

Koori Grapevine

SPECIAL EDITION - COVID-19

Creativity and changes during COVID-19

Not a day goes by without hearing, seeing or reading about COVID-19 and all across the globe we have had to adapt to many changes including restrictions on pretty much everything such as ways of doing business or businesses having to close; people losing jobs and income; working from home, where possible; self-isolation; social distancing; panic buying and supermarket shelves left empty; drive-through medical services and waiting in the car before entering a GP service; restaurants, cafes and licensed premises forced to close; playgrounds, swim centres, beaches and all sports shut down; learning to access the internet, ZOOM meetings, online resources and so much more.

Day to day life as we knew it was thrown into uncertain times and while challenging for us all, and different on an individual level, many have been able to adapt to the variety of changes. While some people may have become fitter and healthier, others may differ. Some have utilised their creativity in unique ways of modifying life, while others struggle with that

side of the brain. There has been a massive increase in social media activity with new groups and pages and an influx of emails as ways of communication. Some relationships have become closer, yet others have become estranged. Some have shown kindness and gratitude, while others discovered greed and selfishness.

From COVID-19, statistics show an increase in mental health services, homelessness, loneliness, unemployment and Centrelink payments, family and domestic violence, online gambling and alcohol consumption.

ANZAC Day commemorations were conducted very different to as we are used to with tributes around the country to service men and women happening with neighbourhood social distance methods in place and candles being lit in people's homes and driveways.

National Sorry Day and Reconciliation Week events were changed from public gatherings to online events. 2020 was the 20-year anniversary of the Corroboree

Bridge Walk which saw over 250,000 people walk across Sydney Harbour Bridge in support of reconciliation.

For those who could work from home, (and I have been grateful to be able to), there is a mix of feelings and numerous homes have had young people who also need to be home schooled while still working and tending to usual household duties. Some see our neighbours more, while others choose to hibernate indoors. To all those essential services and workers that kept us going during these times, thank you!

Every time I open my pantry the furry friends think it's treat time and every time I put shoes on they think it's walk time. I wonder how things will be for them when I can go back to work and into the community. Hope you and yours have coped well throughout this and everyone is safe, strong and deadly.

Maree Edwards

Aboriginal Community Development Officer
Lake Macquarie City Council

"A reconciled Australia is one where our rights as First Australians are not just respected, but championed in all the places that matter..." Kirstie Parker, board Member, Reconciliation Australia.



Council programs go online and digital during COVID-19

Supporting our local economy is critical, now more than ever. Lake Macquarie City Council is continuing to provide essential services, but there will be impacts to some events and activities. The situation is changing frequently and we appreciate your patience and understanding.

To stay up to date with changes to Lake Macquarie City Council services and facilities, visit lakemac.com.au/COVID-19 or by calling 4921 0333.



Over 55s Program

The Lake Macquarie Over 55s Program runs annually from February to November with a focus on health, safety and wellbeing. It delivers information sessions and activities to various locations across the Lake Macquarie City. During the COVID 19 pandemic, Council's Ageing and Disability Support Officer Peta McGrath adapted to isolation by offering the program online to those who were able to access the internet. Some of the programs, which will also be conducted in June, include bingo, yoga, Healthy Moves, cooking demonstrations and In the Kitchen with the Wholesome Collective to discover what is hiding in your pantry that can be used to create chemical-free cleaning products.

All events are free for people in Lake Macquarie aged 55 years or over. Bookings are essential online at lakemac.com.au or by calling 4921 0333.

You're Kidding Me Program

The You're Kidding Me Program, now in its sixth year, is designed to improve accessibility to health, education and family services for kids by connecting Lake Macquarie families to valuable information about local services that support the learning and development of young children.

The program includes the annual You're Kidding Me Expo, which brings together children and family services from all across the City and the Hunter region. Attendees can discover a variety of programs, resources and services that Lake Macquarie parents and families can access.

The 2020 You're Kidding Me Expo is headed online, with a series of free workshops and programs for families to stream at home. The digital move was a response to COVID-19, and a way for parents to access information in a time when it's needed more than ever. The online series of events kicked off on 12 May to coincide with National Families Week. This year's You're

Kidding Me will include five online workshops aimed at both parents and their children.

Council's Community Planner Jess Salvador said it was important to create a program that focused on supporting families and creating stronger communities.

All sessions were run online via Zoom and were very popular even with the change of format.

Community Calming

Community Calming resource posters can be provided to services and organisations across the City in hard copy or electronic format. The A3 and A4 poster is designed to communicate universally the main messages about staying safe and understanding we are all in this together. Lake Macquarie City Council also has a flyer available which includes good practice hints to help community members to not become a victim of theft from their motor vehicle. Organisations can contact **4921 0333** if they've interested in copies of the flyer.

Youth Week

Council and the NSW Government funded \$7832 for service providers and organisations to put on events for young people during Youth Week 2020. There were some great programs and events that would have happened pre-COVID-19 and, with last-minute changes to social distancing and lockdowns, creativity flowed for the following online happenings to support young people. The Lake Macquarie Youth Advisory Committee (Lake Mac YAC) promoted these events on their Facebook page:

Song writing competition (CALM);

Pet competition (Headspace Newcastle);

Tennis video (Total Tennis Mount Hutton);

Exercise training videos (Southern Beaches Junior Rugby Club);

Yoga videos (CALM);

Self-care LOL's TikTok competition (Belmont Neighbourhood Centre);

Grandparents message and letters to aged care residents (Youth Council);

TikTok DIY costume Competition (Belmont Neighbourhood Centre);

Study tips (Youth Council);

Sustainability challenge (Lake Macquarie City Council);

TikTok Lunch break challenge (Belmont Neighbourhood Centre);

Mental health video resources (Headspace Newcastle);

Cooking competition (Southlakes Youth Services);

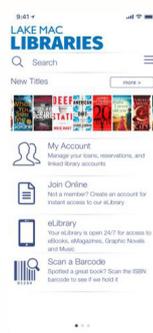
MAC creative arts challenge (Museum of Arts and Culture)

Update to services at Lake Mac Libraries

Lake Mac Libraries are starting to reopen to the community after temporarily closing in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. For the latest information on facility reopenings, visit lakemac.com.au/COVID-19.

For more information about Lake Mac Libraries' online resources, content and programming, visit library.lakemac.com.au or download the Lake Mac Libraries app.

Library eResources



There is a huge range of eResources available online at Lake Mac Libraries' website including eBooks, eAudiobooks, eMagazines, comics and free music.

The new Lake Mac Libraries app is free to download and provides instant access to the entire collection of eResources. Simply login with your library card or join online to get started.

Ancestry Online and Find My Past are available for home use. Login with your library card and follow the links at the bottom of your account summary page.

MAC yapung

The team have been working hard behind-the-scenes throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to develop a range of new online activities for kids of all ages. ARTSPACE@HOME (Ages 2-8) and MAKERSPACE@HOME (Ages 8+) were launched to enable kids to engage with and be inspired by art.

Both of these programs are designed with creativity and sustainability in mind. As such, all activities only require simple household items such as milk bottles, cardboard and lids.

MAC are developing new activities each week to ensure there's plenty to keep the little ones entertained while in hibernation!

Visit the program pages at mac.lakemac.com.au and get started today!

MAC

Museum of Art and Culture
Lake Macquarie ▲ yapung



Awabakal Ltd and Medical Centre

Awabakal Ltd and Medical Centre have been providing support, where possible, during the COVID-19 pandemic to our most vulnerable Elders and those who need extra support due to illness.

In partnership with Fast Fuel Meals, Jesmond Fruit Barn, Survivors R US and Meals on Wheels, Awabakal have called in and dropped off healthy nutritious meals, care and hygiene packs, fruit and vegetable boxes and a few items that have been hard to come by, like toilet paper!

The team at Awabakal have banded together to make this possible and it has been a huge effort with more

than 250 deliveries each week. The staff have also spent time making phone calls to check in on how people are feeling, checking on health issues and the wellbeing of the community and this has been well received with staff receiving many smiles and appreciation on receiving a package or phone call.

For some who have been self-isolating, it was sometimes the only visit and, although social distancing measures were in place where staff were calling in, they were happy to catch up with someone and have a bit of a yarn.

Awabakal received interest from other communities on the

successful delivery of this initiative and together with Fast Fuel are fundraising to expand the program to other communities affected by access to and shortages of healthy and reasonably priced meals.

Further information on the Feeding Our Mob project can be found via our Go Fund Me page. Just search Feeding Our Mob at [gofundme.com](https://www.gofundme.com).

Contact Awabakal on 49186400 or visit [awabakal.org](https://www.awabakal.org) and like us on Facebook.

Simone Jordan

Community Relations Team Leader,
Awabakal Ltd and Medical Centre

Centre for Hope

COVID-19 has presented us with strange times for our generations.

At Centre for Hope (C4H), we left our schools last term and closed our Drop-in centres to protect our young people and staff from the unknown. We looked at ways we could best support and, in response, developed live Facebook feeds on a regular basis and used Facebook to post supportive and informative snapshots. Our staff have regular meetings and we have planned to move out of fear and back into lightness.

Our organisation has offered assistance to other organisations and we have programs ready to reduce fear and create links to other services as we rise from this current challenge.

COVID-19 has also given us time to reflect on what matters and it has been the bearer of good news.

C4H was recently informed that we were successful in the latest Round of Stronger Country

Community Funds through the NSW Government. We have partnered with ITEC Youth to support this project with three years funding for a coach and caseworker to work out of the Windale Drop and further support young people and their families. We are developing youth services and other community services and rebranding The Drop to become The Gathering.

More good news followed after the tender for the Corona Street Hall at Windale through Lake Macquarie City Council was successful in gaining a five-year lease. The Gathering will include multiple supports wrapped around a one stop environment. From 0-beyond we will support those in need. The local community will be consulted to support the ideas that grow when we work together. We were successful in gaining a grant from Office of Premier and Cabinet for Community Building Partnership for a second-hand bus.



Why are these things important?

They are important because in our work, the young people and their family's matter. We may feel helpless in the current times, but we are still here for anyone who needs us. We are readying to support the new look post-COVID. Good news is often mixed with sad and we see that with the world of today. We still have a purpose to celebrate the oldest continuous culture and support Reconciliation: "In This Together."

We are so grateful and humbled that we get to work in this beautiful land every day and support the growth for the future. Please reach out to us if you need support or just to have a yarn over the phone 4947 2182 or email info@centreforhope.com or visit the website [centreforhope.com](https://www.centreforhope.com) and like us on Facebook.

Geraldine Moran

CEO, Centre for hope