

VERSION 1.0  
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# COVID-19 RECOVERY PATHWAY

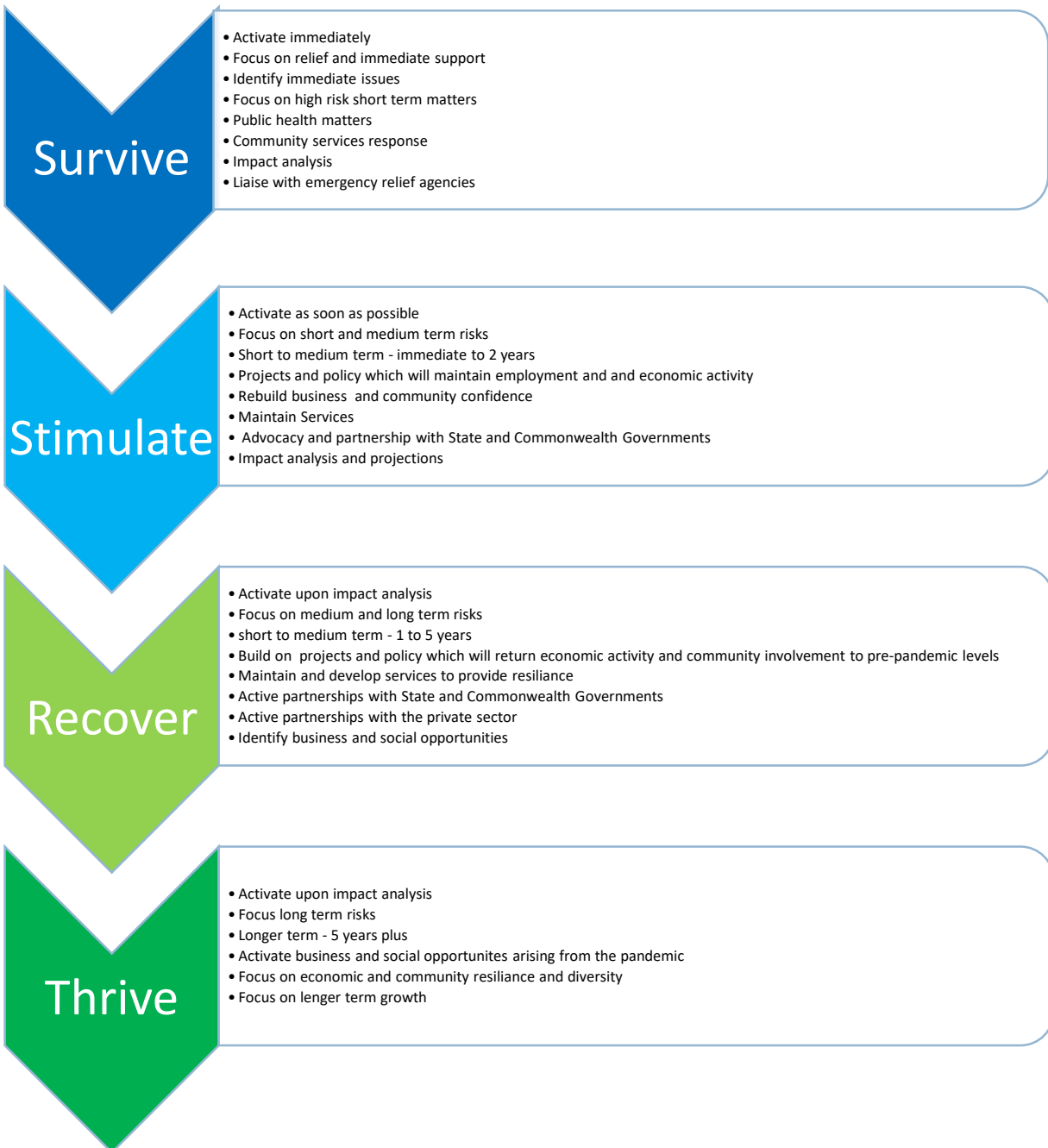
HIGH LEVEL

## COVID-19 RECOVERY PATHWAY

The Covid-19 impact has impacted our West Wimmera Community in a number of ways, economically and socially.

This document prepares the groundwork to outline a pathway for Council to provide community leadership from the pandemic through the recovery process to normality.

In preparing a pathway for a return to Covid-Normal Council can break the process down into four distinct phases:



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## CURRENT SITUATION

West Wimmera Shire, as with much of the state of Victoria, is currently still largely in the 'Survive' stage with some elements of the 'Stimulate' phase being planned and implemented.

Currently our community faces a number of unprecedented risks, including:

- Capacity and access to suitably medical facilities
  - Includes items as:
    - Continued provision of community care services
    - Continued access to General Practitioner services
    - Continued access to specialist medical services
    - Access to mental health services
- Impact of repeated stage 3 Lockdowns on the local economy
  - Includes items as:
    - Maintaining the viability of local businesses
    - Maintaining local employment
    - Maintaining local investment
    - Reduction in passing traffic and custom
    - Visitor economy significantly reduced
- Impact of repeated stage 3 Lockdowns on the local community
  - Includes items as:
    - Restrictions on community sporting events
    - Restrictions on social interactions
    - Implications for longer term health and welfare of individuals
    - Implications on levels of domestic violence
    - Access to mental health services
    - Access to educational services
- Impact of the South Australian Border Closure
  - Includes items as:
    - Reduction in direct cross-border economic activity
    - Restrictions in access to employment and employees
    - Restrictions in access to medical services
    - Restrictions in access to sporting events
    - Restrictions in access to educational facilities
    - Significant reduction in visitor economy

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## THE FOUR PHASES TO RECOVERY

### STAGE 1



The Survive stage involves immediate response to ensure that the necessary emergency response mechanisms are activated.

From a community perspective actions under this stage includes:

- Maintaining essential services, including:
  - Ongoing provision of community care
  - Identification of vulnerable members of our community
  - Situational response to vulnerable community members
  - Compliance with State and Commonwealth Health Directives
  - Advocacy with local Health Services to continue to provide GP services
  - Provision of Pharmacy Services
  - Mental Health

Issues and opportunities:

- South Australia Border Closure has impacted upon GP services in southern half of shire. Advocacy with State continues
- Advocacy with West Wimmera Health Service has secured GP services to northern half of shire
- Access to suitable PPE has been limited
- Assistance with the transition of residents who access medical and/or educational services interstate into the Victorian health and/or education networks
- Lack of clarity and cohesion between State and Commonwealth agencies has led to some confusion. An opportunity to advocate for more integrated standards exists.

From a business and economic development perspective actions under this stage include:

- Contact is made by Council with all registered business to aid in assessment of business impact
- Application of Commonwealth and State Government emergency support packages to businesses impacted by the pandemic (i.e job keeper, rent relief)
- Provision of immediate business relief packages from Council including waiving of business registration and permit fees
- Provision of a Covid-19 Hardship rate relief policy
- Continued advocacy to Commonwealth and State for extension of support packages, including job-keeper, payroll tax relief, rent relief assistance and utility cost assistance.

Issues and opportunities:

- The South Australian Border Closure has the potential to raise business costs due to the need to source alternate supply chains.
- A number of business within the shire may not be applying for support due to not being able to provide sufficient information on the necessary decline in income, possibly due to:
  - Fatigue or distress, or
  - Not having sufficiently accessible financial information, or
  - Not having experienced a significant income decline, but suffering increase costs due to the need to source alternate supply chains – i.e effectively suffering profit declines, but not significant reduction in turnover – unfortunately many of the Commonwealth and State support packages are based on income reduction only and do not consider cost increases.
- Council is preparing an advocacy package in conjunction with the Wimmera Development Association on the issue of business cost impacts rather than just income reductions being a driver for Commonwealth and State support. Initial figures show only 9% of businesses within West Wimmera have successfully applied for the job-seeker package from the Commonwealth Government.
- An opportunity exists for Council to potentially partner with local or regional Accounting organisations to assist business to complete these applications
- Council may explore potential rate and/or fee relief options

**STAGE 2**



During the Stimulate phase Council will focus on undertaking programs to renew investment within the shire. This will involve Council delivering a capital works program and services which provides investment and employment within our community.

Works and services will be delivered with an aim of reconnecting community connectivity and restoring connections to regions outside of the shire boundaries. Re-establishing the visitor economy is of significant importance, rendering the easing of border restrictions critical.

Key projects which will provide stimulus to our economy include:

- Goroke Community and Recreation Centre redevelopment
- Activation of the Edenhope Community Centre
- Ongoing renewal of Council's arterial road network to enable efficient transport of local produce to market
- Roads to Recovery funding
- Local Roads and Community Infrastructure program funding
- Activation of the new Edenhope Library
- Tourism promotion
- Silo Art trail installations in Kaniva, Goroke and Serviceton

#### Issues and opportunities:

- Ongoing closure of South Australian border will severely limit the visitor economy. Council continues to advocate to both states and the Commonwealth governments
- Limited access to agricultural support services (including maintenance, etc) may increase costs as alternate supply chains are sourced. An opportunity may exist for investment in attracting local providers in an either long term or short term role (this may provide an opportunity for accommodation providers)
- An opportunity exists for destination marketing whilst interstate travel is not possible
- Collaboration with State and Commonwealth governments to provide stimulus projects

### STAGE 3



The Recover phase involves planning for our community's medium term future, as the Covid-19 pandemic recedes. The ultimate aim of the Recover phase is to restore our community's level of service and economic activity to a similar level to that before the pandemic.

Recover phase actions are informed by an analysis of the first two phases (Survive and Stimulate) and the requirements from these.

Items that will be included in the Recover phase will include partnerships with the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments and the private sector and may include:

- Longer term economic stimulus packages such as community loans and enhanced Council Business Assistance Programs
- Investment assistance packages
- Ongoing infrastructure funding
- Community wellbeing programs, such as activation and re-activation of community spaces
- Council assistance with re-activating local sporting and social groups and activities
- Support and re-activation of volunteer activities
- Ongoing mental health support advocacy
- Ongoing medical support advocacy
- Ongoing educational support advocacy

The Recover stage will be a 'live' stage with ongoing revision and additions to the actions as funding and opportunities arise. It needs to be noted that a state-wide recovery plan will be initiated by the Victorian Government. Council will be required to be involved in the delivery of this.

## STAGE 4



The Thrive stage involves recognising and activating the opportunities identified in the Recovery Pathway, combined with any other longer term strategies that Council has identified.

The aim of this phase is to provide enhanced community and economic resilience and diversity to enable our community and economy to continue to grow long into the future.

Possible items to include in this stage include:

- Productivity in food production
- Value adding opportunities for our agricultural sector
- Provision of tertiary education opportunities
- Reducing population decline and encouraging diversity
- Growing the visitor economy and marking the region as a 'destination'
- Renewable energy opportunities.
- Advocacy for improved telecommunication infrastructure

Again it is important to note that this phase is a 'living' phase that is flexible to altering opportunities which arise out of the recovery phase.