

Media Release

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Surf Coast Shire Council initial actions on COVID-19 advance

Surf Coast Shire Council is reviewing and adjusting provision of some services and events in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

The Council is making a number of initial service and event changes as health authorities amplify messages about infection risks posed by international travellers and public gatherings. It is also likely that further changes will be required shortly.

From tonight the shire's Visitor Information Centre services in Torquay, Lorne, Winchelsea and Anglesea will transition from over-the-counter to phone, email and website-based services.

Torquay's Australian National Surf Museum will also be closed from tonight.

Ongoing review of Council-run events has led to a decision to postpone an International Women's Day High Tea in Winchelsea on Sunday, and Monday's launch of Winchelsea's entrance sculptures.

"These decisions are not made lightly, but we have a responsibility to be proactive in dealing with a rapidly evolving situation," Chief Executive Officer Keith Baillie said.

"We are taking our lead from health authorities, and latest advice from Victoria's Chief Health Officer on the risk levels posed by people arriving from overseas. This has influenced our decision to transition the visitor information services and close our museum.

"Travellers will still be able to access all they need from visitor information services but via different means, talking to our staff and volunteers over the phone, or collecting information at the door or online."

Mr Baillie said any Council-run community events which bring people into close contact are now being reviewed, considering risks and possible consequences.

"Introducing mitigating measures like encouraging people to stay at home if they feel unwell or providing hand sanitising might not be enough. Cancelling or postponing events is our safest options in these circumstances," Mr Baillie said.

"Regretfully that includes postponing events such as the high tea and sculptures launch."

Mr Baillie urged organisers of external events to take risk of spread of COVID-19 into serious consideration during their planning.

A Council pandemic working group is meeting daily to evaluate and respond to latest COVID-19 developments, with consideration of the Council's pandemic plan.

“Obviously the spread of the disease has potential for widespread impact on community life,” Mr Baillie said.

“We anticipate that further changes to Council services will be required and we will be keeping our communities informed as this occurs.

“People seeking COVID-19 updates and health advice should visit the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services website www.dhs.vic.gov.au

“People seeking latest shire-based updates can go to www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au.”