

COVID-19

ICC Staff Update

22 APRIL 2020

CURRENT ALERT LEVEL **4**



Hi everyone ... This update goes to all staff, and our circumstances are different – so let me say that however you’ve been spending your time, I hope you’ve fared OK. There are lots of smaller consequences as a result of this lockdown period – some of them are positive, some of them are surprising. I’d like to start this off by sharing some interesting feedback I’ve had, that I hope will make you smile a little too:

- Many of the staff who have been redeployed, particularly those who have been involved in making outward bound phone calls, have really enjoyed it. Great to hear!
- With fewer people out and about, and an inability to purchase a lot of takeaway foods, our streets and parks are cleaner than usual.
- And one thing you might not have expected – the birds in the Queens Park aviary have really missed having social contact with people!

Can I acknowledge and thank all those who have lived our ‘Above and Beyond’ value, continuing to deliver services, at times receiving criticism for doing so.

These have been trying times for everyone – sometimes it’s the smallest things we miss – and let’s keep being kind to ourselves and each other.

What we had confirmed for us on Monday is that it is going to take a while to come out of this ‘altered state’. On Tuesday next week, we move from Alert Level 4 to Alert Level 3 (AL3). There are some key messages in that change:

- If you *can* work from home, you should continue to do so;
- If you are returning to your workplace, you must have a risk plan for the health and safety risks around Covid-19 and this must be signed off by me. ICC has seen, from personal experience in some of our staff testing positive for COVID-19, how quickly this can spread. That is why ELT confirmed I should sign these off.

Although the key message above is if you can work from home, you should continue to do so, I know that AL3 will bring some changes for some parts of the business. My thanks to the managers and team leaders who are working hard to get everything in place where changes will need to be made.

AL3 will not bring big changes for most of us.

The library and the pool must remain closed, and cafés can’t open for your coffees with friends – but you will be able to buy a Big Mac. It’s when we move to AL2 that we’ll start to see all services reopening, and people moving around again.

So the big issue for us to think about is what are we moving to? As a community, as a nation, we’re seeking to recover. Southland is fortunate in that our primary industry base will continue to provide opportunities for our people, even though other industries in our region will be hard-hit.

There is no doubt in my mind that we will not be going back to the ‘normal’ we knew. For me, there will be two major drivers:

- I believe people’s behaviour will have changed. They’re going to want more distance between others, possibly be nervous about going out into restaurants, bars, theatres. And there’s going to be less money around to support those activities. Everyone is going to make sure they’re applying their money to the things that they really need – and we’re going to have to think like that at Council;
- We are going to dig ourselves out of this- as a country, as a region, as a community. For us to rebuild, it will

Unite against COVID-19:

Be kind. Share only facts, not rumour. Time to prepare, not panic. www.covid19.govt.nz

be up to the community to work with each other - and that will require Council to shift its focus and become more outward looking, building capacity in the community and advocating to central government to make sure that Southland recovers well.

We've been looking at next year's Annual Plan (= rates increase). Councillors have heard advice from a range of sources that there will be reduced revenue (anticipating less building and resource consents, parking revenue, use of our venues). Again, Invercargill is more fortunate that it does not have a strong reliance on these income streams.

Shortly our financial performance for the third quarter will be released, and it will anticipate an increased surplus at the end of the year. We're lucky that we're going into this crisis with strong financial performance. However, we can't afford to squander that. Every dollar we can save, and apply to another capital programme, will generate jobs.

I have spoken before about reflecting the community we serve. Prudence requires that we apply our resources in the manner that benefits all of the community. We anticipate that this time next year our cash flows will be tighter as our community struggles to pay its rates bills. This is not someone else's money - it's yours, because you are the community too. Roughly 25% of our operating expenditure is employee costs. At the beginning of this crisis there were mixed messages on Council's eligibility, but it has now been clarified that we are not eligible for wage subsidy.

So that brings me to the point that you are most interested in. I previously told you that we would pay everyone to 26 April at 100% of salary. 27 April is a statutory holiday (Anzac Day Monday-ised) so the usual rules around public holiday payments will apply. What happens next?

ELT sought feedback from your managers and team leaders on this in a couple of ways, and have grappled with how we can best support you, while supporting the community.

Here's what we decided:

1. If you are working 100% ie fulltime, you will be paid 100%
2. If you are working less than fulltime, you will be paid 75%
3. If your role means you are not able to work, you will be paid 50%

If you are in a situation of being paid less than your full income, you will have the choice to 'top up' your pay by

using annual leave. You can check your leave balance in ERNIE. ELT agreed that you would be able to go into a negative balance to a maximum of one week (with some conditions).

By next week, your immediate manager will be able to clarify which category you are in - they are receiving this update at the same time as you are, and will need a little bit of time to seek clarity if they need to so that they can give you the best guidance they can.

There may be a small number of 'outliers' - people that don't really fit into any of the categories above, and we will deal with those on a case by case basis.

If you use other leave - ie if you are sick, or bereaved - you should continue to advise of that change and usual conditions will apply.

Some people have asked if they can use this time to undertake projects or jobs that they don't usually find time for. Discuss that with your manager. As always, projects need to make sense - and fit within the plans for your part of the business.

Let's hope AL3 is for two weeks only and we can all get back to some semblance of normal life. For myself I'm looking forward to walking at Sandy Point, and getting in the water at Splash Palace.

The discussions at ELT today were based on an assumption that AL3 would not go past 30 June, and I would just reserve the right for further discussions if that assumption proves incorrect! As I've said before, we receive the latest information at the same time you all do. We appreciate your patience as we all work through this together.

Let me close by thanking you all once again.

In many ways, our staff members' challenges are not different to others, however when you choose to work in Local Government - in the public sector - as a public servant, we know that this brings unique conversations, considerations, and challenges to your work day.

Councillors have asked that their thanks be added to mine in recognising the work you have continued to do as a public servant for Council, for your community, and for the work you have done by staying home to break the chain - to unite against COVID-19.



Unite against COVID-19:

Be kind. Share only facts, not rumour. Time to prepare, not panic. www.covid19.govt.nz