Getting Ready

We are a network of people helping each other with practical support, connection and resources to get through this together. Physical distancing doesn't have to mean social isolation. We are doing everything we can to prepare for the worst while we all hope for the best.

Why are we doing this?

We are getting on the front foot and setting up local networks for anyone who wants to stay connected with their neighbours and the community as the COVID-19 pandemic unfolds in our Shire.

We don't know how many of us will be in home isolation and we want to make it as easy as possible to help each other.

Who is the network for?

The network is for people who are self-isolating or are quarantined at home now or who might be in the future and anyone who wants to help. We are calling people who join the network 'participants' – irrespective of if they need help or are giving help. This is because everyone's needs, and situations will change as time moves on.

The needs of older people, people living with disabilities, carers and anyone who feels vulnerable and wants help are a priority.

Everyone who wants connection at this time, either to give or receive support, is invited to join a network. This will provide opportunities for us all to strengthen our wellbeing and find ways to cope while we are stuck at home.

How does this work?

Different small groups of people are setting up street by street, or in rural hamlets.

Everyone registers online or by phone. This is so we can link people up and share information as things keep changing.

Local Networks – by street

People in the local network might need help, can provide help or be in both situations at the same time! We expect that everyone's needs will keep changing as the COVID-19 pandemic progresses. This network provides a way for us to help each other as each of our needs change.

The groups are small and local – just based in a small area, which we are calling 'precincts'. So, chances are you will already know some of the people in the group. This is about neighbours helping neighbours.

Support Networks – by needs

Support networks for people with similar needs can also be set up – for example there could be a network for people with disabilities, LGBTI people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, or people with carer responsibilities.

It is possible to join more than one network.

What sort of help is there?

Practical

Examples of the sort of practical help that the networks will provide include picking up and delivering shopping, running errands, picking up medication from the chemist, posting letters, walking the dog, mowing the lawn, tackling the weeds etc. Practical help is based on what people need and what network participants can do.

Help for people to set up Zoom and Skype and other forms of communication on home computers and devices is being organised as a first, urgent priority. This will make it much easier for people to stay connected with family and friends while they are at home. Playing board games by video will be the new trend for sure ….

Wellbeing

Participants who are house-bound or still active can provide help and connection with each other – e.g. by being phone or Zoom/Skype buddies. We can share good ideas about interesting ways to stay engaged and socially connected. We might even find some new ways to have fun! Our aim is that we all care for our own and each other's wellbeing and stay connected as this situation unfolds.

Actively supporting local businesses and sole traders across our Shire

We are all very concerned about the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in our Shire. It is critical that we all do whatever we can to help our local businesses and sole traders stay afloat. They are a big part of what makes our communities so great and we need them to survive.

The Neighbourhood Care Network is working closely with the local Chambers of Commerce and other business networks to do whatever we can to keep money circulating in our towns and villages. We will build relationships with local businesses and help deliver shopping, takeaway, medications and other goods to Local Network participants across the Shire.

We will work together with these groups to find other creative ways to help local businesses and sole traders adapt and provide goods and services that help all of us as we are increasingly practicing physical distance.

Stay tuned and watch this space. If you have any great ideas, please get in touch with us at care4neighbourhood@gmail.com.

How will we stay safe and maintain physical distancing?

Strict guidelines are in place for practical help involving any out-of-the-home activities, such as shopping or errands etc. Infection control will be strictly managed, and once the networks are up and running there will be no direct personal contact between participants.

Lots of support and help will be provided online and by phone – which means everyone stays safe in their own space.

Participating in a local network will be one of the ways people who are self-isolating but not sick can stay connected and engaged.

Reasons to join the network

- If you are currently self-isolating or in quarantine and need help
- If you are older, living with a disability, have a pre-existing medical condition, are a single parent or just feel vulnerable and know you will need help if you must self-isolate
- If you are healthy and not self-isolating and want to help
- If you are self-isolating/quarantining and want to help, and stay connected and engaged
- If you want to be a local coordinator for the network in your street or rural hamlet – which means you will have a coordination role across your street or rural hamlet

What support will be provided to participants?

There will be tools and resources online that will be constantly updated.

We will share useful information and ideas about staying connected and things to do at home.

There will be regular information as things progress.

How to get involved?

Register online at https://airtable.com/shrLwdFmfGwX6vBwf

Phone the Registration Help Desk if you can't register online on 6655 1005 between 10 am and 4.30 pm

What happens when I register?

You will be linked up with the person who is the Lead Coordinator for your area. Each group is self-managed. This means that you will decide in your street or rural hamlet how you work and what sort of help and contact you have with each other. Tools and resources will be provided to you as they become available.

Privacy

Your contact details will be kept confidential apart from being used in ways that you consent to when you complete the form.

Risk and Responsibility

This is a local network of people who are helping each other. Everyone is responsible for themselves and for maintaining safe infection control practices. Each person participates in this network at their own risk.

Bellingen Shire Council has sought advice on the network's behalf and there is no insurance worldwide that covers COVID-19. However, Council has been advised that they may be able to cover Network participants, who are volunteers, under the Council insurance policies, except for COVID 19. Council are urgently exploring what may be possible with insurers and will get back to us as soon as they can. We will update this information as soon as we know more.

Health advice is not our thing

This network doesn't provide any advice about COVID 19 or health related matters. This information will be available on the COVID website set up by Bellingen Shire Council, with links to other sites with official information.

Who set up this network?

We are a small group of residents from the Housing Matters Action Group who approached Bellingen Council and offered to set up a network to make it easy for local people to safely help each other. We are a part of the Bellingen Shire Council COVID-19 Pandemic Response Group.

Kerry Pearse, Rose West and Gai Stern started this network in close collaboration with Bellingen Shire Council, the Housing Matters Action Group Inc and the Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire. A big shout out to Gull Herzberg and Ian Gilmore who worked through Sunday night to get the enrolment form in place.

More info or to join the Network?

https://create.bellingen.nsw.gov.au/coronavirus-updates

Join the network at https://airtable.com/shrLwdFmfGwX6vBwf

Contact our Enrolment Help Desk at care4neighborhood@gmail.com

Ring our Enrolment Help Desk between 10 am to 4 pm at 6655 1005

We will respond to requests as quickly as we can. However please be patient with us as we have been working really hard over the past three days to get the network in place and we are still building the materials we need to be effective.