



SUSAN TEMPLEMAN MP

FEDERAL MEMBER FOR MACQUARIE

Macquarie Newsletter

From Susan's Desk

Are we over this yet?!

I wish this newsletter wasn't about COVID, I wish it wasn't about lockdown rules, and I wish it wasn't about vaccines, because I know you – like me – wish we were through the worst.

So, instead of just repeating the doom and gloom, just for a moment, I'm going to lighten the mood and ask: what are your tips for some fun things we can still do in lockdown?

I know we've all been trying to get out for walks, and there's been wonderful community efforts to keep spirits up with activities like teddy bears in windows and painted stones being placed for others to find. Hawkesbury Community Outreach Services even posted of treasure hidden in McMahons Park in the form of self-care packs and books for lucky park-goers.

I've also had local residents telling me about free activities for people to do to help the community keep connected, which I think is a great idea.

Artist Corinne Loxton contacted me to tell me she is offering [free online drawing classes](#) via Zoom during lockdown to "anyone who can hold a pencil". They take place on Mondays, 7.30pm - 8.30pm, and offer people the chance to have fun, learn stuff and become part of a community of drawing lockdowners!

Markesha Hartshorn is offering free exercise classes on [YouTube](#) and [Facebook](#) for the over-60s, which are great to do in the comfort of your own home.

Blue Fringe Arts is offering a free Venetian mask-making workshop (giving us all a break from those other masks) with Livonne Larkins later this month. Contact Springwood Neighbourhood Centre on 4751 3033 for more information.

I've included details of free community catch-up sessions run by [Healthy Connections Clinical Psychology](#) in Blaxland later in the newsletter, and I know there's lots of other things that I just can't fit into one newsletter.

It's wonderful to see the local community step up for each other and keep spirits up during what's a really challenging time for all of us.

Mental health is an issue constantly brought up when my volunteers do their community check-up calls with residents in the Blue Mountains and Hawkesbury, and it's also a particularly difficult time for our young people as they miss their friends, school and socialising.

I've spent many days recently in hearings for the Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Committee I'm a member of, and I've included a couple of specialist contact points below, including one specially for pregnant woman and new mums - PANDA.

I'm sure you all know the usual helplines, but just in case:

- Beyond Blue - 1300 22 4636
- Lifeline - 13 11 14, text on 0477 13 11 14
- Kids Helpline - 1800 55 1800
- PANDA - 1300 726 306, Monday - Friday, 9am-7.30pm.

And remember, if you need help with any federal government issue – Services Australia (Centrelink), the NDIS, aged care or health information – get in contact with my office. It's currently closed to the public, but my team is still working hard to help you and can be contacted on (02) 4573 8222 or susan.templeman.mp@aph.gov.au.

COVID Information

Case numbers

There have been increasing COVID case numbers in the Blue Mountains and Hawkesbury Local Government Areas (LGAs), and I do urge everyone who can get vaccinated to do so as soon as possible. Tragically it was announced on Friday that a Blue Mountains resident, living in the Hawkesbury Living aged care facility passed away, and I extend my sincere condolences to his family. They are in the thoughts of our community at this sad time.

Restrictions

The NSW Government announced current lockdown restrictions in Greater Sydney – which includes the Blue Mountains and Hawkesbury Local Government Areas (LGAs) – have been extended until the end of September. There have been changes to travelling outside the Greater Sydney area, and wearing masks outdoors (except when exercising) is now compulsory.

Twelve suburbs located in the Penrith Local Government Area (LGA) are currently subjected to tighter restrictions, however the Blue Mountains and Hawkesbury LGAs are not considered as “LGAs of concern”. Those remain as Canterbury-Bankstown, Fairfield, Liverpool, Blacktown, Cumberland, Parramatta, Campbelltown and Georges River.

Greater Sydney restrictions are available [here](#).

Keep up to date on the latest case locations [here](#).

Vaccinations

All Australians aged 16 to 39 can now receive the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, and the government advises that more GPs will be provided access to Pfizer throughout September.

GPs will continue to prioritise vaccines to those most at risk, including aged and disability care workers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, pregnant women and those with underlying medical conditions – so people are being urged to be patient, and if they can't make a booking straight away, try again in a week.

This will help our GPs to manage their vaccine bookings while still providing other vital health services.

It should be noted the supply of this Pfizer vaccine is opening up another option for people to get vaccinated. This is in addition to the AstraZeneca (VAXZEVRIA) vaccine already being administered by primary health care providers, including GPs and pharmacists. You can check your [eligibility here](#).

Children aged between 12 and 15 years will be able to book a COVID-19 Pfizer vaccine from September 13. Bookings will be available through GPs, Commonwealth Vaccination Clinics and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations. Each state and territory will advise when their state vaccination clinics will open to this group.

The rollout of Pfizer vaccines was expanded on August 9 to children aged 12 to 15 years old with specific medical conditions, who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or live in a remote community.

Children aged 12 to 15 who are on the National Disability Insurance Scheme and/or are living with significant disability requiring frequent assistance with activities of daily living are also eligible for the Pfizer vaccine.

The vaccination program is already open to at-risk 12 to 15-year-olds, on the advice of ATAGI.

You can read more from ATAGI [here](#).

Business support

The [NSW Government has announced](#) an extension of economic support for business, including the JobSaver program and Micro-business Grant. There will also be further reductions in payroll tax as well as allowing eligible businesses to defer their payroll tax payments, due from July 2021 through to December 2021, until January 14, 2022 with 12-month interest free repayment plans to be available.

A list of [available business supports in NSW](#) has been compiled by [business.gov.au](#).

If you cannot access support, please reach out at susan.templeman.mp@aph.gov.au.

Assistance for individuals

Those seeking individual assistance should check for more information [here](#).

Food support

There are a number of organisations providing emergency food relief during the current lockdown. If someone you know is in need of supplies, please get in contact:

- Blue Mountains Police have been dropping off food boxes from the Rapid Relief Team to help people stay safe in the current lock down. If you or someone you know lives anywhere from Lapstone to Mt Victoria and needs a hand with some emergency food supplies (which will last about 48 hours), email Chief Inspector Garry Sims APM at 33211@police.nsw.gov.au
- In addition to regular food assistance organisations in the Blue Mountains, seniors or people with disabilities have access to Emergency Food Boxes. These boxes contain a variety of non-perishable, long-life food that can be delivered to the doors of self-isolating households that meet the relevant criteria. Contact Council at goodneighbour@bmcc.nsw.gov.au or call 4723 5000 (Lower Mountains) or 4780 5000 (Upper Mountains).
- For a list of other food support services in the Blue Mountains, click [here](#).
- [Hawkesbury Helping Hands](#) in South Windsor is available for people in need. Contact them [here](#).
- Mountain of Joy are providing support for vulnerable people in the Kurrajong area. Contact them through their Facebook page [here](#).
- The Living Room Richmond provides meals and food parcels. They are open on Wednesday or Thursday between 10am and 2pm at 15/25 East Market Street.

Vax facts

The ABC has launched a [public information campaign](#) to debunk myths about COVID-19 vaccines, and encourage Australians to protect themselves and the community against the deadly virus. ABC presenters join doctors Norman Swan, Preeya Alexander and Karl Kruszelnicki to dispel misinformation and tackle vaccination questions Australians are asking.

Covid-19 contacts

- The Australian Government - [here](#)
- The Commonwealth Department of Health - [here](#)
- The NSW Government - [here](#)
- Nepean Blue Mountains Health District - [here](#)
- Blue Mountains City Council - [here](#)
- Hawkesbury City Council - [here](#)
- Domestic travel - [here](#)

Community News

Medlow Bath highway upgrade

I have spoken in Parliament about the [community's concerns](#), and community feedback has now been extended to September 5. I'd urge everyone to have their say, and those who are unable to go online can contact the project team on 1800 953 777 or at gwhd@transport.nsw.gov.au to arrange a phone consultation. The REF and concept display is available at a virtual consultation room [here](#).

Action on telecommunications

For years I've taken action on our poor telecommunications in the Hawkesbury. I've written to the Ministers responsible, spoken in Parliament, spoken in the media, spoken to mayors and worked with the telco companies to try and improve the big gaps in mobile reception, internet and even landlines.

And I have no intention of stopping until it's fixed. People deserve a decent and reliable service, especially in a natural disaster.

I'm delighted that [Hawkesbury City Council](#) has taken an interest, as we head into a Federal election year, into the sad state of telecommunications in the area. I was invited to brief the Innovations and Partnerships Committee on the issue last week, and while I couldn't attend in person due to Parliament sitting, I am pleased they "noted" [the four page letter I provided](#) to all councillors covering the issues we face.

The support of local government on what feels like a crusade is a welcome boost. The more pressure on the Federal Government the better!

[In response to ongoing pressure from MPs](#) like me about the poor mobile service in peri-urban bushfire areas, like Hawkesbury Heights and Bowen Mountain, the government announced a new program called PUMP. Consultation on the guidelines has just closed, but if you would like to provide any feedback on the draft guidelines for this program, please email me your input and I will ensure it gets to the Minister and the Department.

Reduced bank hours

There has been a temporary reduction of trading hours for Westpac and St George Bank branches. From August 3, branches across Greater Sydney and surrounding regions (Shellharbour, Wollongong, Blue Mountains and Central Coast) began operating on reduced opening times from 9.30am – 2.30pm. If customers need to come into a branch for essential support, the banks have stated a range of safety measures are in place to protect them and employees. The Commonwealth Bank branches in Springwood, Richmond and Windsor are operating from 9.30am to 3pm, Monday to Friday.

Library help

Hawkesbury Library Service recently resumed housebound delivery services for senior residents who are cut off from their normal support network. If you, or someone you know, has become isolated because of lockdown and would benefit from this service, please contact the Library to check eligibility and find out how to participate. Call 4560 4462 or email library@hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au for more information.

JP services

Hawkesbury Library is trialling a temporary zoom JP service. Every Tuesday, from 10am to midday, a library volunteer Justice of the Peace will be available to provide a limited Justice of the Peace service via Zoom. This service will continue every Tuesday for the duration of the lockdown. Available services are limited due to restrictions imposed by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice, however the JP can continue to witness statutory declarations and affidavits via audio-visual link. The Justice of the Peace is not able to certify documents online. You can [register for a 15 minute timeslot](#) and select a convenient time. More information on JP services is also available via the [Department of Justice's JP register](#).

Healthy connections

[Healthy Connections Clinical Psychology](#) in Blaxland has stepped up to offer a [new way to support well-being through lockdown](#). Free, online Lockdown Catch-Up sessions are being held via zoom, giving you the chance to connect with neighbours, share ideas, and discuss strategies to help maintain well-being in such a challenging time. The sessions will run through to the end of September, and you can book at info@hccp.com.au.

Bridge consultation

Transport for NSW has extended the consultation period on the preferred option for the new Richmond Bridge to September 17. The department has stated no face-to-face information sessions will be available due to COVID-19 restrictions, so two Facebook Live sessions have been organised for **Wednesday, September 8 at 12pm and 5pm**.

To attend, visit the **NSW Roads Facebook page** at the time of the online event. For support on how to join the Facebook Live event, please email richmondbridge@transport.nsw.gov.au or call **1800 370 778**.

The department has also stated targeted online sessions will be held with residents around Norfolk Place, Southee Road, Inalls Lane and The Driftway in coming weeks. Residents should contact Transport for NSW to join in.

Women's safety summit

The current pandemic has only served to highlight just how important this issue is of women's safety is – at home, at work and in the community. Local services have reported a huge increase in demand since the devastating bushfires of 2019, demand that has only continued to rise with subsequent flooding and the repeated lockdowns of the COVID-19 pandemic. The National Summit on Women's Safety takes place in Canberra on September 6 and 7, and is a central part of consultation for the next National Plan to end violence against women and children. It will focus on key issues affecting women's safety, including the prevention of violence, technology and abuse, coercive control, policing and justice responses, sexual violence, frontline service delivery and innovation, and violence experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. The event will be live-streamed for all to watch, with the link available on September 6 on the [website](#).

Scamwatch

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC's) Scamwatch page has advised of several COVID-related text scams, including one relating to "vaccine passports". The texts look convincing but are designed to steal your personal information. For more information, visit the [Scamwatch website](#).

Census information

It's not too late to complete your Census. If you haven't received your Census instructions or have misplaced your letter you can still complete now – click [here](#), select 'Start the Census' and choose the 'Get a Census Number' option. You can also request a paper form by calling 1800 512 441. All personal information collected is kept safe and is not shared with anyone.

Enrol to vote

The local government elections due to take place in September have been postponed to December 4. It's important that you either enrol to vote, or check that the AEC has your most up to date details. You can click [here](#) to find information on both.

Mental health support

General support

PANDA - Perinatal Anxiety & Depression Australia supports women, men and families across Australia affected by anxiety and depression during pregnancy and in the first year of parenthood. PANDA operates Australia's only National Helpline for individuals and their families to recover from perinatal anxiety and depression, a serious illness that affects up to one in five expecting or new mums and one in ten expecting or new dads.

Teen mental health support

We know that COVID-19 is having a disproportionate impact on the mental health of young people and parents are also facing challenges ensuring their teens get the support they need. ReachOut has launched the [Checking in with yourself quiz](#) that provides young people aged 15 to 15 years with practical tips aligned to what's going on for them, as well as [new resources for parents](#) to help them check in with their teens in a constructive way.

A Butterfly's embrace

[A Butterfly's Embrace](#) is selling hoodies to raise funds for the construction of a new garden at [The Secret Garden and Nursery Richmond](#), where those affected by the loss of a baby - whether it's parents, grandparents, siblings or friends – can go to find comfort and support.

If you'd like one of your own and help raise money for a good cause, click [here](#).

Mindspot

MindSpot is a [free service for adults](#) who are experiencing difficulties with anxiety, stress, depression and low mood. MindSpot can provide assessment and treatment courses, or can help you find local services that can assist.

Young people – raise your voice

I'm partnering with Raise Our Voice Australia to read 90 second speeches written by young people across Macquarie. If you're under 21, have a go at writing a speech about one of your passions. Submit it

through [Raise our Voice](#), and I'll pick the best submission to read in Parliament. Submissions close on September 21.

Hawkesbury Art Prize

The biennial [Hawkesbury Art Prize](#) is now open. First prize of \$10,000 plus a two week at residency at Glenhuntly Estate in the Hawkesbury is awarded to the winning entry. Two highly commended prizes of \$1,000 plus an additional art residency are also awarded. Three eminent visual arts professionals judge the prize and select the finalists. The art prize is for a painting that is inspired by contemporary Australian identity. Closing date for entries is September 8.

Flood support

If you have been affected by floods, Recovery Support Services will help you in your recovery journey by providing personalised, long-term support. Recovery Support Services will link you to your own personalised recovery support worker, who can help you navigate and access services and disaster assistance packages. Hawkesbury residents can phone or email their local Recovery Support Service directly via Peppercorn Services Inc Recovery Support Service on (02) 4587 0225 or emailing rss@peppercorn.org.au.

Suicide support

StandBy Support After Suicide supports anyone bereaved or impacted by a death by suicide. It operates in the Blue Mountains and Hawkesbury, providing non-clinical and ongoing practical support and linking people into suicide bereavement counselling and peer support. Anyone can access support through the 24/7 phone line 1300 727 247, or you can visit [StandBy's website](#) for more information.

Business and financial support news

Jobsaver changes

There have been changes to the JobSaver program announced by the NSW Government relating to community sector organisations. The threshold required to access JobSaver has been reduced for the community sector from a 30% or more decline in turnover to 15% or more, and there will be a new \$50 million Social Sector Support Fund established. To apply, click [here](#).

Accessing financial support

I know that some people have finally had success in receiving support, but I am deeply concerned that many have given up. I recently listened to the NSW Minister for Small Business, Damien Tudehope, say on SkyNews that they have started making special consideration for small businesses that have been bushfire affected, flood affected, businesses that have grown, a new business or a business that has changed structure. He says these applications are now being manually processed, and that if you say that the lockdown has caused you a 30% downturn, he thinks you should be eligible for support. So I'd encourage you, even if you've tried before, to ask for a personal call with a business staff member to be able to talk through your exact circumstances, and find out what evidence might be appropriate for you. If you have the energy, give it a go and let me know how it progresses. I will continue to be guided by business operators, on the ground, based on your lived

experiences.

Handy templates

[Business.gov.au](#) has updated its [downloadable business planning templates](#), including its business plan, marketing plan, succession plan, emergency management plan and finance templates. The templates can help you start your business and help you adapt as your business grows or changes.

Mental health support

Running a business can be stressful and may come with mental health challenges. With ongoing COVID-19 restrictions, [resources and support](#) is available for you and your employees.

Arts financial assistance

Support for actors

The Actors Benevolent Fund is offering crisis assistance to meet an unexpected cost with medical, pharmaceutical or household expenses such as utility bills or purchasing food. If you are experiencing financial distress as a result of the COVID-19 impositions, the fund can respond quickly with financial assistance.

You can [apply online](#).

Support for musicians and crews

[Support Act](#) is offering COVID cash crisis relief grants. The [one-off grants of \\$2,000](#) (or \$2,700 for families with dependent children) for artists, managers, crew and music workers, as well as theatre, dance, circus and comedy workers who remain largely unable to earn income due to the ongoing restrictions.

There are eligibility requirements – for example, you have to be able to prove you have been working in the Australian music industry for three years, and have household expenses which are greater than your household income. Check the website for more information.

Arts assistance

The Australia Council for the Arts is working closely with industry and government to assess and advise on the impacts of the challenges thrown up by the current pandemic, and an updated **guide to government assistance** can be found [on its website](#). It sets out various assistance initiatives that are being provided by federal and state/territory governments and is updated regularly.

Grants news

Resilience grants

As an area hit by the 2021 floods and storms, the Mountains and Hawkesbury are eligible for resilience grants from [Suncorp](#) and [FRRR](#). Worth up to \$15,000, it's for projects that support long-term recovery and resilience building. Round one applications close on September 15, and successful projects will be announced in

November. Click [here](#) for more information.

Black Summer Bushfire Recovery Grants

The [Black Summer Bushfire Recovery Grants program](#) and applications are now open. This program supports social, economic and built environment recovery. For information on the grant and eligibility criteria, please click [here](#). For technical assistance and enquiries and the Grant portal, click [here](#)

The grants deadline has been extended to October 6, and free online workshops and webinars are being held for applicants. The workshops introduce the program, give an overview of the guidelines and cover tips on how to write good grant applications. They're being held throughout September, and registrations can be made via recovery.gov.au/black-summer-grants. While the grants won't come through my office, please contact me before the deadline via email at susan.templeman.mp@aph.gov.au if you need a letter of support.

Community Wellbeing Grants

Primary Health Networks (PHN) were provided with funds last year to support the mental health of people in our electorate after the bushfires. The first phase of these Community Wellbeing Grants has been rolled out. Forty individuals have been funded to conduct small grassroots, community connection activities across the Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury, and Lithgow areas. The Nepean Blue Mountains PHN is still accepting applications for grants of up to \$1,000. If you would like to find out more about these, please click [here](#).

Grants bulletin

Would your organisation be interested in hearing about some of the latest government grants available? Sign up to my [grants newsletter](#).

In the news

The seat of Macquarie in the media:

- I [called a spade a spade](#) over the prolonged wait for a desperately-needed Headspace service in the Hawkesbury.
- A [mass vaccination hub](#) needs to be set up immediately as locals face months-long waits for COVID vaccines.
- Bushfire-ravaged areas including Mount Tomah have again [missed out on funding](#) to improve mobile black spots. Just one location will receive any funding at all across the Hawkesbury and Blue Mountains under the latest round of the Mobile Black Sport program, despite hundreds of people contributing to a heat map of black spots.
- Local school students have quizzed Shadow Climate Change Minister Chris Bowen over [climate change policy](#) via a special zoom I held.
- The Australian Defence Force should be enlisted to help [speed up the rate of vaccinations](#) in the Hawkesbury

Keep in touch.

I hope this information has been useful. If there are specific issues you'd like information on, please do not hesitate to ask.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan Templeman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Susan Templeman
Federal Member for Macquarie