



# Tuesdays at Twelve webinar

## Questions answered – 14 April 2020

- 1. Overcrowding in properties is an issue. We are concerned as to how people can isolate and quarantine in those conditions. How can Communities assist with addressing these concerns?**

Currently there is work going on to undertake a very rapid assessment of properties that we hold around the State and there have been some properties identified that can be refurbished in a relatively quick and straightforward way to assist with the overcrowding challenge. That's one of the steps that Communities is taking at the moment and obviously we're open to other proposals.

I know there's also been work going on to look at unused resources being held by private sector organisations and we're building an inventory of those. However, hearing from people on the ground, from communities through the local emergency committees and the district leadership groups about where the opportunities lay to address those overcrowding challenges is going to be the most powerful ways to get pragmatic solutions to these types of challenges.

- 2. Youth issues (neglect, crime, education) are a high priority for our community, but are magnified with coronavirus disease (COVID-19). What support can Communities provide organisations to address these, reducing the impact on the whole community? Many non-government organisations have stopped or reduced face-to-face contact. There have been education strategies put in place, but these young people often reside with older family members, and alcohol and drugs issues are prevalent. This increases risk in these vulnerable communities.**

Where non-government organisations have stopped face-to-face services, it does create a flow on impact.

I know one of the things that we are looking at is how we can expand some of our youth services and have more wrap around services for young people. Especially those that are in families that are struggling with other issues as well, such as alcohol and drugs, which we expect is going to be worse during this crisis.

Some of those services operate with some limited hours so we are looking at expanding operation hours, expanding the actual numbers of people involved and looking into the use of technology to provide services.

One of the task forces that we've established is looking at this area and we would welcome any ideas information, intelligence or suggestions.

**3. When will these welfare services be available to support people affected by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) situation and how you link into State Welfare Incident Control Centre (SWICC) and State Welfare Emergency Committee (SWEC) access these services?**

Services are available now and have been supporting people for some time. For example, we have supported people getting off cruise ships, people returning from overseas and going into quarantine and then people leaving quarantine but not necessarily able to return to their normal residence. We have also provided support to backpackers that have found themselves without work and without accommodation and not able to move – none of these people would normally be within our scope.

So, we're already delivering on those services and there are telephone lines available for people to call to access them either for themselves or for other people they know that are that are in dire straits.

**4. Who can give accommodation service providers a guideline, on how to safely take new clients in when others have been self-isolating. The need is there, and we have demand for accommodation but we need to balance this with safety and capacity to support.**

That's something that we've been working on and we've sought basic public health advice to provide guidelines and steps for residential services across the community service sector to follow.

We're hoping to have a draft flow chart and scenarios out to the sector for some initial feedback towards the end of the week which will give some great guidance in this area.

It's been a very big piece of work in development, and hasn't been easy, but something very much needed to get clarity in this area.

**5. Have any business cases that have been developed by the task force groups been put to Treasury for additional resources by Department of Communities or Mental Health Commission?**

Yes, they're in process.

**6. How does the State Welfare Emergency Committee (SWEC) facilitate a more rapid response from Communities - what changes will we see? How will SWEC facilitate a more rapid response to providing housing / accommodation?**

SWEC is already proving to provide a rapid response to housing needs. For example, last Thursday, Communities became aware of a group of mostly Aboriginal people who had been housed in a hotel by not for profit organisation for a number of days, but the funding had run out and they were going to be back out on the street and homeless.

We got notice of that and very rapidly secured availability and access to the Woodman point recreation camp and struck agreements around the various support services that were going to be needed to help those people - both moving in with the right assessments and then support and security. This all occurred within a 24-hour period.

There is work underway by the Task Force to create a centralised point for alternative accommodation, for example a 1800 number, so that we have a process that will assist us to understand the right types of accommodation and supports when people need it going forward.

**7. Is there a plan for management of short term accommodation options for people either isolating, recovering, hospital discharge etc - i.e. vacancies management in/out and for appropriate accommodation types (accessible, secure etc)**

Yes, this is something the Task Force is working on. For example, we are currently looking at a facility appropriate for this with lots of outside space, security and all the facilities that are needed and that's the sort of thing that we're looking at that could be for suitable when someone has to isolate for two-week period.

Some of the other mechanisms for improving that is that we're looking at building better information sharing with health services such as the WA Country Health Service or Aboriginal Medical Services or the Department of Health so that we can do better forward-planning around the release of patients and around things like accommodation services, transport etc.

Improved communication in this area will continue to be helpful past COVID-19.

**8. We have seen a massive outbreak of racism with posters across the freeway as well as racist graffiti in a number of places. We have been asking the Minister to issue a statement condemning this as Dan Andrews has done. So far, we have been asking for this since the last week in March. We need to see this urgently. There are people out there feeling very vulnerable and under attack.**

This really speaks to our values as a community. As a leader in the community, as a leader of the Department of Communities, I can tell you that racism is unacceptable.

Simply pushing something underground is not the solution and so for all of us that are leaders in whatever form, whatever role, wherever we go and whatever we do, we all have a responsibility to call racism out.

I would invite you to continue to both call out and take steps to build a better state. Racism is unacceptable. Always is, always will be.

**9. Is there any additional assistance for women and their children seeking accommodation after leaving a Family and Domestic Violence (FDV) environment? FDV has considerably worsened in recent weeks.**

It's absolutely one of the priority areas for us as we can see what's happening in other jurisdictions and we're already getting indications around what is happening in our own

state. Steps are being taken to improve the support for those women, children and families.

The first place for assistance are women's refuges, and if there are no bed availabilities at any of the existing services then the Department of Communities has responsibility and will act to accommodate people if they are escaping violence and there's nowhere for them to go.

There is also a [toolkit](#) available to help give financial abilities and empowerment to those families looking to leave an abusive situation.

This toolkit was developed by a group of extraordinary volunteers and in its first 12 months it had about 8,000 hits, and in the last three weeks the hits have gone up to about 17,000.

My communications team will be working with the education and health communications teams to promote that toolkit to frontline workers that deal with these people like GPs, teachers and support workers.

So, there are a lot of supports out there, we really just need to make sure that people know about them, that they're understood and that they're available in a timely way.

**10. This current situation has seen the activation of the State Emergency Welfare Plan - What safeguards will be implemented to ensure that the (known and overdue) anticipated benefits made for vulnerable populations will be sustained into the future in the "post-COVID world" once the State Emergency Welfare Plan is no longer "required".**

Yes I believe that is absolutely priority for the government broadly at the moment.

I think we can expect some significant decisions coming out of government over the next week or so around social and economic recovery in terms of commitments, resourcing and capabilities that are being built cross government.

I am very interested in reform opportunities. I am going into this COVID-19 situation every single day and seeing it is an opportunity to reform the way we work to get better outcomes. All of us know that doesn't just mean throwing more dollars at things. This is actually about changing the way we work and that when we get to the other side of COVID-19 it's not a snapping back moment but in fact we have started to embed different and better ways of working. I will be seizing opportunities every day to drive that long-term sustainability.

**11. Can the slides be made available on Sharepoint please?**

Yes.