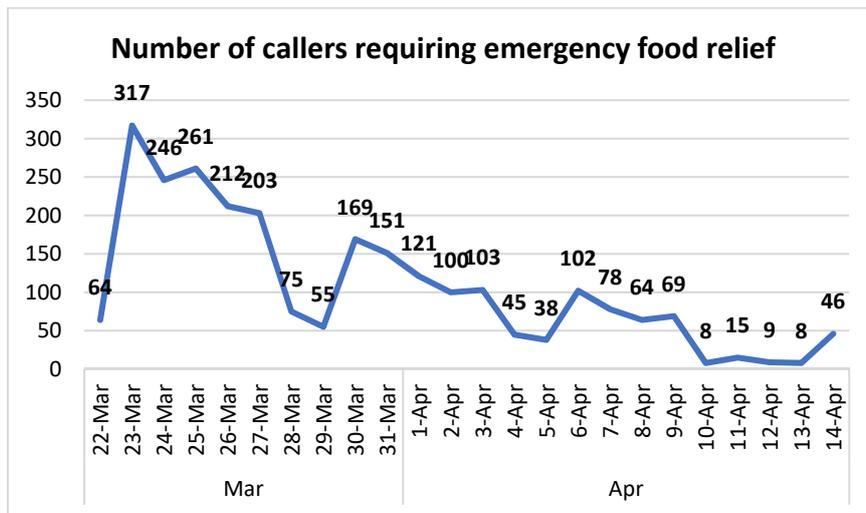


Arrangements for the provision of relief by State and Council

Background

On 22 March, the Government announced a State-led food relief program that would provide for the provision of food and essential supplies to those who cannot source/access these items themselves and are required to self-isolate. The State engaged with emergency relief agencies via existing arrangements under the Emergency Management Manual Victoria to provide for timely supply. While the focus of the program to date has been people in mandatory self-isolation, there has been a significant number of requests from people who identify that they are self-isolating on advice from a health professional due to illness or age. While requests from these individuals have been addressed to by the State-led program to date, it is proposed that going forward only callers in mandatory self-isolation will be addressed through the State-led emergency food relief program. In addition, some callers are presenting with more complex needs and circumstances than just food relief.

As at 14 April approximately 2,500 requests for food relief had been received and approximately 2,000 care packs delivered. Demand peaked in the days immediately after the announcement, with a gradual decline since then, as illustrated in the graph below.



It is acknowledged that local government is already servicing the relief needs of members of their community affected by COVID-19, through a range of existing services and mechanisms.

Food Relief Program

The COVID-19 Hotline provides a contact point for those requiring urgent food relief who are required to self-isolate as a result of confirmed coronavirus COVID-19 cases or close contact with confirmed cases. The state-wide program has been established to distribute relief packs through Australian Red Cross, together with Foodbank Victoria and Emergency Management Victoria.

Food relief deliveries are essential to community members who are self-isolating (confirmed coronavirus COVID-19 cases or close contact with confirmed cases) who have little or no food, and

no network of family and friends to support them. Each eligible household receives a food package containing the equivalent of two-week supply of essential goods for a family of four.

Food packages

Relief Packs comprise 4 hampers (three food and one personal care). The food items include items such as long-life milk, pasta, cereal, canned vegetables and sugar. The personal care items include soap, toothpaste and deodorant. They are designed to support a family of four for about 14 days with the essentials. Additional items have also been provided depending on the needs of the household, such as nappies or baby formula.

People can be self-isolating for a number of reasons that fit into two categories.

Mandatory Confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection or close contact with a confirmed case.

Non-mandatory Those self-isolating due to their age, medical advice or other high-risk factors.

The State will continue provision of the urgent food relief program for those required to enter **mandatory self-isolation**.

Those that are in **non-mandatory self-isolation** will be referred to local government for support.

From 27 April 2020, councils will receive information relating to those that contact the State COVID-19 Hotline and who are not eligible for the state-led program (ie in mandatory self-isolation), however still require some level of support.

Arrangements for the provision of food relief from 27 April 2020

As requests for food relief are received by the State COVID-19 Hotline, the delivery agent will be determined based on the circumstances under which the requester is having to isolate, i.e. mandatory or non-mandatory self-isolation.

State Responsibilities

Information Log

The State will retain provision of the urgent food relief program for those required to enter **mandatory self-isolation**.

The State will provide councils with a daily listing of all persons requesting food relief within their local government area. The information log contains the following details for each request:

- Reason for call
- Caller and subject relationship
- Reason for isolation
- Ability to self-support, prepare food, arrange food delivery
- Remaining days of food supply
- Coping status
- Stability of Accommodation
- Contact details of person making the call and requiring relief
- Number of household residents
- Children requiring nappies and formula
- Pet food needs
- Additional comments

This information log will be provided for all requests received to date and then daily at approximately 0900 (including weekends and public holidays).

NOTE: Pet food relief is not within the scope of the State's program but is a known relief need. Councils are asked to contact community members who requested this assistance and see if they still require pet food and assist the resident with accessing pet food via normal local arrangements.

Adult sanitary items are also a known need, including incontinence items for the elderly. These aren't a staple product for Foodbank and have been provided as supplementary part of the state program, subject to the availability of appropriate products.

- Stability of Accommodation
- Contact details of person making the call and requiring relief
- Number of household residents
- Children requiring nappies and formula
- Pet food needs
- Additional comments

This information log will be provided for all requests received to date and then daily at approximately 0900 (including weekends and public holidays).

Adult sanitary items are also a known need, including incontinence items for the elderly. These aren't a staple product for Foodbank and have been provided as supplementary part of the state program, subject to the availability of appropriate products.

Regional Responsibilities

The Regional Relief and Recovery Manager monitors relief activities by councils and will manage issues and escalations where councils are unable to manage demand within existing capacity and capability. Regions will maintain situational awareness of activities across other regions to pre-emptively address emerging issues being experienced by other regions.

Council Responsibilities

Each day councils will receive a log of calls of the identifying residents in their municipality who have contacted the State Food Relief Hotline. Local councils should coordinate the provision of services to community members requesting assistance who are in **non-mandatory self-isolation** or not in self-isolation.

Councils are requested to support community members by providing relief assistance as required and linking them in with local community service organisations as appropriate. Councils are also requested to contact those who are in **mandatory self-isolation** and have received food packages to ensure any ongoing relief needs are met. Any requests for second or third food packs will be included in the mix for local government to address, as it is not the intention of the State-led program to be an ongoing source of food supply for individuals.

Council Pandemic Plans or Municipal Emergency Management Plans may provide the arrangements for the provision of relief services.

Triage principles

Councils are encouraged to apply the following triage principles and monitor and address demand for food relief services within their respective LGA's:

1. **Information and Deferral** – Where clients have the means to purchase food but due to self-isolation are having trouble in accessing food without leaving their home:

Councils can:

- a. provide information to enable people to meet their own needs such as priority home delivery from major supermarkets.
- b. work with local businesses and community organisations to establish delivery services to those people who are self-isolating.
- c. support and encourage community led relief programs, neighbourhood initiatives and other programs such as [Gather My Crew](#), which build community connection and resilience.
- d. encourage them to seek support from family and friends.

2. **Access** – Where clients have the means to purchase food but require support to access local services such as priority supermarket services or community service organisations;

Councils may:

- a. provide access to online delivery platforms by helping residents complete ordering forms.
- b. work with local providers to arrange for alternative payment options (e.g. Invoice payments) where clients do not have access to a credit or debit card.
- c. arrange delivery of groceries on behalf of clients.
- d. engage the support of community organisations to support clients.

3. **Provision** - Supply emergency relief goods and services to those in **non-mandatory self-isolation** who not have the financial means to access food and groceries:

Councils may:

- a. coordinate the delivery of basic care packages of groceries to clients who have an immediate need.
- b. work with local providers to arrange for immediate basic care packages of groceries.
- c. engage volunteer organisations to assist with food delivery.
- d. arrange the provision of meals, through programs such as meals on wheels.
- e. engage local service partners to support clients.

4. **Follow-up** – support people through sustained self-isolation with telephone outreach, and to triage support based on the frequency and urgency of needs. Work with clients to determine if the need is short or long term and coordinate relief accordingly.

Where demand cannot be met, councils are encouraged to immediately report capacity issues raised by local service providers to allow for a controlled escalation to the state to prevent overwhelming existing systems.

Considerations

The following guiding considerations may assist councils in managing relief support:

- Persons requiring food relief can be considered as part of one of three vulnerability cohorts:
 - Temporary: persons in self- isolation without support networks to service relief needs.
 - Extended: persons required to self-isolated due to an existing vulnerability (e.g. age, medical) that has been, or may be, exacerbated.
 - Emerging: people newly facing hardship due to loss of jobs/income.
 - Prolonged: are an existing client of food relief services.

- Food relief is designed to assist those who are unable to source food items/ meals without assistance; the response to requests for relief support must consider the capability and vulnerability of the person requiring support.
- Many callers are requesting relief support for essential items other than food. This includes, pet food, medications and personal hygiene products. Councils should consider how to support people to obtain these products where appropriate.

Escalation to State

Where urgent food relief is required that is unable to be managed or delivered through local arrangements councils will escalate this request directly to State. Councils should send the case ID and any additional details as to the reason for the escalation to sccvic.recovery@scc.vic.gov.au by 1500 daily.

Escalation to Region

Councils that lack capacity or surety of supply to support food relief needs will escalate the matter to the regional tier; overseen by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The Regional Relief Recovery Manager engages with local councils to identify, plan and coordinate food relief functions. The State Emergency Relief Coordinator will maintain situational awareness of escalations to ensure timely provision of support to regional and local tiers.

Reporting

Local councils are required to report to their respective Regional Relief and Recovery Manager weekly. Further information is in Appendix A: Reporting Template.

Funding

The State is working with the Commonwealth to explore potential funding sources for any expenses that occurred in the provision of emergency relief. As this progresses, local governments will be kept informed by LGV and the MAV.

Arrangements for the provision of other relief

The State continues to provide relief support for all Victorians. This support, like food relief, operates alongside existing council programs and supports from community organisations to provide an escalation point where local supports, including council are unable to meet local demand. This relief support is provided through:

- Psycho-social support/ outreach
- Accommodation
- Health and medical (prescriptions and supplies)
- Transport (essential but non-emergency)
- Community information.

Psychosocial support / outreach

Isolation measures have been a key strategy to date worldwide in attempting to contain the spread of COVID-19. While proving to be effective and necessary in curbing the emergence of new cases, isolation precautions have been shown to impact patients' mental well-being, increasing anxiety, depression, and anger. Additionally, negative attention towards particular cultural groups (where it is perceived that a person originates from, and is more likely to be infected with the virus) has been observed.

Consideration must be given to the potential psycho-social impact of isolation measures, as well as discriminative or offensive behaviour towards cultural groups, as part of the multi-agency coordinated response to the virus.

Telephone outreach programs proactively reach impacted people and aim to reduce the stress, anger and anxiety brought on by COVID-19. The call centre has been recording if people feel they are coping and if they would like a follow up phone call. These are conducted by the Australian Red Cross and the Victorian Council of Churches (VCC). Many people have had multiple follow up calls at their request. The State will continue to direct requests for telephone outreach to the Australian Red Cross and the VCC.

Local councils should consider activating their local Psychological First Aid arrangements as outlined in their Municipal Plans.

Accommodation

Funding is provided to Victorian homelessness organisations to help protect Victorians at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness because of the COVID-19 virus and manage any outbreaks.

The funding will provide homelessness agencies with extra resources to find temporary housing for those who need it most in both metropolitan and regional areas. It will also go towards private rental brokerage for those at risk of falling into homelessness, helping to keep them in safe and affordable accommodation, and reduce the community transmission of COVID-19.

In addition, alternative pop-up accommodation will be established for homeless people requiring quarantine or self-isolation in Melbourne as required.

Health and medical (prescriptions and supplies)

Funding is provided to increase the capacity of Victoria's health care system through the procurement of capital works, workforce training and personal protective equipment

Timeline

Councils are best placed to support, and lead, local relief activities, particularly as the isolation requirements of coronavirus COVID-19 are extensive.

From Monday 27 April, councils will coordinate relief services to their local community as per the state's standing emergency relief arrangements outlined in Part 4 of the Emergency Management Manual Victoria. Prior to this councils will receive a log of all calls received to date from the State Food Relief Hotline for their information.

Key contacts – regional and State

Regional Relief and Recovery Manager - Contacts

Region	Email	Phone
Southern Metro Region	southern.EOC@dhhs.vic.gov.au	1800 309 916

Eastern Metro Region	eastern.EOC@dhhs.vic.gov.au	1300 792 766
Loddon Mallee Region	loddon.EOC@dhhs.vic.gov.au	1800 392 720
Barwon South West Region	barwon.EOC@dhhs.vic.gov.au	1800 238 183
North and West Metro Region	northandwest.EOC@dhhs.vic.gov.au	1800 765 149
Grampians Region	grampians.EOC@dhhs.vic.gov.au	1800 238 414
Hume Region	hume.EOC@dhhs.vic.gov.au	1300 164 867
Gippsland Region	gippsland.EOC@dhhs.vic.gov.au	1300 528 951

State contacts

Contact	Email	Phone
State Control Centre State Relief and Recovery Cell	sccvic.recovery@scc.vic.gov.au	<u>1300 368 722</u>
Local Government Emergencies Duty Officer	lgv.emergencies@delwp.vic.gov.au	1300 764 373

Appendix A: Reporting Template

WHAT Councils are asked to report back to the State on the status of each Case ID.

WHY: This information is required to provide state with understanding of demand for relief across Victoria and introduce appropriate measures to address issues that may impact service supply.

WHEN: Weekly.

HOW: A reporting template is provided below with a definition of each data-point. An excel version of this template will be sent to all councils.

Case ID: the unique identifier as stated within the information log provided to Council

Date of request: the date of the call made to the State Food Relief Hotline

Category: Food relief: persons requesting basic food items

Pet food: persons requiring pet food

Psychosocial need: persons who identify the need for psychosocial support as part of council interactions.

Other: any other form of relief identified by council that can be managed through local arrangements.

Date of action: date of most recent action to respond to the needs of the community member.

Status: indication of whether the relief request has been addressed or remains in progress. Where there is ongoing relief required for any of the categories, please mark as 'ongoing' until council services are no longer required.

Referral agency: name agency to which the relief request was referred.

Reporting template

Progress reporting

Case ID	Date of request	Category				Date of action	Status	Referral agency
		Food relief	Pet food	Psychosocial need	Other			

Emerging issues	
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Capacity of local arrangements

Local arrangement	Summary of service provided	Is service provision meeting requests	Emerging future capacity issues	Issues