



Media Release

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Casual wages to discontinue from 11 May as COVID-19 economic downturn deepens

After holding out for as long as possible, the City of Cockburn has made the difficult decision to discontinue paying some members of its casual workforce from 11 May, as the economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic deepens.

City of Cockburn Acting CEO Daniel Arndt said the City was no longer able to absorb the significant financial impact of paying casuals who were unable to undertake the duties of their former roles from a home setting, or could not be deployed into other roles.

Mr Arndt said the decision would affect about 250 casuals, mostly employed at Cockburn ARC, which closed its doors on 20 March.

“The City’s goal from the outset of the COVID-19 challenge has been to minimise the impact on our employees, particularly when it comes to job security and income,” Mr Arndt said.

“The City has not stood any employee down without pay, forced any employee to take leave or sought wage freezes or cuts.

“This philosophy was applied to almost 400 registered casual employees who provide an invaluable contribution to our ability to deliver a range of important services.

“They had continued to be paid even though they were unable to undertake their work from home, be redeployed or undertake further training.

“Unfortunately, with no return to normal operations for the foreseeable future, the City is no longer able to absorb this significant financial impact.

“It is not financially viable to continue paying these wages, of at least \$320,000 per month, in the current economic climate.”



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Mr Arndt said he hoped the City's services and facilities would return to full strength in the near future as determined by State Health Department directives.

"No casual employee will be terminated from the City's employee register so that when our services and facilities come back on stream, it will be a simple matter of slotting them back into their former roles, subject to availability," Mr Arndt said.

Mr Arndt stressed that no permanent employee would be stood down as a result of the downturn caused by the pandemic and that the majority of the permanent workforce was undertaking business as usual, with some areas busier than ever.

"The City appreciates the patience of our employees to date, and we hope to be able to return to normal operations as soon as possible.

"From the City's perspective we've been working tirelessly to deliver the necessary works on our roads, parks and gardens, ensuring waste is efficiently managed and in some areas, such as community services, we continue to deliver a range of vital services to our community in demanding and often confronting circumstances.

"All of this has to be achieved in an environment where about 90 per cent of our employees are working from home, direct customer contact services such as Seniors Centres, Libraries and the ARC are closed and strict safety protocols are implemented to provide a safe work place for those employees not working at home.

"COVID-19 has presented us all with personal and professional challenges that we have never envisaged and we will continue to meet those challenges head on in the weeks and months ahead."

ENDS

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