# **Pandemic Recovery – Topic Paper Summary**

Community and business recovery effort over the next 18-24 months.

## Summary

On 14 March 2020, the Victorian State Government declared a State of Emergency due to the Covid-19 virus. In response, Moreland City Council implemented a response and relief effort. This effort supported the local economy, community and staff.

Covid-19 has affected everyone. Financial hardship, mental health challenges, and isolation and family violence have increased. People who were already vulnerable to these issues have been particularly vulnerable. The impacts of Covid-19 has increased existing inequalities.

Council has a role to play in community recovery while continuing its normal services. Recovery offers Moreland the opportunity to grow stronger and address inequality.

## Key Issues

* **Financial distress:** impacts for households.
* **Mental health and wellbeing:** the mental health toll on the Moreland community.
* **Digital access and inclusion:** impact of technological barriers.
* **Social inequalities and vulnerabilities:** isolation, discrimination and family violence.

## What are some opportunities?

Opportunities in this space might include:

* Gather more data on the impact and community needs in the coming months to inform decisions on longer term recovery planning.
* Strengthen the focus on mental health in different Council plans.
* Promote community-led initiatives that support mental health and access to relevant services.
* Promote opportunities for community participation following Covid-19, to rebuild the confidence of residents to connect with others and address any mental health issues that may have arisen.
* Address digital inclusion across Moreland, particularly for older residents, people with disability, families and newly arrived communities.
* Support the Moreland community services sector to better meet the growing needs and to advocate to State and Federal Governments to ensure that a safety net is provided for the most vulnerable in our community.
* Involve the community directly in designing and the delivery of information in appropriate ways for them.

## What Are Some Challenges?

Challenges in this space might include:

* Supporting households facing uncertainty after March 2021. Particularly given the uncertain job marks and indication that economic recovery is likely to be slow.
* Managing the growing demand for food and material aid as many individuals and families are accessing food services for the first time. Moreland food relief agencies are reporting they cannot meet the demand.
* Ensuring local mental health services and supports are culturally appropriate and able to respond to the level of need in a timely way.
* The high cost of digital technology is a significant barrier for low income earners and households experiencing financial stress.
* Mental health issues associated with social isolation and the consequent impacts are likely to increase the longer the pandemic continues.
* People are “falling through the gaps” due to a lack of information, infrastructure and eligibility for services.
* Weakened trust people have in others and public institutions. This may discourage people from connecting with the broader community, from seeking support from essential health and social services, and from engaging in other aspects of community life.
* Implications for promoting social cohesion into the future with the increase in racist attitudes, behaviours and experiences during the pandemic, which has already caused significant harm to communities.