

Wednesday, 22 April 2020

NEWCASTLE PERMANENT ADAPTS SERVICES AS CUSTOMERS STAY HOME

Newcastle Permanent is adapting its services to support customers' changing requirements as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The changes, which will be effective from Saturday 9 May, include extending the hours of our Hunter-based Customer Contact Centre, limiting the number of branches open on Saturdays, and retraining more than 30 staff to support the increased demand for the Customer Contact Centre and Customer Hardship Assistance team.

CEO Bernadette Inglis said the pandemic had significantly increased customer demand for non-branch banking services including online and contact centre services, and was the driving force behind increased requests for hardship assistance.

"We're here to support our customers who are following advice of the authorities to stay home. We've seen a significant reduction in visits to our branches, with a corresponding increase of up to 50% in calls to our locally-based Customer Contact Centre and record levels of usage of online banking.

"A number of our customers are also experiencing the financial impacts of the pandemic, with more than 2,000 customers contacting us since mid-March for support – more than double the volume we typically receive in a full year," Ms Inglis said.

"In response to this, we're adapting our teams to meet our customers' needs. We've provided further training and are re-skilling people from our branch network and lending teams to increase the capacity in our Customer Contact Centre and Customer Hardship Assistance team. Our teams are also working extended hours to respond to requests, and we're grateful to our customers for their patience as we continue to respond."

The following changes to customer services will be effective from Saturday 9 May:

- Our Customer Contact Centre will extend its hours of operation each Saturday – our team will now be available over the phone until 6pm every Saturday.
- We will not open on Saturdays in a number of our branches. However a Saturday service will operate at the following larger branches including Greenhills, Charlestown Square, Raymond Terrace, Glendale, Kotara, Mount Hutton, Swansea, Erina, and Tuggerah.

"We've announced a suite of support measures for existing business and personal banking customers to provide some relief through this challenging period and help them prepare for recovery. I encourage our customers to review the information available on our website to see if any of these measures can be of help to them."

"All our branches remain open as usual 9am-5pm Monday-Friday and we have also implemented additional cleaning and preventative hygiene measures within our branches, at our ATMs and in our workplaces."

"I'd also like to remind customers that we will continue to offer access to all of our services through this pandemic. With the expectation of ongoing social distancing measures for some time yet, we will continue to adapt our services to support the needs of our customers."