



New(town) Beginnings #4

Dear Neighbour,

Well, haven't things escalated quickly?

You'd be hard pressed to find a person who isn't feeling overwhelmed and anxious about the months that lie ahead.

Our brains are overloaded with information while we scramble to work out how we're going to readjust to our new normal...plus find that elusive pack of toilet paper.

The uncertainty during such unpredictable times can feel debilitating but for many who we support this level of anxiety is their normal.

As community workers we are finding this time incredibly difficult. We love being around people and working to protect the vulnerable in our community by offering a space for temporary respite when needed, but resisting our natural impulse and adhering to the stringent physical distancing restrictions is paramount.

Our case managers have placed posters up at boarding houses to help educate residents about proper hygiene, which sadly will be near impossible without regular supplies of soap or toilet paper. We've heard reports that boarding houses landlords are no longer supplying these basic items. If anyone has access to these items and is able to drop it in to the Centre please email communitystrengthening@newtowncentre.org

Many clients don't have smart devices so access to current news can be sporadic. Adequate phone credit is also a challenge so we're trying to figure out how they can call us in order to maintain healthy levels of sociability.

There was a sadness last week as our case managers conducted their last face-to-face visits with our elderly clients. Some are bed bound, while others are not aware of what is going on but thankfully we know who these individuals are and can therefore arrange emergency deliveries. Sometimes identifying those in most need is the tricky part.

A recurring comment we hear from our regulars is the fear of being isolated and living on their own. For many the streets was a safe place and Newtown Square is their social mecca. Despite having accommodation, they need to be around their community and away from the demons of loneliness.

Speaking with one of our regulars last week, he was lamenting how this will be like an extended Christmas break. People who are socially isolated despise the holidays as Services shut down, but at least there is usually an end in sight. With a pandemic we don't have the luxury of certainty, although we do know it will end at some point and that's one reassurance we can give.

Newtown Neighbourhood Centre

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Another regular who spends most days with her friends around Newtown, has recently been housed and is terrified of what will happen to her at home without distractions such as a TV. "It'll push me to drink again" she said anxiously. While physical distancing is the only solution to flattening the curve, for many of our clients it puts their mental health at risk.

During these troubling times we need to share the good news stories and out of this pandemic we have seen an increase to income support payments (finally!) which will provide some much needed relief. #raisetherate

Plus I have faith in knowing that rough sleepers and those living in volatile situations are excellent at being resourceful. They are masters at survival in arduous circumstances, so we must continue to hope.

I also take comfort in knowing how well people are caring for each other and that community spirit is thriving. My newsfeeds have been flooded with offers of assistance across existing and new online local communities, which is so heartening.

Our creative juices are in overdrive as we try and find innovative ways to continue our main service delivery safely. We pose another major challenge: how as a community organisation do we best harness all this immense goodwill and generosity? Suggestions always welcome!

And remember that we're still very much here. We will do whatever we can to remain present and available. Please don't hesitate to call us on 9564 7333, send an email to communitystrengthening@newtowncentre.org or message us via our Facebook page.

Continue to spread your love and kindness.

Mel
Community Strengthening Team