

Message from the Director General

Department of Communities



Good afternoon everyone,

I would like to begin by thanking all of you for your dedication, perseverance, strength and resilience over the past weeks. You have all achieved a lot, but there is so much more to do and this is going to be a marathon not a sprint. I would especially like to mention our taskforces who have tirelessly stepped up to lead the community work in addition to their normal workloads to ensure that we best service the community.

As many of you will know the State Emergency Welfare Plan has been activated. The activation of this plan established the Director General of Communities as the State Welfare Coordinator. So essentially, I am now wearing two hats. Through the activation of the State Emergency Welfare Plan, a State Welfare Incident Control Centre (SWICC) will be established to sit alongside the State Health Incident Control Centre (SHICC) to identify, respond to and coordinate the provision of welfare services across the community (inclusive of those in self-isolation or quarantine).

Finally, The State Welfare Emergency Committee (SWEC) will be established, chaired by the State Welfare Coordinator as an advisory, consultative and referral group to oversee and assist in the planning and operation of State and local level welfare services. The SWEC will provide advice to the SWICC on operational matters.

What does this all mean?

The primary roles of the SWICC and SWEC is to assist in coordinating the provision of welfare services across six functional areas:

- emergency accommodation;
- emergency food provision;
- emergency clothing and personal requisites;
- personal support services;
- registration and reunification; and
- financial assistance.

We have enacted our emergency management planning which considers where special arrangements may be required for those people within the community whose circumstances may create barriers to obtaining information, understanding

instructions, or reacting to an emergency. People considered in this process may include, but are not limited to:

- children;
- individuals from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds;
- at risk and special needs groups; and
- isolated individuals and communities.

We have been listening to what you have been saying and have heard you. We are working through a process to capture and assess your short, medium and long-term needs and are developing a list of priorities and initiatives. We are doing this as quickly as we can but are ensuring that we undertake all of this with an appropriate cultural lens and with strong governance and integrity.

While we need to address immediate issues, concerns and provision of services, we also need to be aware that we need to sustain and maintain service delivery right through to a full-recovery phase.

We are being challenged by some of the ways in which we need to work in this new environment we find ourselves in. As a result we need to ensure that we are providing culturally appropriate practices. The Department of Communities has an Aboriginal Engagement and Inclusion Strategy (AEIS) which is an online workshop for all of the Communities staff whom are relocating to Fremantle. The AEIS provides an opportunity to deepen our understanding of culture to transform the way we work.

In addition, we have an Aboriginal Cultural Appreciation Course as part of our corporate induction which covers Aboriginal Origins, Colonisation, Policy impact on social development and practice consideration all of which is strongly guided by our Department's values.

I have encouraged all Communities staff to prioritise cultural competency so that we can provide the most culturally appropriate practices for the people we serve.

Before I sign off, in order to provide the latest information to all of you as quickly as possible, I have established a **weekly interactive webinar series** Tuesdays at Twelve. Anyone can join in on Tuesday at 12pm and this week I am joined by Deborah Zanella – President of WACOSS and Jennifer McGrath Commissioner Mental Health Commission to discuss State Emergency Welfare Planning, community engagement and citizen wellbeing. Simply [click this link](#) to join us.

I will continue to provide updates as soon as they come to hand and ask all of you to look after yourselves as well as each other during these unprecedented times.

Michelle Andrews

Director General

Department of Communities
