

**TO: The Select Committee on the Government's Management of the
Powerhouse Museum and other museums and cultural projects in NSW**

**RE: Question on notice regarding potential closure of smaller organisations as
a result of COVID 19 impacts.**

During the appearance of AMaGA representatives Alex Marsden and Judith Coombes at the Committee hearings on 29 July 2020, a question on notice was taken regarding impacts on smaller museums, galleries and historical societies in NSW of COVID 19. The Hon Walt Secord asked if any organisations were at risk of permanent closure.

We have consulted with our members in NSW and there remains extensive and deep concern regarding financial and other impacts. The following organisations have notified us that they do not see a viable future for their organisations unless additional grants and support are provided by government. A number of people commented that they had applied for grants that had been unsuccessful or that there were no grants available that they could apply for. These are only the organisations who are members of AMaGA. I am aware that this is representative of many more who will be at risk of closing.

There is also an appendix provided with details of direct comment from the organisations concerned.

- The Arms of Australia Inn
- Dungog Museum and Historical Society
- Evans Head Living Museum
- Fort Scratchley Historical Society
- Illawarra Historical Society and Museum
- Ingleburn Heritage Military Precinct
- Maitland and District Historical Society
- Murrurundi and District Historical Society
- Orange, Blayney and Cabonne Regional Museums
- Raymond Terrace Historical Society
- The Museum of Fire, Penrith
- Transport Heritage NSW affiliates
- Young Historical Society and Lambing Flat Folk Museum

These organisations are vital cultural, social, health and economic assets to their regions and we would appreciate the opportunity to discuss additional support programs.

Judith Coombes
President, AMaGA NSW Branch.

Appendix – Small organisation responses

The Arms of Australia Inn Museum hosted School Groups and Community Visitors on a regular basis

Since we had to close in March 2020 we have had no income at all

Our Treasurer did a forecast of our funds and by the end of the year he forecasted \$400 in the bank account

Because we are a totally volunteer organization we dont qualify for any Grants

We have applied to Penrith City Council for a waivering of our Rent and awaiting their decision

We have handed back our photocopier to Fuji Xerox

Social Distancing is a huge problem for the Museum to open up to even Community Groups let alone when Department of Education allows School Excursions

The Museum has standing charges of utilities and maintenance

The Museum is at a huge risk of closure

Secretary

Dear Judith

Our Historical Society runs the Dungog Museum. We closed in early March following advice from M&Gnsw. Our usual opening hours are Saturdays (10am – 2pm) and Wednesdays (10am – 12.30pm) and other times by arrangement. We have an entry fee of \$5.00 and we have local history books for sale. Usually we have small bus groups and coaches visiting the Museum by arrangement, especially during the cooler weather as well as visits from the primary schools.

We have adopted a COVID-19 Plan and a COVID-19 Risk Assessment. Recently we have opened a couple of times by arrangement and from 26 August we will be open on Wednesdays only and by arrangement. We are not opening on Saturdays at the moment due to large number of visitors from out of town on the weekends because of a new bike track and the fact that most of us are in the higher risk age group. To complicate matters we needed to have a major clean at the Museum before we reopened because of major road works in the section of road in front of the Museum.

Clearly we have forgone our entry fees as well as the sale of our publications – we do get inquiries about some of our publications and we post them to people. We often get donations for family history inquiries and these have also dried up. Our income is well down on usual but we do have adequate sums in our working account as well as a term deposit.

I trust this information is of some use.

Regards

Secretary and Public Office

Dear Judith

In relation to the email regarding the effect on small museums of COVID:

- Illawarra Museum is part of the Illawarra Historical Society in Wollongong
- it is entirely staffed by volunteers most of whom are 60+ years old
- pre-COVID hours were 3 hours on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday
- the Museum also opened for school and group visits
- in 2019 visitors totaled about 2,500 of whom 750 were schoolchildren
- income from visitor donations for 2019 totaled \$1,700 plus about \$2,000 from group tours
- the museum has been closed since 16 March
- due to the ages of the volunteers, the museum will remain closed until community infection rates are minimal
- the museum does not have the financial or personnel resources to deep clean after each opening
- of the 18 regular volunteers, 7 are not expected to return
- during the outbreak, volunteers have been reviewing the and recataloguing the collection
- the financial loss to the museum since March has been about \$2,300
- as part of future strategies, the museum is developing a series of 'museums in a suitcase' that can be sent to schools in lieu of visits
- the museum has operated since 1966 and will continue but it will take considerable effort to regain momentum

Hope this helps

Honorary Museum Manager

ILLAWARRA HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

11 Market St, Wollongong 2500 (Museum)

PO Box 241, Wollongong 2520 (all correspondence)

ABN 90 648 511 485

02 4228 7770

info@illawarramuseum.com

<http://www.illawarramuseum.com>

Judith

I understand you are looking for information regarding the effect of Covid 19 on Museums and Historical Societies.

Fort Scratchley Historical Society prior to Covid opened Fort Scratchley 6 days per week conducting tunnel tours and escorting people around the grounds and museum rooms.

When the need to close due to Covid occurred we were forced to cancel our annual fund raising concert which would normally have generated around \$20k for the Society. Our little kiosk normally contributes around \$16k per year so the combination of the two plus collections from our donation bin puts the Society in a reasonable position to continue to develop our displays and carry out restoration projects as identified.

With these sources of income temporarily gone we have had to look closely at what we spend our limited resources on and have had to cancel certain expenditure such as maintenance of the time ball on customs house.

With the majority of our volunteers being over 70 we have been extremely careful in what we do and as a result have recently started to open our gates every Sunday. If the Newcastle area remains free of Covid we will start to open Saturdays as well, probably by the middle of October.

At this stage we will not reopen during the week as our main source of weekday visitors is school excursions and seniors bus trips. The main attraction for these groups is the opportunity to tour the tunnel complex but these tours are impossible under the 1.5 separation rule. Should cruise ship visits recommence we will look at the possibility of opening on the days ships are in Port

I do not believe our Society is currently under threat of closing but this is not to say that down the track it will not happen. At least by opening on weekends we are giving our volunteers an outlet to do something and are now firing our historic Mark V11 gun on the 3rd Sunday of the month which gives those volunteers a reason to get out of the house.

Trust this information is of use and should you require any further information please feel free to call me on _____

Regards

President
Fort Scratchley Historical Society

Hello Judith,

In response to your email received today I would like to make the following comments:-

The Raymond Terrace Historical Society, Raymond Terrace is only small and comprises of a genuine "pioneer cottage" and museum building depicting what early life in the late 1800's was really like here in our town. Raymond Terrace was the first stopping off place along the Hunter River from the coal port of Newcastle in very late 1700's. Our settlement was first surveyed in 1837.

This year being closed down since early March means we have not had any income except for couple of small donations (\$50) so we are really struggling to pay expenses eg. Security / web site / water etc. We do not seem to qualify for any of the small grants being offered recently. Maybe other Historical Societies are in the same boat. Can we be considered for some monetary help? Hope you can help, thanks

_____, Secretary

Dear Judith

I am the Secretary/Treasurer of a very small Military Focused Museum called "Bardia Barracks" or the Ingleburn Heritage Military Precinct.

Our focus is to preserve and promote the Military Heritage of the Ingleburn Army Camp which was established in 1939. Apart from developing and maintaining the artifacts on site we cater for Seniors Groups, Schools and Individuals wishing to visit and learn about the Ingleburn Camp.

The site is managed by Landcom who to be honest have been less than helpful. Parliamentarians at every level are ambivalent, lip service only.

We have a Licence from Landcom to conduct our affairs.

We operate purely on a voluntary basis and apart for some Grants for specific purposes rely exclusively on visitors to the Barracks as a modest source of income to pay our outgoings eg AMAgA membership, Insurances, Government Fees etc.

Income this year is effectively zero. Bookings understandably have been cancelled.

At this point in time we will possibly be able to pay the relevant costs to operate in 2021 but that will be it, our bank balance will be depleted, nothing left for development.

The question is do we wind the operation up now or do we try to hang in?

Thank you for the opportunity to get this off my chest.

Regards

Secretary/Treasurer

Ingleburn Military Precinct Assn Inc

The grant 'unsuccess' I have since been informed related to two we were after which was an FRRR and the other was a NSW events government grant along with in the past Clubs grants when they come around. We are mindful a lot of organisations from mens sheds and art bodies in the country are suffering so we are not too surprised at the rejection rate. The trouble with rejection over time you tend to not bother with applications that want to know every nuance of the project on hand from menial framing of photos to digitising collections. We also have made available our exhibition hall for the organisation 'Doing it for our Farmers' where they run a food service for destitute farmers handing out donations and cash cards to farmers almost within a 100 mile radius of the township. We get told on countless occasions by farmers they do not bother to apply for grants either, for the same reason -- the paperwork, the rejection rate and even when they meet with success, the money is a long time coming. The grant reviewers work in the city and have no understanding of life in the country so asking them to judge something like an application and its merits is akin to asking Bind Freddie where a scissors are. With a population of around 800 we tend to kiss anyone who gives us anything; covid or no covid! Our normal fundraising relates to the good donation graces of the traveling public; being on the New England highway caravanners and other travelers stop off for coffee etc so we get a few come in to marvel at country life but that has completely dried up. Our other form of revenue was a raffle every Friday night at the local pub and the moment of the lockdowns, the pub was shut and is now, like ourselves, in renovation mode but whereas the owner has a wrecking business and money to spend, we have to end up supporting any work we do out of our own pocket. Being on a pension does not handle any large expenditure which is what museums require. The farming items are in the open and weathering with age and events we want to respect (we had the biggest rail disaster in the country in the 1920s at Muralla but not a memorial or even a plaque). The ageing population, noticeable in small towns (not only are volunteers thinning out, we don't ask them to man our buildings and endanger exposure at a fragile age -- our 1870s wood slab cottage which was on a farm and moved to town 40 years ago and our main building all have small rooms so distancing is impossible). That's our lot and we will continue while we can and thanks for your interest. No government, state or federal, liberal or labor, green or bridle has ever shown any interest. It's the country you see -- no votes here.

On 23/08/2020 10:37 am, Judith Coombes wrote:

Thank you _____

I am very sorry to hear how tough it continues to be for you. Could you let me know what grants you have been unsuccessful with, as I am very keen to continue lobbying for further grants for smaller organisations such as yours.

Thank you very much for replying. I will certainly include Murrurundi in the response to the parliamentary committee.

Judy

On Sun, 23 Aug 2020 at 9:28 am, _____ <_____> wrote:
We have been closed since the first distancing rules came in and our
revenue streams (fundraising and visitors) have been non-existent. We
are paying our costs including power and other outgoings out of reserves
and we predict by mid-October there is a chance we could be closed
permanently. It appears we have been unsuccessful in grants from
applications we have made to continue work behind the scenes which could
have helped us stave our predicament.

president

Murrurundi & District Historical Society Inc.

website: www.murrurundihistoricalociety.com

Dear Judith

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the impact of COVID-19 on the Lambing Flat Folk Museum (operated by volunteers from the Young Historical Society Inc.)

As a small unfunded museum we operate on a low profit rate. We are registered under the Charitable Collections Act. We have changed our entry charge to \$5.00 for adults and \$2.00 for children and students, under school age children are free. The entry was changed as we are unable to use Eftpos. The reason being, we have three volunteers in the eighty plus age group and they did not want to embrace this technology. It was also considered necessary to lower the entry charge as we now have restrictions in place that have changed the experience in our museum. Also it was considered necessary to lower the entry charge in an attempt to have less handling giving change, as most visitors to the museum have ten dollars and two dollar coins in change. If visitors have no cash, we let them in for free. This is rare, however it has occurred twice recently; one couple did direct credit the next day and another couple returned the next day with the money. The entry charge prior to the lock-down was \$7.00 for adults, \$5.00 for seniors and concession holders, \$3.00 for Uni and TAFE students and \$2.00 for children and non-school children the entry is free. Members of the Historical Society are free.

Prior to the closure of the museum on the 18 March the museum was open seven days and operated by volunteers. The museum reopened on 4 July. A committee of four executive members and three ordinary committee members manage the museum. We held a meeting to discuss what was required to reopen. We did the following to reopen:

- . opened for two weekends and then increased the opening to a four day weekend
- . purchased sanitiser
- . purchased a sanitiser dispenser
- . purchased paper towels
- . took all items off the top of displays, to make cleaning/sanitising easier
- . cleaned and sanitised the museum
- . clean and sanitise every day when open
- . put direction arrows on the floor for flow of visitors
- . put up "please do not touch" signs around the museum
- . marked the floor for volunteers using the office
- . gave written information to volunteers for their safety and the safety of the visitors
- . put up advisory health check list signs on outside doors

- . changed to an earlier closing time to allow for cleaning and sanitising
- . have visitors sanitise and sign in on arrival
- . allowed visitors to exit from the back door to keep social distancing of visitors

The impact on the museum:

1. The lockdown in March has meant less visitors
2. Less visitors, less income
3. The museum is now open Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday each week instead of the previous seven days
4. There are now only four volunteers and one person doing mutual obligation hours (Centrelink)
5. The three eighty year plus volunteers chose not to volunteer due to pre-existing health issues
6. One volunteer is not volunteering due to health issues
7. The workload of the volunteers has increased, due to the extra precautions to keep volunteers and visitors safe
8. There are less visitors coming to the museum as it is winter and the border closures is keeping visitors away
9. The reopening in winter has not helped, this winter is cold and wet
10. Due to the situation it is difficult to attract new volunteers
11. All tour buses have been cancelled
12. The festival in March was cancelled and the cherry festival in late November/early December is cancelled
13. School student visits have ceased
14. Club group visits have ceased
15. There is no support from our local Council
16. Difficulty of volunteers having time off for personal reasons
17. Cost of heating. (On Saturday 22 August 2020 at 12:42pm the outside temperature in Young was 2.1°C)
18. Concern that we will not have enough income to pay the bills (insurance, electricity, phone/internet, back to base alarm, consumables, and our yearly lease)
19. The possibility that the volunteers who are staying away due to age and existing health issues will not return to volunteer.

In (17) above cost of heating, this has been a cold winter. As our income is less there is a problem being able to heat the building to a standard that is comfortable for the volunteers and visitors. The building is an old school built in 1883 and occupied in 1884. The ceilings are high and there are places that are not sealed against outside air. This discomfort causes a problem as the volunteers are aware that we need to be able to pay our electricity account. This should not be the case.

All cleaning is done by the volunteers. The shortage of volunteers has made this task more difficult and time consuming. The effect of the extra cleaning on the objects in the museum is unknown. This was a pre-existing problem, however a much greater problem now.

Prior to COVID-19 some of the now exacerbated impact conditions were already appearing. The pandemic has made them appear sooner, made them more time consuming and is encroaching on the time spent on cataloguing and research.

Another issue we are experiencing is that the Family History Group (FHG) is collocated in this building and is currently closed due to COVID-19. This has meant that visitors needing to consult the FHG, now come to the museum to ask for information about family history.

It is my opinion that there should be funding for all volunteer managed and operated rural museums in NSW. The museum is situated on Crown Land, managed by Land Managers. It would be greatly appreciated if the museum were given enough financial assistance to allow the museum to pay the yearly lease. The Young Historical Society Inc Committee is currently awaiting the decision of the Heritage Council pending their consideration for the heritage listing of the Lambing Flat Riot Site (14 July 1861) and Associated Banner (Under Consideration). This decision is expected to occur on 2nd September 2020. It would be unfortunate if the Museum were to close due to lack of funding.

Yours sincerely

 Vice President
 Young Historical Society Inc
 Lambing Flat Folk Museum
 2 Campbell Street
 PO Box 41
 YOUNG NSW 2594

Dear Ms Coombes

Thank you for making representation on our behalf to the Select Committee parliamentary enquiry on the Powerhouse Museum and Cultural Projects.

We are responding to your request for information about organisations at risk of permanent closure as a result of the SARS-Cov-2 virus. While we are not at that point yet we are using up our cash reserves very quickly to cover basic overheads such as insurance, volunteer, property and third party.

And because we have been open to the public since 2003 the equipment we have built or purchased over the years is in need of replacement as it reaches the end of its useful life.

The Evans Head Living Museum has served the community in many ways:

- Preservation and display of local history including collection building of materials pertinent to our seven museum themes
- Research facility and resource centre for the public and students from primary to tertiary schools.
- Training for employment including transition to work for people who have suffered injury or impairment
- Work opportunity for those with disability
- Courses on computer security, photography, IT
- Work experience for high school students
- Photographing major events such as the Supreme Court Determination for very large Native Title Claims, and the visit of the Governor General to celebrate the 70th Anniversary of the establishment of the Empire Air Training Scheme at Evans Head, Australia, during World War II.
- Support for various industry events such as the Fishing Industry. We organised a well-researched exhibition on the early days of the fishing and prawning industry for the East Coast of Australia with focus on Evans Head because it is not only considered to be a pioneering port for prawning but was the home port for The Challenge, the first of the research vessels to undertake fisheries research for prawns from the Cape to Wilson's Promontory. This event attracted a large group of fishers and industry representatives and led to an invitation to us from the Sydney Fish Markets to provide information for their proposed new facility for Sydney. The event provided much economic stimulus to the community and there is strong interest for our next 'reunion' but we keep having to put it off because of virus problem which of course impacts on our earnings.
- Lead a four year program with the community, RSL and local Evans River K-12 School to recognise the contribution of the 260+ Diggers who came from this area and served in WWI. We provide a great deal of research support for the students. They won the Department of Veterans Affairs Prize for history research, a real stimulus to students.
- We run an annual Reunion for Veterans who served here during World War II. While their numbers are thin, subsequent generations are now stepping up to any events we organise.
- We run information sessions for the local schools and community groups on a regular basis and some of these have been an important source of earning to keep us alive financially. However many of these earning events have dried up as have events which provide no money such as school trips. In the past two weeks we have run a half day outdoors event for Grades 1 and 2 students from the local school for which there was no earning. And we also ran a half day outdoor tour for a native plant society for which we will receive some money but not enough to fully defray our costs. Many of these groups are not particularly well off financially. We live in a socially – disadvantaged area (many published indicators show this) which has trouble making ends meet. We go out of our way to make sure that we support the community as best we can but it does take resources to do so.
- Serves some social needs of volunteers who are living in isolation.

- We very much depend on our public activities to keep us afloat financially but when you are closed, as we have been for some time now as a 'risk management' strategy, there is no money coming in the door yet various overheads still need to be met and equipment and consumables replaced.

This is far from a comprehensive list of our activities all run without paid staff. We not like to see the good will, community connection and services we provide lost to the community as a result of not being able to meet 'compulsory' financial requirement such as insurance and other overheads and equipment replacement. It is unlikely that we will fold in the short run but we are reaching a point of concern where we may have to use remaining resources to wrap up our institution including our collections so that the right thing is done by those who have entrusted their precious collection items with us.

If we were to ask for anything it would be opportunity for interim grant funding to help us stay afloat. As it presently stands our opportunity for self-funding is greatly diminished. We had a \$3,000 loss last year as a result of the virus and need funds for a new printer which gives us the chance to earn funds through production of saleable items such as calendars. Funds for overheads would also be appreciated. We have worked hard to get to where we are. We would not like to have to close but we have now started thinking about our future.

We are very happy to discuss any of the matters contained here.

Kind regards

President & Life Member
The Evans Head *Living* Museum Inc.
18 Park Street
(PO Box 145)

HI Judy

I hope you are well.

I work with a group of regional museums in Orange Blayney and Cabonne Councils, under the Sustainable Collections Program.

I am regularly in contact with the museums and have been offering support during COVID, this could be in the form of sanitiser, signs and funding opportunities through announced grants ie – start up grants etc.

Of the 12 volunteer museums that I work with, they were all closed from March to at least June 2020. I'll provide a summary of how each museum is operating at the moment.

Orange RSL Museum – currently closed to the public, elderly volunteers

Molong Museum – has commenced operations and open again 1 weekend a month and having working days 1 day a week.

Canowindra Museum – closed remaining this way indefinitely, they have a workday on Wednesday.

Carcoar Hospital Museum – remaining closed indefinitely. Only 3 volunteers at this museum.

Eugowra – open on weekends depending on volunteers.

Millthorpe Museum – open

Stoke Stable – open
Carcoar Court House – unsure
Carmanhurst Room Carcoar – unsure

Whilst the museums are operating on a shorter basis, they are no longer able to hold any events which is a major source of income for the museums. Molong has regular plant and book sales, whilst Carcoar Hospital have open days during the show weekend and other large events. Millthorpe Museum offer catering to buses, but I would think that bus tours are very limited at the moment. Some museums have commented that visitation has been good since opening, due to the large influx of intrastate tourists getting out after lockdown. However relying on reduced entrance fees will not pay the rates and engage builder to undertake maintenance work.

It may be too soon to determine the financial situation of these museums, but extended periods of earning limited income, may have an impact in the future. I am also concerned about the age of the volunteers, the majority of them being over 70. During lockdown all museums were closed, it was deemed too much of a risk to open due to age. Without recruiting new volunteers that may be younger, I am concerned for the regional volunteer run museums sustainability. Without the volunteers to open these museums, they will remain closed. They provide such a wonderful tourism asset to the smaller villages of the district. Some of the villages do not have a lot of infrastructure to support tourism, however these small villages have a museum offering a place to visit.

Please let me know if you require further information.

Kind regards

Community Museum and
Heritage Manager

P: _____

A: PO Box 35, ORANGE NSW
2800

E: _____

W: www.orange.nsw.gov.au

Hi Judy,

I wasn't going to send a statement but ironically just after I read your email one of our front of house staff came to me distress that we'd just had another group cancel so I felt I should. As long as we continue to receive government support, we should survive but the recent restriction on school excursions is a major setback.

Not only was the Museum closed for two months and we lost all our major fundraising events but on top of that due to the ongoing restrictions we have lost a large majority of our current income. The Museum's main weekly traffic is school groups and seniors' groups. In the school holidays this is extended to vacation care of which last school we were unable to take any bookings.

Given the current situation we are able to accept bookings of 20 and while this isn't necessarily cost efficient, we need the income so adapted our practices as per our COVID plan. We were surprised at the number of schools still wanting to book and despite limitations we had a number of bookings in place all of which have now had to be cancelled.

Since the onset of COVID we have lost 17 seniors group bookings, 6 school bookings (of which many were for these next few weeks) and 6 other general bookings.

We actually traded very well over the school holidays with families obviously keen for something to do but I fear this gave us false hope given the current changes facing Museums.

One other factor that is problematic is that even though we are on 30,000 acres we can only have 20 people outside on our grounds which is limiting our ability for income.

I trust this may be the sort of information you were looking for,

Kind Regards,

_____ | **Interim CEO (Senior Heritage and Research Officer)**

MA Museum Studies | BA (HON) History/Heritage (University of Sydney)

MUSEUM OF FIRE

1 Museum Drive | Penrith | NSW | 2750 | P _____

E _____ W www.museumoffire.com.au

Mailing Address: PO Box 400, Penrith NSW, 2751

Heritage Partners to Fire + Rescue NSW

Good morning Judith,

Our Society, Maitland & District Historical Society Inc, has certainly been impacted by the Covid restrictions, the primary restriction being to our capacity to raise income. Secondary concern is the restriction placed on member activities, especially in this instance the cancellation of our monthly lectures.

Unlike many societies, we are in rented premises (owned by the Catholic Church) and pay rent and outgoings. We receive little or no help from Council, our major income generating from BBQs at Bunnings and the sale of published material at various festivals throughout the year. These activities have effectively stopped, our only income now being occasional on-line sales.

Whilst not destitute, we are eating into reserves at an alarming rate, a rate that is unsustainable in the long-term. We believe our activities add to the well-being of the broader community who would be the poorer in the event of our demise and would welcome any assistance that might be forthcoming through governmental agencies.

Best wishes,

President

Transport Heritage NSW (THNSW) works closely with over 35 transport museums and heritage operators across NSW. Like all NSW community museums, these organisations have been significantly impacted by the pandemic, in particular because they rely heavily on volunteers over 60 years old. Consistently, THNSW is finding that organisations are working with a reduced volunteer workforce, particularly in front-of-house roles. For organisations located in areas that were heavily affected by the 2019-20 summer bushfires, this effect is compounded.

The current Covid-19 environment has also meant an extended shut down of heritage train, tram, or bus services. For four months from the end of March to the end of July NSW heritage transport operators were unable to run services for visitors. Those who have returned to operations in recent weeks must do so at heavily reduced passenger rates. This is because the 4 m² rule which applies to buildings has also been applied to train carriages and other vehicles when they are in a heritage context. Some groups are unable to justify the expense of operating heritage vehicles with such low passenger numbers and other smaller groups are struggling to find volunteers to staff their operations in a Covid-safe way. Not being able to operate further reduces visitor numbers and has anecdotally led to some demotivation for volunteers. As well as workforce problems, these reduced or suspended services are impacting hugely on the financial health of the volunteer run heritage operators.

Of the 34 groups that work in partnership with THNSW, the impacts of bushfire and coronavirus in their local areas according to the SGS Economics and Planning Local Government Area Forecasted GDP Growth for 2019-20 as a percentage is below:

GDP impact by percentage	Groups affected
0 to -2.5	3
-2.5 to -5	5
-5 to -7.5	9
-7.5 to -10	14
-10 to -12.5	2
-12.5 to -15	1
Greater than -15	0
Total:	34

Average impact to GDP: -7%
 Median impact to GDP: -8.75%

Across the board, transport museums and operators are working hard to ensure their ongoing viability, but the sector is suffering in terms of financial health and their volunteer workforce. Fewer volunteers has led to reduced opening hours, fewer opening days, and reduced heritage services. The continued community anxiety about the virus circulating around the state and the reality of exposing themselves to risk is taking a toll on the volunteers at the heart of the transport heritage sector.