

CISVic Teleconference

Delivering Service during Lock-down

Tuesday 24 March 2020

This meeting was attended by approx. 25 people however due to time constraints and the nature of the conference call it was difficult to collect exact names and organisations. Therefore, the names and agencies of all are not recorded in these minutes.

CISVic (Kate) - Thanked everyone for joining the teleconference and acknowledged that these are trying and stressful times at every level. People who are disadvantaged and vulnerable are being unduly impacted. Kate explained that she will give an update on what CISVic is doing and then ask to hear from participants about what they are doing and what concerns people have. Kate explained that this meeting is not a solution-focused meeting, but rather a chance to share what people are doing and learn from each other as we are all figuring it out as we go along.

Keep Communities Connected - The Consumer Action Law Centre have headed up an advocacy campaign (Keeping Communities Connected - <https://consumeraction.org.au/keep-communities-connected/>) requesting relief measures in terms of freezes on loans, utilities for people experiencing financial hardship, CISVic has become a co-signatory this request and in coming days the relevant paperwork will be uploaded to the CISVic website.

Emergency Care Packages - The Emergency Care Packages that have been advertised by the government are being prepared by Foodbank and delivered by the Red Cross. These Care Packages are only for people who have been self-quarantined and do not have the support of family and friends who can provide them with food and toiletries for the two-week period.

Education - There is concern about education in the likelihood of term two being remote delivery for students (particularly vulnerable students who don't have access to phone/internet). Jennifer has been speaking to VCOSS and we have been speaking to State School Relief. They are putting something together to government for device access for students and data cards, so if we are looking towards remote-learning, people will have the technology they need. When CISVic finds out more information about this we will be sure to pass this onto the membership.

Updated information about service delivery - CISVic sent out an email this morning requesting a service delivery update. We're getting a lot of traffic via website and phone number. We will be updating the CISVic website with any changes to service delivery for member agencies. We are talking with Infoxchange about the possibility of CISVic being able to update the AskLzzy platform with changes to service delivery for each of our member agencies. This is a work in progress, and we will give agencies the option to opt out of this assistance if they would prefer to update AskLzzy themselves.

Could agencies please continue to email Meagan with short succinct updates about changes to their service delivery so that these could be made to the website, service delivery document in the member's area.

Telstra Bill Assistance – Discussion has been had with Telstra about the possible logistical difficulties services may have in assisting clients with Telstra Bill Assistance whilst working with increased social distancing measures in place and potentially working remotely. Telstra have advised that for agencies who are existing participants in the Telstra Bill Assistance Program, that an email can be sent to the Special Assistance Team at Telstra advising how much the service would ordinarily be providing in the way of Telstra Vouchers. The Telstra Special Assistance Team will then organise this at their end. Meagan will upload more detailed information to the Members Area of the CISVic website (afternoon of Wed 25 March).

Telstra will also be doing a bulk-print of reply-paid envelopes for those agencies who still have access to the vouchers and are able to send the vouchers off themselves.

CISVic raised the question about pre-paid phones mobile top up and the possibility of the membership having access to this. At this stage it is not possible however they will feed it up the line.

Telstra are open to hearing from us about how they can assist their customers and our agencies during this pandemic. If agencies have any ideas, please email those through to Meagan to progress.

A question was asked by Steve from Frankston about increased access to the Telstra cards given people will need to be calling services to access support. CISVic will follow up with Telstra about this within the next 24 hours.

Support from local government – We are hearing about some fantastic support and flexibility being provided by some councils and would like to hear more from agencies about their experiences as it will help us to map this and identify gaps.

1800 Number – CISVic has been looking into the possibility of a 1800 number should the state / country go into lockdown. The thinking being that as a centralised number it may assist with catching the overflow of enquires that agencies will have.

There was concern raised that there is a coronavirus number, regional number, etc. Local number might be better due to confusion.

Community Support Frankston (Steve) - We're in a modified service lock-down where reception doors are closed, and we have a gated area with modifications so we can have some client facing work. We're doing e-vouchers as well and have found it's working quite well. But there has still been an overwhelming need for some client-facing services with paid staff members and assertive outreach. We're getting a bit anxious about what a full lockdown would look like if we're still trying to provide support to our community.

Westernport Community Support (Georgia) - We're working in a similar manner to Community Support Frankston, everything is closed down in terms of roller door and door. Clients still coming. We're doing everything over phone and then leaving the food parcel or food voucher in the door for the client to pick up. There is no contact at all between the client and the

Community Support Worker / staff member. We are taking it day-by-day changes and we'll see what happens. We might be looking at doing a partnership with the Shire to do a more central support for local clients whereby staff from the Shire will be doing the food delivery to people in need. Its early stages and we just got together to discuss today, implementation later.

Mornington Community Information and Support Centre (Stewart) - Closed op-shop, tourism centre, meals. Running a modified fresh food program every Thurs, this means that the food has already been bagged rather than client's being able to access themselves. We have a reduced numbers of volunteers, and as such have reduced service delivery to 9am-4pm Mon-Fri. Our biggest problem is access to buying food in bulk for pantry.

We have a couple of phases, and we're reviewing it every afternoon. Our next phase is closing the doors and telephone operations. Moving to e-vouchers as well.

Kate: CISVic has found that the online Coles vouchers have buckled under pressure and have been hard to order.

Cobram Support and Information Service (Ross) - This is our first day back for the week. We've only have had one client; they appear to not be coming. We're reviewing service today and will likely go to remote work from tomorrow. The service does not have any paid staff and is run entirely by volunteers, a number of volunteers have opted not to come in, which is why we will be moving to remote service delivery.

Kate: You're a volunteer and are more vulnerable. How are you going in terms of volunteers?

South East Community Links (Kay) - All SECL staff and volunteers went to remote from today. We're doing telephone appointments and I've arranged food voucher express post-delivery. We've been talking with the City of Greater Dandenong and are exploring the possibility of how we can work with the Meals on Wheels service delivered by Council.

Monash Waverley Community Information and Support (Chris) - The service does not have any paid staff and is run entirely by volunteers. At this point in time the service is closed, we have a number of older more at-risk volunteers and it was agreed upon by the Committee of Management that we would close the service for the time being. Whilst we would like to move to remote service delivery, our difficulty is that it would be very difficult for our volunteers and fall to only a small handful of people to do. We have looked at other options and spoken with Council however are yet to find a solution, we are still exploring our options.

Monash Oakleigh Community Support and Information Service (Kathleen) - The service does not have any paid staff and is run entirely by volunteers. Half of our volunteers have said they won't be coming into agency, which is understandable. We are however in the fortunate position of having an interior lockable security door. We can talk to clients through the door, which is what we're doing. We've also created a physical barrier with a card table and a note to stand behind table. They can put Centrelink card on table so we can read it, and then we put voucher on the table. There's no op-shop, but we are doing food parcels. We're open 3 half days per week because we don't have enough volunteers to do anything other than that.

We've put on our answering machine so that people can leave a message, however to-date no one has used it yet. Like Chris, I've been in contact with Monash Council who is keen to keep

the service going. It's a hard thing because things are changing by the hour. At this point, we've got a roster posted on the front door going through 1 May, but we'll see.

Whittlesea Community Connections (Alex) – Whilst the service is closed to the public and the vast majority are working from home, there are some volunteers who are still at the service doing back of house operations such as filing etc. Express posting, etc vouchers to people. This has been going well and people are grateful for not having to travel. We have Monday and Friday appointments and ER.

In terms of phase 2, we're working with our ER network out here to ramp up food and other relief items. We've got delivery. We should get ready for lockdown even if it doesn't come. We are delivering everything we can and talking to others to work out a collective delivery service. How can we get the maximum amount of food we can get with other ER providers? We're also talking to STREAT meals who are working with RACV. They're trying to keep people employed who have people in kitchens. We talked yesterday about the kinds of meals that could be delivered out here. Meals, food boxes, etc. There's a bit of activity more broadly for people who wouldn't normally be in ER to help out. We're taking a coordinator role. We're trying to test lock down procedures to get food items and get it out to their houses.

The service is developing a bit of a database and identifying clients that the team can check in on (over the phone).

Casey North Community Information and Support Service (Susan) - Switched to phone-based service from last Monday. Everything is conducted over phone. We've been posting vouchers out and are trialling e-vouchers. The post is expensive. We're also still able to help people with other crisis stuff (car rego, etc). Prioritising clients that don't normally contact us and are newly unemployed who don't know to come to us. I contacted our local Centrelink this morning, so they know we're here. We've got fewer volunteers coming in. Most calls are going to message bank, which we are clearing through the day. This has taken pressure off about having to answer phone. Our financial councillors are still coming in and providing service by phone. Non-verbal clients can photo or message their needs. The financial councillors are very busy. The ER is still busy, 15-20 per day (which is less). Once the Centrelink payments go out, I expect it to reduce. We're trying to get to new clients, people who don't know about it. It's been working and we haven't had any complaints. Our next stage is difficult. We're in the middle of upgrading our IT. We will need laptops, phones, making sure environment is adequate for confidentiality. One of our biggest problems is accessing our database and making sure it meets Australian policies and law, which has been impossible thus far. Privacy in the cloud.

LinC Church Services Network Yarra Valley (Julie) - We opened yesterday to see how many clients we would have. We didn't have any so stayed we are closed today. We normally close during school holidays, but we've decided to tell people to call and leave a message if they're in need and we'll deliver food parcels. We can also organize them from our building if needed. Staff are working from home where they can. We can also do referrals. Fresh food program still running with deliveries from Second Bite. BBQ's still running, transport continuing with increased hygiene and social distancing. We are taking it day-by-day. We're in a Council building, and they're still open., they've said that if they do need to close and it's not staffed, we can still use the building. Fresh food program, parcels could be provided from the side door if needed.

IndianCare (Tina) - Today is the last day in the office and then we will be working from home and scaling down activities. Our services, events in the community, will be cancelled. We're trying to go online with services, some will be more difficult than others. Positive parenting, etc will be quite easy. We were working out a call forwarding to main office line to mobile that I will manage this from home. It will be a challenge, there are lots of technicalities. Our funding is being impacted by all this because we can't deliver services in community. Our deliverables are impacted, and we have concerns about ongoing funding.

Kate: VCOSS and ACOSS working on this specifically. Especially about there not being penalty for deliverables not being met.

Port Phillip Community Group (Rose) - The office is closed to the public this week and all calls are coming in through the St Kilda office. Our Community Centre has closed down and we are negotiating with Food Bank to use this space as Depo so we can supply food parcels to our clients and to other organisations. We've got lots of volunteers, there is a strong art community in Port Phillip and there have been lots of offers of people with vans and time to help with food deliveries. We're looking to organise deliveries at home and big drop-offs at places like Sacred Heart who are open but don't have the food they would normally. We've seen quite a few people who are newly unemployed and aren't familiar with system. That's why we want to get the Depo set up quickly. Financial counselling is going really well and is being delivered remotely. We trailed e-vouchers yesterday and it was fine. The next step is doing more to work from home and staggering who is in the office. We used Coles and the instructions that CISVic sent out.

BANSIC (Phil) - Still providing an office-based service, the majority of support is being undertaken via the phone however there have been some walk-in clients. We are in the process of planning for a lockdown in the building, so we're trying to work out how to provide service remotely. Continuing contact with local council and other community services. It's all happening hour-by-hour. We're operating in whichever way we can. Many of our volunteers are still coming in. Some were told they cannot.

Community Information and Support Cranbourne (Kathy) - Operating in modified lock-down service. Today moved to full lockdown with skeleton staff. Still doing interviews with telephone and sent out first log of e-vouchers and doing express post overnight. First batch seems to have gone well. Our client numbers are down today however our busiest day was yesterday, and we did 31. Most people were looking for food support. Our counselling service is still running, and she is doing phone counselling from home. The other is on-site and doing it over the phone too. Financial Counselling is being delivered over the phone and via email. Our volunteers are depleted, the vast majority are in the 70+ bracket. We did a risk assessment and identified who we would prefer to not be on premises, and some have chosen to self-exclude. We're relying heavily on paid staff. Phone interviews are working well. The next stage is moving all phone enquiries to message bank to relieve some staff to phone and do interviews. We're also investigating off-site option and are working on the necessary IT requirements. We'd like to keep offering service electronically and by post.

CityLife (Kylie) - All our groups have been suspended. We are still providing food support via pre-packed food hampers. We've gotten donations through church congregation and can provide frozen food and meals, fresh fruit and veg and toilet paper. We are making up great hamper for when clients do come in. We're not doing face-to-face contact. We're doing phone intake. As of tomorrow, clients will not be able to enter the building and food parcels will be

delivered by car. We're making changes as things change rapidly. We still have all of our staff on board. Our volunteers are still keen to be helping, so we are well-positioned to keep helping. Vouchers, prescription assistance, etc all over phone or email (pictures of scripts, etc).

Maroondah Community Assist (Rhonda) - The service does not have any paid staff and is run entirely by volunteers. We have been providing a phone service since the 16th March and are able to provide our regular food parcels due to the set-up of our office. A phone assessment is completed and then food is left at the back door for the client to pick up, there is no contact between the Community Support Worker and the client.

Rhonda asked if CISVic had heard anything about tonight's cabinet meeting and what we might be able to expect. Kate reported we have not.

Doncare (Ian) - We're operating by phone only. Our opening hours are still the same. Doing telephone screen so people can make appointment. We weren't worried about food stock, and we sent appeal out and we've gotten great donations. Next week, other services in our building will be closing and the whole building will be closed to the public. We're working with council to have them open/close the front door so people can still do pickup. Basically, it's food parcels and vouchers. We've arranged for home delivery for some, and that is likely to increase. Currently very day-by-day. Client numbers have not been high compared to normal.

Knox Infolink (Denise) – Denise asked if CISVic knew anything more about the article from ProBono, about \$30k support packages for community organisations. Kate reported that she has not heard anything more regarding this.

Knox is providing food support service. We have an inner door and keep it locked to ensure social distancing. We also have an intercom system so we can communicate with people from the outside if it comes to that. Currently we're providing food parcels, reducing time with clients, only taking essential info, pre-packaging food (no more self-service). We provide space for our housing support worker and with the enormous cues at Centrelink, we've had people come in and use this space to access computers to complete their on-line form. AT this stage it is only for people who are experiencing homelessness. We have an extension phone out into those who need to make phone calls. We have reduced our chairs to those that can be wiped down. Our long-term plan is, with stages in between, moving to phone-only interview. We are also talking with our local community transport provider about assisting with the delivery of food to the aged etc.

Southern Peninsula Community Support and Information Centre (Jeremy) - Running similarly to Knox. Still doing face-to-face, modified. Letting one person in at a time into a special area. Keeping meetings to under 15 min, pre-packaged parcels. We've gotten our vouchers with a quick turnaround. All co located agencies are no longer working onsite. We have put measures in place with regards to our shower program, social isolation is a huge issue with the people who access the SPLASH program, and we're worried about turning it off and it being turned off for an extended period.

Darebin Information Volunteer and Resource Service (Fiona) – All staff are now working from home and the service is focused on checking in with volunteers to see how they are. Talking to Darebin Council to access another location that will meet more social distancing

requirements. We are not able to get parcels out at the moment to people, but we're working on it. We're taking messages and following up to provide as much support as possible.

Follow-up -

Discussions with other key providers - At 3:30 this afternoon CISVic will convene a teleconference with Salvos, Catholic Care, Vinnies, Anglicare, Foodbank and DSS to talk about what is happening at ER level. Kate asked if agencies had any particular issues that they would like raised at this meeting. Suggestions provided were:

- ✓ Concerns about funding if unable to meet deliverables. Joint advocacy on this issue would be welcomed.
- ✓ Additional ways CISVic can support the membership. Kate asked those in attendance what additional ways CISVic could support, the following suggestions were provided:
- ✓ Advocating for additional phone cards
- ✓ Advocacy with DSS and State Government re additional support. Agencies have and will continue to need to change service delivery and this will increase overheads, increased supply costs, etc.
- ✓ Advocate to Coles and Woollies to open up access to bulk ordering again. We can't currently buy in bulk from local suppliers. Is there scope for established agencies who order to continue ordering?

Advocacy – Jennifer reported that CISVic is putting together a template letter that agencies can use to send to their local member of parliament, this will go out to the membership soon and will also be uploaded in the Members Area of the CISVic website for people to access. Please contact Jennifer directly if you have other advocacy suggestions. Please note that Jennifer works Mon – Wed.

Kate thanked everyone for joining in the teleconference today and spoke about how it again demonstrates the strength of our sector, we are able to be nimble and our strength is in being local independent agencies that can respond rapidly. Kate applauded everyone for the wonderful work being undertaken in this difficult time and requested that further questions or comments be direct to her via email or phone. CISVic will organise another teleconference again in the coming week so members can come together in conversation.

Contact details of CISVic City Team

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