



NGAA Speaking Panel

Financial Stress in Growth Areas – the ticking time bomb for vulnerable communities

Speaking Notes

1pm to 2pm Wednesday 2nd September

Session Outline

In this webinar we will explore the impact of increasing mortgage, rental and overall financial stress on communities in growth areas. With more and more residents in outer urban areas facing unemployment, underemployment, social isolation and an uncertain future, we will look at how local government is responding to these newly vulnerable communities.

16 of the top 20 postcodes suffering mortgage stress are in NGAA Member Council areas. Half of all households in growth areas are under mortgage stress, with more than 300,000 lower income families at particular risk. With an additional 70,000 growth area residents claiming JobSeeker in May 2020, and JobKeeper payments ceasing at the end of September, the level of financial vulnerability is extremely high.

Presenters

Martin North, Principal, Digital Finance Analytics

Currently he is the Principal of Digital Finance Analytics (DFA), a boutique research, analysis and consulting firm providing advisory services to Companies in Australia and beyond. DFA combines primary consumer research, industry modelling, economic analysis and segmentation analytics to offer insight into the dynamics of the mortgage, lending, savings, payments and superannuation sectors. Using experience derived from more than 25 years of analysis, DFA is able to pinpoint opportunities created by changing customer needs in the evolving market.

Martin North, its founding Principal and banking sector analyst is often quoted in the media. Based in Sydney, Australia, Martin has enjoyed senior roles with National Westminster Bank, Citibank, National Australia Bank, and Fujitsu Australia, as well as senior consulting roles with Booz Allen and Hamilton, Andersen and DMR Consulting,

He has advised more than 100 organisations in aspects of strategy, business transformation, digital business and IT strategy. He has considerable international experience, working in Australia, UK, USA, Poland, Hong Kong, Singapore and New Zealand.

Matthew Martin, Senior Lawyer, West Justice

A passionate lawyer advocate managing the financial services programs at WEstjustice Community Legal Centre, including the Mortgage Wellbeing Service and Motor Vehicle Accident/Insurance service. Matthew has been at WEstjustice for almost five years. Prior to this he was a Senior Industrial Relations Consultant at Unfair Dismissals Australia.

Speakers will cover:

National overview of mortgage and rental stress in outer urban areas across Australia, and profiles of some of the country's most stressed postcodes – which are within NGAA Member Council areas

Insights into the experience vulnerable community members are facing during the pandemic, and how this will impact their prospects post-COVID

A deep dive into Wyndham City Council's response to increased community need during COVID-19 and how it has changed the way local government plans for and supports vulnerable residents.

Outcomes

To equip officers in our Member Councils with the data (or directions to the data) to support their work in community services and planning

To help NGAA develop its advocacy narrative around the need to ongoing government support for vulnerable communities (including income support, job creation, health services etc)

To showcase a leading example of local government response to community need.

Running Order

TIME	PRESENTER/S	ACTIVITY
12:50pm-12:59pm	ALL	Test panellist link and audio with webinar presenters
1:00-1:02pm	Bronwen Clark	Welcome, acknowledgment and introductions
1:02-1:12pm	Martin North	Overview of Mortgage and Rental Stress in Australia's growth areas
1:13 – 1:23pm	Matthew Martin	The work of West Justice and the impact of mortgage stress
1:24 - 1:34pm	Kelly Grigsby	Wyndham City Council's response to increased community vulnerability during and after COVID-19
1:34-1:57pm		Q&A with webinar participants, moderated by Bronwen
1:58pm	Bronwen Clark	Thank you and Farewell
2:00pm		WEBINAR CONCLUDES

Speaking Notes

About Wyndham

Good Afternoon everyone and thank you for the opportunity to be with you today.

For those of you who don't know about Wyndham City Council, let me take a minute to tell you about our City.

Wyndham has a population of just over 288,000 residents and is forecast to grow to around 500,000 residents over the next twenty years.

Wyndham mothers are currently welcoming 13 babies each day – this equates to around 4.1 primary school classes each week.

Of every three people you meet in Wyndham, one has moved into the city in the past five years.

Almost half of all Wyndham residents were born overseas, coming to Wyndham from 162 different countries and around 53% of the municipality speak a language other than English.

Wyndham is a young municipality, 58% of our residents are 35 years of below.

Wyndham is also home to families, with over half of the municipality having children and the vast majority of these children are 15 years or younger.

Prior to COVID, seven out of ten working residents went out of the city each day for work. Like all growth cities, our roads are full, and our public transport is at capacity, with both our train lines comprising the busiest train stations on the metro and regional network.

The median house price in Wyndham is \$567,000 and our contribution to State Product is \$11 billion or 2.4% of Victoria's GSP.

COVID IN WYNDHAM

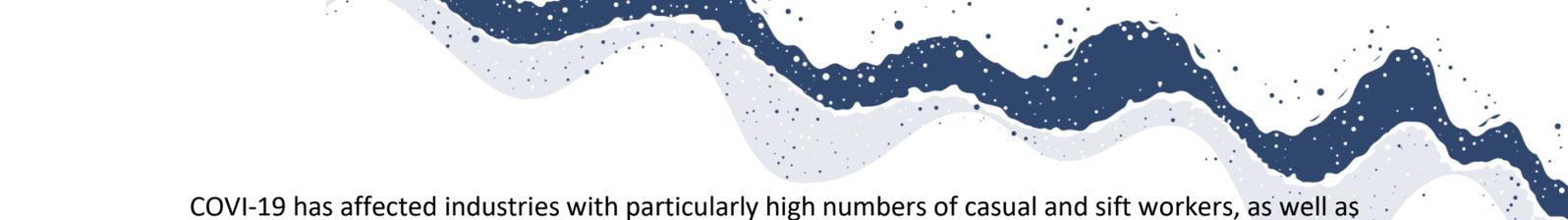
COVID for more reasons than one has had a significant impact on the Wyndham community.

I'm sure Victorians would be aware that Wyndham has the unenviable mantle of having the highest number of COVID cases of any municipality in Victoria. This is concerning for the Council as we are now seeing that unlike the seasonal flue, COVID attributes are far more like a chronic disease and have lasting impacts on people of all ages.

From an economic point-of-view, COVID has hit our community hard. The sectors hardest hit as a result of COVID comprise the industries many of our residents are employed in.

The data I'll refer to is prior to Stage four restrictions, and indicates that 2,815 jobs have been lost across the top five industries in Wyndham:

- 1,021 in accommodation and food services
- 627 in education and training
- 429 in transport and warehousing
- 371 in construction; and
- 367 in retail trade.



COVID-19 has affected industries with particularly high numbers of casual and shift workers, as well as industries that rely on people travelling or gathering in groups. The industries that have been hit hardest as I've outlined above, provide 31,305 or 48.5% of all jobs in Wyndham – to see around 10% of those jobs go will have a significant impact on our local economy.

Nearly 30,000 Wyndham residents, as at the 2016 Census, are in what is known as insecure work. We have seen from the State Government data, where at one point around 80% of infections were in the workplace, this insecure work is feeding this pandemic.

It's no surprise when I had my data team produce a map outlining where people working in insecure occupations live: Wyndham, Hume, Casey and Cardinia all feature highest on this map.

JobSeeker data from the Department of Social Services up to June 2020 has been made available. This data source, which covers March to June 2020, is a strong indication of the extent to which residents have lost their jobs due to COVID-19.

JobSeeker data at the sub-regional level indicates that residents in Melbourne's West and North West have been particularly affected by job losses due to COVID-19:

- In June 2020, the Melbourne – West statistical area, which covers Wyndham, Brimbank, Melton, Hobsons Bay and Maribyrnong, had the highest number of people on JobSeeker out of all other areas.
- Between March and June the Melbourne – West area has also seen the highest volume increase in people on JobSeeker with an additional 26,639 people.
- Wyndham has the third highest number of JobSeekers in Victoria, with 16,080 people.
- Between March and June 2020 Wyndham had the highest increase in people on JobSeeker in Victoria, with 8,915 new JobSeekers.

There are also a significant number of businesses being supported by the Commonwealth Government's JobKeeper program.

If you put the Sydney and Melbourne CBD's to one side, Hoppers Crossing in Wyndham is equal highest with Liverpool in South West Sydney: with 3,681 businesses being supported by JobKeeper. There are an additional 3,272 businesses across Werribee and Point Cook in receipt of JobKeeper, putting these suburbs in the top five recipients of the program.

I'll finish on the VAMPIRE index.

The VAMPIRE Index is a measure of the impact that increased mortgage costs, rising fuel prices and inflation may have on households. The index combines the following information from the Census of Population and Housing to create a vulnerability score for geographical areas:

- Journey to work by car
- Households with two or more cars
- Median weekly household income
- Proportion of dwellings purchased through a mortgage or rent/buy scheme.

Again, when I asked the team to produce Maps to show me visually what this looks like, we see suburbs in growth municipalities the most impacted. Like most other outer growth areas, much of Wyndham is highly vulnerable to changes in income such as what COVID-19 may induce.

The maps shows me that vulnerability is particularly high in Tarneit and Truganina, which is where a large number of JobSeeker live.

WYNDHAM RESPONSE TO COVID

IMT

In early March after reading about COVID for the two months prior, my instincts told me that as an organisation Wyndham would need to plan for a State of Emergency.

Because this would require a coordinated response, I decided in early March to establish the Incident Management Team. The IMT have been the central coordination and decision making body of Council since mid-March.

The IMT has overarching coordination of Council services and activities, ensuring the left hand knows what the right is doing. The IMT administered the program of work when Council was scaling back up service in June and July and will lead us through Stage Four restrictions and out the other side.

WAVE ONE

The first wave of the pandemic saw Council working in a very challenging environment. Circumstances were changing on a daily basis and we were responding quickly to the realisation that the pandemic was in the community.

As an organisation we moved quickly to move services online where possible, move a large number of staff to working from home, in the vicinity of over 900, and developed plans to support our workforce that would continue to work in the community.

Staff responded well on the whole and we followed health directions to see us move through Wave One with around 50 or 60 cases locally and most importantly all staff were safe.

We learned during Wave One that we could do things differently and I want to ensure we keep those learnings for the future. The way staff work in the pandemic environment and post the pandemic environment will be different.

Our focus during Wave One was focussed on three things:

- Ensuring the community were following health directives and keeping safe – trying to keep the number of local cases down through ensuring the community understood the risk COVID-19 posed
- Supporting community through adjusting the delivery of support and services across Wyndham, including scaling up new service offerings where there was a need in the community
- Finally, keeping staff safe and working. We have kept all our permanent workforce in place throughout the pandemic and worked hard to ensure they are working with purpose and are supported.



WAVE TWO

In some ways the adjusting of our service provision to community has been easier during Wave Two. We had been here before and for some services we were still in the process of scaling up our service offer.

I have been far more cautious than other CEO's and moved the Council to a mini-Stage Four prior to it being declared by the State Government. I did so because I couldn't have hundreds of workers out in the community at a time where community infection was so high.

Some staff have remained in the community and are the focus of myself as the CEO – staff safety is something that keeps me awake at night.

COUNCIL RESPONDING TO COVID

Wyndham staff have risen to the challenge of working in a COVID-19 environment.

Since March we have been agile in adjusting the services we offer the community, while continuing to work on projects.

- We were quick to stand up a Community Kitchen that's producing over 630 meals a week for residents in need
- Our community outreach team have been working with over 350 community groups, mainly from the CALD community, to support and provide assistance – we are now holding weekly online meetings with this group to share the latest information
- We stood up in days a community website – Wyndham Together to ensure Wyndham residents had access to entertainment while stuck at home
- Our Kinder teachers were able to move quickly to a remote learning program, including social distanced home visits for some families to support local children
- We moved our Maternal Services to online for up to 90% of consultations during Wave One to ensure we keep supporting the youngest residents in Wyndham
- We have moved our arts and culture program online, ensuring many thousands of visits to our regular curated program of events and shows continued
- Our IT team stood up a platform to support the Customer Service team to work from home in just days and the team are open to assist the community seven days a week

DHHS

Given the serious challenge we are facing as a State and Nation more broadly at the moment, now more than every it's critical that all levels of government work together to ensure that we use our collective talent and resources on the things that are going to make a difference in the fight against COVID-19 and to ensure the public health and wellbeing of our communities.

As one of Victoria's largest councils, we have the capacity to be able to share resources and expertise; and therefore, through our Crisis Management Team (CMT); and Incident Management Team (IMT), we are regularly reviewing where we can assign staff to have the most impact both within our own city and at a state or national level.

It is within this context that since March we have been offering help to the Victorian Government in their work to combat and control COVID-19. Whilst it's taken some time to reach agreement, I'm really pleased we have been able to agree to collaborate on the following matters:

Commenced a Remote Surveillance Program of selected officers to concentrate on high risk worksites with a view to expanding to broader engagement/support for these impacted businesses.

A cohort of our Environmental Health officers have undergone training to assist relevant State agencies in their operations and are now part of a State register awaiting formal deployment.

Been seeking better data and information from DHHS around workplace settings, community cohorts and other factors which are leading to persistently high local active case numbers, data analytics support has also been offered to assist the State.

We have established a new Direct Community Engagement team made up of a series of subject matter experts who will build on existing work such as Community Leadership Forums, community organisation networks and communications portals to target the right message to the right people who are currently impacted by COVID-19. This team will also help us build an evidence base to extract enhanced information from DHHS so we can empower and assist our community through this pandemic.

ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE

Finally, I dedicated significant time to the economic impact on Wyndham.

Council acted very quickly back in March to pass an economic support package. The \$5 million WynLocal package is designed to support Wyndham's business community and those in the community most in need.

We have a significant number of staff dedicated to a business concierge service, ensuring business are supported via the WynLocal package or through assistance from the State or Commonwealth governments.

Residents are being supported via an expansion of our Rates Hardship policy, a \$50 rebate for pensioners and a \$100 rebate on rates for residents in receipt of JobKeeper.

Thank You