

OFFICER'S REPORT

General Meeting to be held in April 2020

Subject: COVID-19 – Business Continuity Plan
Author: Jane O'Malley, Chief Executive Officer

Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve rapidly and the PHCC team is committed to flatten the curve and keep our team, and our community as safe as possible, while continuing to operate effectively.

Members are asked to review and endorse the draft PHCC Business Continuity Plan, as presented, or recommend modifications.

Summary of Action taken to Date

The following protocols are currently in place:

- We have temporarily closed our offices to visitors.
- Our team is still working with most now set up and working from home.
- We are undertaking a review of our activities and practices to ensure that we continue to provide support to our community, as far as practical.
- We have postponed and/or cancelled community events and activities and are looking at novel approaches to deliver these.
- We are attending meetings, but via teleconference or similar.
- Some of our team are still working on country, where they can abide by social distancing and hygiene recommendations.

Consultation

At its meeting on 9 April, the Executive Committee recommended:

- The CEO prepare a 'Business Continuity Plan' to be tabled at the next Board meeting;
- Staff caring for primary school aged children or elderly family members have the option for an additional 5 days of leave (pro-rata), that will not impact on leave entitlements, with approval delegated to the CEO;
- CEO continue to provide support for staff to be flexible in their hours to enable them to be most productive, while balancing home needs;
- If a staff member contracts COVID-19, they are eligible for additional COVID-19 sick leave entitlements, of up to 10* days, once their personal leave entitlements are exhausted.

**note that the Plan includes 20 days, in line with State Government and industry standards which were not considered at the Executive Group meeting.*

The draft plan has also been reviewed by Program Managers Steve Fisher and Melanie Durack. Finance and Payroll Manager Karen Henderson and Office Manager Leanne Greene. Comments from the Executive Group and these staff have been incorporated into the Plan as presented to the Board.

Strategic Implications

Goal 1 Governing, Leading & Managing the P-H

KA3 Meet performance expectations of the Australian Government

Goal 2 Securing our Future

KA1 Continue development and delivery of significant projects

KA4 Provide a safe and effective work environment to secure and maintain quality staff, including resources and development opportunities

Conclusion

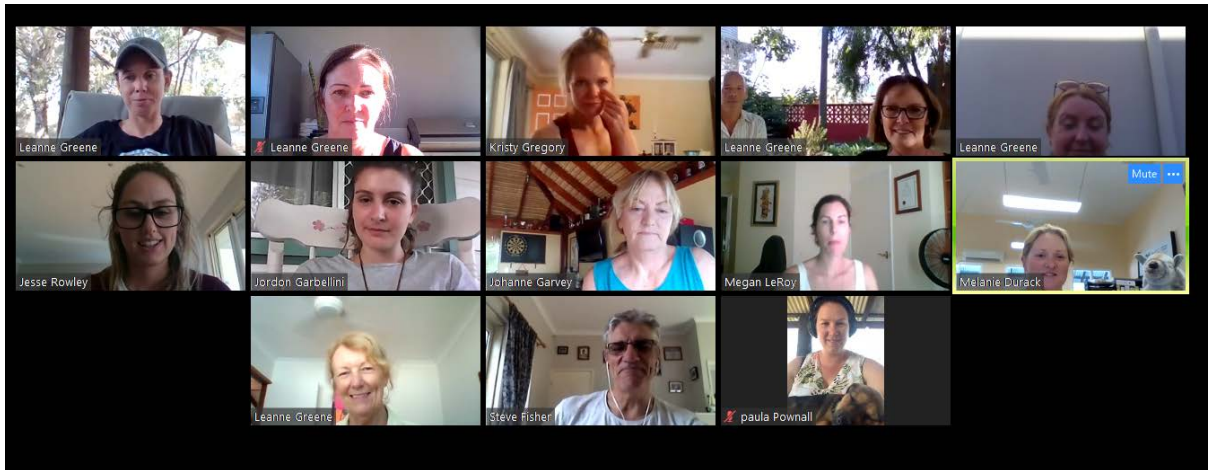
We will continue to review these measures on an ongoing basis to determine whether they remain an appropriate response. We feel strongly for our community. These are not usual circumstances and it is anything but business as usual but be assured the team are still working hard to protect and restore our beautiful Catchment and support our farmers and landholders.

Recommendation

That the:

- 1. Draft PHCC COVID-19 Business Continuity Plan be endorsed as presented, noting that this will be a flexible Plan to enable the PHCC to respond to changing circumstances around COVID-19 (e.g. will be modified if we are required to go into Lockdown, or if/when isolation and distancing measures are relaxed); and**
- 2. Actions taken by the Chief Executive Officer to date to address the COVID-19 pandemic be acknowledged and endorsed.**

We acknowledge the Noongar people as Traditional Custodians of this land and pay our respects to all Elders past and present



PHCC COVID-19 Business Continuity Plan

Draft

April 2020

Prepared: 14 April, 2020

Revision history

Version Number	Changes made	Person responsible	Date updated
1.0	<i>Draft Plan</i>	<i>Jane O'Malley</i>	<i>14 April 2020</i>
1.1	<i>Draft Plan prepared & reviewed selected staff and Exec Group</i>	<i>Jane O'Malley</i>	<i>16 April 2020</i>

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1 Background

In the wake of the COVID-19 Coronavirus global pandemic the PHCC is taking action to protect the health and wellbeing of its Operations team and Board of Management, minimize risks to the community, and ensure business continuity.

At April 2020 the World Health Organisation continues to label the COVID-19 as a pandemic. The Australian Government is continuing to manage the COVID-19 outbreak as a health emergency and the Western Australian Government has declared a State of Emergency.

2 Objectives

- Protect the health and wellbeing of the PHCC operations team (and Board of Management).
- Minimise risk to the Community.
- Ensure business continuity.

3 WA Guidelines – at 14 April 2020

All Western Australians are asked to stay at home unless you are:

- Shopping for what you need - food, takeaway, and necessary supplies.
- Medical or health care needs, including compassionate requirements.
- Exercising, in groups of no more than you and one other.
- **Working and studying, if you can't work or learn remotely.**

If leaving the house people should observe social distancing (staying a minimum of 1.5 metres or two arm-lengths from each other), practise good hygiene and consider the needs of others in the community.

To reduce the spread of COVID-19 coronavirus people are being asked to practice good hygiene as the best defence. People are being encouraged to:

- Wash their hands frequently with soap and water
- Take extra care before and after eating, and after going to the toilet
- Cover your cough and sneeze, dispose of tissues, and use alcohol-based hand sanitiser
- sStay inside (social isolation and social distancing).

Daily updates can be found at <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov>

Staff and Members may wish to stay informed via:

- Download the “Coronavirus Australia” government app in [Apple App Store](#) or [Google Play](#)
- Join our [WhatsApp channel](#) on [iOS](#) or [Android](#).

4 Crisis Management Team

Jane O'Malley (CEO) and Executive Team (Caroline Knight [Chair]; Darralyn Ebsary [Deputy Chair]; Marilyn Gray [Treasurer]; Paddi Creevey [Secretary] and Bob Pond [Exec Member]. With input from Program Managers, Melanie Durack, Steve Fisher and Andrew Del Marco.

5 Workplace Arrangements – Social Isolation

5.1 Office Closures

The Mandurah and Boddington offices will remain closed until social isolation restrictions and recommendations have been lifted, or unless determined by the Crisis Management Team. A skeleton team may, at the CEO's discretion, continue to operate from both offices, if the CEO is satisfied that social distancing recommendations can be maintained. Staff will not work out of the Waroona Landcare Centre unless they have written approval from the CEO. Both offices will carry out hygiene recommendations at all times.

5.2 Meetings, Events and Activities

Unless otherwise approved all meetings at all levels will be via teleconference, with no face to face meetings events or activities. Events and activities will need to either be postponed or cancelled, noting that not all events can be postponed. Additional Zoom licenses have been purchased, a booking system has been established and guidelines distributed.

5.3 Payroll, Invoicing and Finance Matters

Procedures have been put in place, including an electronic signature process (being reviewed by Auditors and delegated to the Finance and Audit Committee to recommend approval), to minimize any disruption to payment of invoices, payroll and other finance matters. Skeleton staff at the Mandurah and Boddington office are assisting in the maintenance of processes, noting that the procedures do extend to lockdown, should this come into place.

5.4 Field Work

If social distancing and hygiene recommendations can be achieved, staff may continue field work, with a social isolation plan in place, in addition to normal WHS plans, with the approval of their supervisor.

5.5 Contract Agreements with Third Parties

Companies contracted to deliver services for the PHCC will be responsible for their own social distancing and hygiene requirements. The PHCC will continue to initiate contracts for services where works can be delivered as per the agreement.

5.6 Working from Home

All staff will be required to Work from Home until social distancing recommendations have been lifted, unless approved by the CEO, or determined that the PHCC will continue distancing beyond formal recommended timeframes.

Staff working from home will be provided with the equipment and support required to productively work from home. Staff will need to complete a Working from Home Self-Assessment and Declaration that must be approved by the CEO.

When working from home staff are encouraged to be conscious of ensuring they take care of their own wellbeing by taking frequent and suitable breaks.

Action:

Staff must complete a Working from Home Self-Assessment and Declaration to be approved by the CEO, and ensure that they are provided with the equipment and support required to productively work from home.

5.7 Work Hours

While social distancing and working from home arrangements are in place staff are encouraged to work their contracted hours, across each fortnight to suit their individual, family and the PHCC needs. That is, staff are not required to work strictly to their e.g. 7.6 hour times and days, as per their contract, but can work their hours across the pay fortnight. That is, if you are contracted to work 76 hours / fortnight, you can work these hours across the fortnight, subject to this enabling productive work.

Staff who choose to work flexible hours across this time must maintain a timesheet and save it to S:\Work (PHCC) Documents\HR (Human Resources)\Timesheets Active\ActiveTimesheets\Current Staff

The timesheet will be for self-management and guidance to supervisors, they will not be submitted to payroll. If staff are within 5-10% of their working hours and they feel they have been productive in their output, this is acceptable, given the unusual COVID-19 circumstances.

Staff that are working from a PHCC office (Mandurah, Boddington or Waroona) and choose to work outside of normal working hours must abide by established procedures and protocols to ensure they follow all safety aspects, and that security services are advised of staff being at offices outside established security hours. It is preferable that staff do not work at offices outside of daylight hours.

Where staff are struggling with productivity across normal hours, they need to discuss with their supervisor to determine appropriate actions. This may include an option for voluntary use of leave entitlements and/or the acceptance of tasks/projects from other sections/areas.

Action:

Staff who opt for flexible working arrangements are to maintain a timesheet showing working hours across payroll fortnights; and

Staff must advise their supervisor if they are unable to work productively from home in order to discuss options for voluntary leave and/or a shift in work tasks/projects.

5.8 Data Security and Backup Strategy

Working from home is recognised to increase the risk of cyber attacks that can disrupt our work and provide risks at varying levels. Staff must maintain vigilance over this period to ensure that they are extra careful with any suspicious emails/attachments etc. Any queries should be directed immediately to Lasar Computers [95175080].

Staff must back all work to the S:Drive at least once every day.

5.9 Communications - Team

The CEO will communicate regularly with the staff on COVID-19 updates (at least weekly) as well as:

- Maintaining regular 'Stand-up' staff meetings (via Zoom); and
- Social teleconferences (e.g. Friday drinks on Zoom).

To ensure that the staff are keeping in contact with each other through this period of isolation.

6 Leave Entitlements

6.1 Sick Leave

Coronavirus can cause a range of symptoms. Symptoms can range from mild illness to pneumonia. Affected people may experience:

- Fever
- Flu like symptoms such as coughing, sore throat and headaches.
- Difficulty breathing.

While coronavirus is of concern, it is important to remember that most people displaying symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat or tiredness are likely suffering with a cold or other respiratory illness - not coronavirus.

For the latest advice, information and resources, go to www.health.gov.au

Call the National Coronavirus Health Helpline on 1800 020 080. It operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

If staff are experiencing symptoms and or have concerns they should consult https://healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/A_E/Coronavirus and determine if they need to take further action (see your doctor).

If staff contract COVID-19 they will must advise follow government health instructions, advise the CEO as soon as practical and completely isolate themselves from any PHCC staff or related persons (contractors, volunteers etc.).

Staff who are diagnosed with COVID-19 will be entitled to a further 20 days specific COVID-19 sick leave days, after they have used all personal leave entitlements and on receipt of a medical certificate identifying that they have COVID-19 and are unable to work.

6.2 Parental Leave (Home Schooling of Primary School aged Children)

Staff who are required, or choose to care for and/or home school their primary school aged children are entitled to 'COVID-19 Parental Leave'. This new entitlement is for up to 5 days, for full time employees and pro-rata for part time and casual workers who have been with the PHCC for longer than 6 months. The intent of this leave is to ensure that Parents and/or carer's can balance the educational needs of their children with their PHCC work requirements. This leave can be taken ahead of using other leave entitlements, on approval and at the discretion of the CEO.

6.3 Carer's Leave

Staff who are required, or choose to care for elderly or sick members of their immediate family are entitled to 'COVID-19 Carer's Leave'. This new entitlement is for up to 5 days, for full time employees and pro-rata for part time and casual workers who have been with the PHCC for longer than 6 months. The intent of this leave is to ensure that Carer's can balance the needs of their elderly or ill family members with their PHCC work requirements. This will be most relevant where staff have chosen to bring their elderly or sick relatives into their homes during the COVID-19 pandemic, requiring additional time to care for them. This leave can be taken ahead of using other leave entitlements, on approval and at the discretion of the CEO.

6.4 Annual and Long Service Leave – Voluntary Leave

Staff may choose to voluntarily use annual and/or long service leave entitlements throughout the social distancing timeframe, if approved by their supervisor, to suit their personal circumstances. For example a full time employee may wish to consider taking 1 or 2 leave days / week/fortnight, particularly if they are struggling to be productive working from home.

6.5 Annual, Long Service Leave and Unpaid – Voluntary Leave Request

Should staff be unable to work productively from home, the CEO may, in discussions with the relevant supervisor, request that the staff member use existing leave entitlements, particularly if social distancing continues for an extended timeframe. If staff are requested to take existing entitlements (or potentially leave without pay), the CEO will discuss with each individual, with individual circumstances being carefully considered and privacy being maintained. Should the staff member decline the request, the CEO will have the discretion to consider next steps.

7 Workplace Arrangements – Lockdown

Should the Australian and/or WA Government declare a lockdown, this Plan will be reviewed and appropriately updated. Processes have been put into place anticipating a full lockdown.

8 Travel

PHCC staff will abide by State Government's advice on travel. Updates can be found at: <https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/department-of-the-premier-and-cabinet/covid-19-coronavirus-advice-travelling-and-within-western-australia>.

8.1 Interstate and Overseas Travel

At the time of publishing, travel interstate and overseas is not allowed and PHCC do not qualify for any exemptions. Therefore the CEO is responsible for working with the team to ensure business continuity around this restriction. For example obtaining written departmental approval to not attend the annual Regional Agricultural Landcare Facilitator Conference [a requirement of our RLP Service Agreement]; and e.g. site visits for REI projects via virtual tour with an alternative PHCC team member as the Project Manager is in Victoria and unable to return to W.A..

8.2 Regional (Intrastate)

Regional travel restrictions came into place from 1 April 2020, restricting movement between Development Commission Regions unless meeting set exemptions, including:

- People travelling to work
- Returning to a place of residence

The Peel-Harvey Catchment cuts across 3 Development Commission Regions, being:

- Peel (entirely)
- Wheatbelt (portion);and
- South West (portion)

The WA Government has declared that Perth and Peel will form one region, for this purpose, due to their proximity and therefore travel to and from Perth is not restricted.

Action:

Staff needing to travel between regions for the purposes of work, or returning to their residence following a working day, need written approval from the CEO. If approved, the CEO will provide a letter of authority which must be carried at all times to ensure that it is available on request. The CEO will also provide a letter for PHCC contractors stating the need for travel between regions for essential work purposes and an agreement/contract is in place between PHCC and the designated contractor.

9 Project Delivery and Impacts on PHCC

Planning for, responding to, and recovering from a pandemic presents unusual and varied challenges for PHCC. Unlike other disruptive events that Business Continuity Plans normally address, a pandemic will have no direct effect on physical infrastructure and assets.

By contrast, a pandemic will directly affect people's health and wellbeing, and potentially the roles that people perform in the ordinary course of employment and business, and their family and social life. The full impact of a pandemic on the PHCC will depend on the severity, location and duration of the pandemic.

A pandemic has the potential to impact on all areas of PHCC workplace operations and may include:

- Increased staff absences for a variety of reasons, including personal illness, fear of contamination, provision of care and support to ill family or household members, isolation or quarantine requirements, the need to care for children unable to attend schools or child care centres during closures, or revised transport arrangements.
- Increased dependency on staff performing key business functions.
- Disruptions to business operations, including delays to the supply of goods and materials.
- Reduced movement of goods or people.
- Reduced availability of services from sub-contractors or suppliers.
- Disruptions to financial payments and processing.
- Leave costs may reach a peak during a pandemic.
- Potentially higher personal stress and people undertaking different roles in the workplace due to other staff absences.

A review of project delivery is in preparation, with all staff looking at innovative and effective ways of delivering contracted projects/programs. This will continue with regular updates for early identification of any risks associated with delivery.

9.1 PHCC Role in Stimulus Activity – Post Social Distancing

The NRM industry has the ability to provide support for employment opportunities, post social distancing. The CEO will continue to work with the State and Commonwealth on proposals that identify the Peel Region (and Wheatbelt and South West) as areas for employment stimulus. To date the PHCC have submitted:

- \$3.6 million “Regional Estuary Recovery Package” (State Government); and
- 6 x projects to employ 120 people (40 full time equivalents) (Commonwealth Government).

9.2 PHCC Request of Australian Government – Minimise Impacts

PHCC is working closely with the Peel Alliance (formerly Peel Regional Leaders Forum) and Regional Development Australia (Peel) to help identify issues that may impact the delivery of projects and/or cash flow in respect to COVID-19 restrictions. The following issues have been identified and made available to the Commonwealth Department of Regional Development:

- Need to maintain funding, within agreed time periods (not variations).
- Relaxation of outputs (without concern of financial penalty now or later).
- Don't force 'making up for lost time' (e.g. cannot squeeze all events into a smaller timeframe or think that we can catch up on all delivery at the back end).
- Funding needs to continue to flow to the PHCC so that it can flow on to our community.
- Postponed or 'reduced' projects may not be able to be delivered in the long run.
- Cannot use volunteers and/or school groups.
- Need a waiving of variation processes and timeframes – allow some freedom to best deliver against outcomes rather than wasting time and efforts on paperwork and uncertainty.
- Shift payment from 'in arrears' to upfront at the start of each payment period, so that cash flow is not impacted.

9.3 Government Employer and Employee Support

The Federal Government has introduced a range of support and subsidy packages for employers and employees impacted by COVID-19. The PHCC will continue to review this support and determine if relevant to the PHCC and/or the staff, and if so, apply appropriately as well as support staff to access relevant support. It should be noted that the PHCC will use its best endeavors to maintain existing contracted staff through the COVID-19 pandemic.

10 Communications

All queries related to Pandemic Planning should be direct to the CEO, Jane O'Malley at jane.omalley@pee-harvey.org.au 63698800 or 0407988036.

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