "critical service". This includes those in residential and non-residential services, food security and financial counselling. This applies to:

- Aboriginal people who utilise community service supports
- People who are homelessness includes couch surfing
- People with severe and persistent mental health and drug and alcohol issues
- Women and children escaping domestic violence
- Seniors
- Children in out of home care
- People (adults and children) with disability
- Residential services for all the above
- Remote Communities

- People experiencing poverty

We know that agencies, including both paid and volunteer staff, are developing great ways to service these people and please keep on doing what you are doing.

Taskforces
- Taskforces have been established to combine the efforts of community sector service partners and the State so that joint service delivery is targeted where it is needed the most.
- We also are establishing a liaison position within the State Health Incident Control Centre.

Vulnerable cohorts and taskforce leads are identified below:

Cohort	Lead (Government)	Sector Representative
Homelessness	Emma Colombera	John Berger / Michelle McKenzie
Disability	Marion Hailes-MacDonald	Julie Waylen, Samantha Jenkinson, Caroline Watt, Marina Re, Kathy Hough, Leanne Pearman, Su-Hsien Lee
Family & Domestic Violence (FDV)	Astrid Kalders	Women's Council, WACOSS
Aboriginal people & ACCOs	Jade Cass, Jacqueline Littlejohn	AHCWA, Council of Elders, TBA
Children in Care	Helen Nys	Out of Home Care Reference Group; Maria Harries, Dawn Bessarab
Seniors	Simone Bastin	Christine Allen (COTA)
Remote Communities	Linda Sperring	Ali Meehan (AHCWA)
Mental Health & Alcohol & Other Drugs (AOD)	Sophie Davidson / Elaine Patterson	Taryn Harvey (WAAHM) / Jill Rundle (WANADA)
Youth	Audrey Lee	Ross Wortham (YACWA), TBA

Linkwest (Jane Chilcott) and Volunteering WA (Tina Williams) will work across most of the taskforces.

The focus for each taskforce will be:
- To define the key COVID-19 issues that need resolving.
- To identify issues that may impact upon access to essential services.
- Identify options to address and resolve issues.
- Prepare an implementation plan with resource requirements for the Community Sector Partnerships Team to escalate.
- Identify emerging trends and issues and recommended responses.

- Communicate outcomes to community sector engagement team.
- Develop and deliver key messages.

Current and future actions being undertaken by the community sector response team include:

- Working with the sector to develop a workforce business continuity plan that reaches across government and the community services sector.
- Working with the Director General's Cultural Council in all actions.
- Working with the sector in "interpreting and making relevant" instructions and guidelines developed by the Health system.
- Working with the sector to coordinate and facilitate existing efforts to integrate them so we can work better together as never before.
- We are working closely with the relevant departments to finalise the issue of contract extensions and renewals.
- Together, we will develop different ways of working that enable us to achieve the change that we are seeking.

Attached is the structure of how the community sector response team fits within Communities Incident Management Team, the Mental Health Commission and the Premier's Pandemic Unit.

Updated advice from the Premier of WA can be found at https://www.wa.gov.au/government/coronavirus-covid-19.
WA Government Pandemic Plan

For more information:
National Coronavirus Health Information Line: 1800 020 080
Federal Department of Health
WA Department of Health
World Health Organization

Sam Knight
Deputy Incident Controller Sector Partnerships – Coronavirus Incident Management Team
Department of Communities