



**GUIDELINES FOR  
SAFE POOL  
OPERATIONS**  
MANAGING THE  
RISK OF COVID-  
19 IN AQUATIC  
FACILITIES



**ROYAL LIFE SAVING**  
AUSTRALIA

## ABOUT ROYAL LIFE SAVING

Royal Life Saving is focused on reducing drowning and promoting healthy, active and skilled communities through innovative, reliable, evidence based advocacy; strong and effective partnerships; quality programs, products and services; underpinned by a cohesive and sustainable national organisation.

Royal Life Saving is a public benevolent institution (PBI) dedicated to reducing drowning and turning everyday people into everyday community lifesavers. We achieve this through: advocacy, education, training, health promotion, aquatic risk management, community development, research, sport, leadership and participation and international networks.

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The drowning prevention research of the Royal Life Saving Society – Australia is proudly supported by the Australian Government.



**Australian Government**

[royallifesaving.com.au](http://royallifesaving.com.au)

## RLSSA ACCEPTANCE AND RELEASE NOTICE

This document is a managed document. For identification of amendments, each document contains an issue date, number and a page number. Changes will only be issued as a complete replacement document. Recipients should remove superseded versions from circulation.

### Authorisation

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- YMCA
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- Australian Swimming Teachers and Coaches Association
- Safe Work Australia
- Brisbane City Council
- Club Group
- Recreation SA

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## SCOPE

This Guideline provides practical guidance for owners or operators of aquatic facilities on how to manage the risks within an aquatic environment as it applies to COVID-19

It includes information on Risk Assessment and managing risks within the aquatic environment.

This National Industry Guideline applies to all Hotels, Motels, Camping and Caravan Grounds, Commercial and Public Aquatic Facilities, Learn to Swim Schools, and Body Corporate who own or manage an aquatic facility for the purpose of swimming or recreation such as a pool or waterslide. It may be used for Public Waterways such as Rivers, Creeks, and Streams.

This Guidelines have been developed by Royal Life Saving Society Australia under the National Aquatic Industry Safety Committee for adoption by the Commonwealth, state and territory governments and owners and operators of aquatic facilities.

Most of this information in this guideline has been sourced from Safe Work Australia.

## ABOUT COVID-19

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease that is caused by a newly discovered form of coronavirus.

COVID-19 is a respiratory infection that was unknown before the outbreak that started in Hubei Province, China, in December 2019.

Other known forms of coronaviruses include Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

### What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Symptoms of COVID-19 can range from mild illness to pneumonia. Some people will recover easily, and others may get very sick very quickly.

The common symptoms of COVID-19 may include:

- fever
- coughing
- sore throat
- fatigue (tiredness), and
- difficulty breathing or shortness of breath.

Most people infected with COVID-19 will have a mild to moderate illness and will recover without special medical treatment. Some people, such as those with underlying medical problems or disease and older people, are more likely to suffer from more serious symptoms of the diseases. See also our content on vulnerable workers.

## How is COVID-19 spread?

- The most likely way someone will catch the virus is by breathing in micro-droplets a person close to them has released by sneezing, coughing –or just breathing out
- A person can, however, also catch it via the hand-to-face pathway: touching a surface where live virus material is present, then touching their mouth, nose or eyes
- Spread of COVID-19 is highest from people with symptoms
- Spread of COVID-19 before symptoms appear is less common

## More information

For more information about COVID-19 please see the resources available from the [Australian Government Department of Health](#).

You can also call the National Coronavirus Help Line on 1800 020 080 if you have questions about COVID-19. It operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

If you require translating or interpreting services, please call 131 450.

# CV1 MANAGING THE RISK OF COVID-19 IN AQUATIC FACILITIES

**Issued:** 12/05/2020

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## 1.1 Purpose

1.1.1 To provide aquatic facilities and swim schools guidance on managing the risk of COVID-19 cross infection

## 1.2 Scope

1.2.1 This guideline applies to aquatic facilities who are considering the impacts of aquatic activities or events which are being conducted under Australian Governments COVID -19 Social Distancing advisories [www.health.gov.au/covid19-resources](http://www.health.gov.au/covid19-resources).

## 1.3 About COVID-19

1.3.1 Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease that is caused by a newly discovered form of coronavirus.

1.3.2 COVID-19 is a respiratory infection that was unknown before the outbreak that started in Hubei Province, China, in December 2019. Other known forms of coronaviruses include Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

### What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

1.3.3 Symptoms of COVID-19 can range from mild illness to pneumonia. Some people will recover easily, and others may get very sick very quickly.

1.3.4 The common symptoms of COVID-19 may include:

- fever
- coughing
- sore throat
- fatigue (tiredness), and
- difficulty breathing or shortness of breath.

For the latest update on COVID-19 Symptoms please visit [Australian Government Department of Health](http://www.health.gov.au/covid19-resources)



1.3.5 Most people infected with COVID-19 will have a mild to moderate illness and will recover without special medical treatment. Some people, such as those with underlying medical problems or disease and older people, are more likely to suffer from more serious symptoms of the diseases. See also our content on vulnerable workers.

### How is COVID-19 spread?

1.3.6 The most likely way someone will catch the virus is by breathing in micro-droplets a person close to them has released by sneezing, coughing –or just breathing out

1.3.7 A person can, however, also catch it via the hand-to-face pathway: touching a surface where live virus material is present, then touching their mouth, nose or eyes

1.3.8 Spread of COVID-19 is highest from people with symptoms

1.3.9 Spread of COVID-19 before symptoms appear is less common

## 1.4 Legal Framework

1.4.1 State and Territory Work Health and Safety (WHS) laws require you to take care of the health, safety and welfare of your workers, including yourself and other staff, contractors and volunteers, and others (clients, customers, visitors) at your workplace.

1.4.2 This includes:

- providing and maintaining a work environment that is without risk to health and safety
- providing adequate and accessible facilities for the welfare of workers to carry out their work, and
- monitoring the health of workers and the conditions of the workplace for the purpose of preventing illness or injury.

1.4.3 Owners and operators of Aquatic Facilities should refer to the state/territory workplace health and safety authorities for specific advice on their legal advice.

Specific guidance on the legal framework as it pertains to COVID-19 can be found <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces/industry-information/general-industry-information/duties-under-whs?tab=tab-toc-employer>

## Commonwealth

- [Biosecurity \(Human Biosecurity Emergency\) \(Human Coronavirus with Pandemic Potential\) \(Overseas Travel Ban Emergency Requirements\) Determination 2020 \(25 March 2020\)](#)
- [Biosecurity \(Human Biosecurity Emergency\) \(Human Coronavirus with Pandemic Potential\) \(Emergency Requirements\) Determination 2020 \(27 March 2020\)](#)
- [Biosecurity \(Human Biosecurity Emergency\) \(Human Coronavirus with Pandemic Potential\) \(Emergency Requirements – Retail Outlets at International Airports\) Determination 2020 \(28 March 2020\)](#)
- [Biosecurity \(Human Biosecurity Emergency\) \(Human Coronavirus with Pandemic Potential\) \(Emergency Requirements for Remote Communities\) Determination 2020 \(16 April 2020\)](#)
- [Biosecurity \(Human Biosecurity Emergency\) \(Human Coronavirus with Pandemic Potential\) \(Emergency Requirements—Public Health Contact Information\) Determination 2020 \(25 April 2020\)](#)

## Australian Capital Territory

- [ACT Government - public health directions](#)

## New South Wales

- [NSW Health - public health orders](#)

## Northern Territory

- [Northern Territory Government - Chief Public Health Officer directions](#)

## Queensland

- [Queensland Health – Chief Health Officer public health directions](#)

## South Australia

- [SA Emergency Declarations and Directions](#)

## Tasmania

- [Tasmanian Government Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) Resources \(under the heading 'Current Directions'\)](#)

## Victoria

- [Victorian Department of Health and Human Services – State of Emergency](#)

## Western Australia

- [Western Australian Government](#) – State of Emergency Declarations

### 1.5 National COVID-19 safe workplace principles

- 1.5.1 Recognising that the COVID-19 pandemic is a public health emergency, that all actions in respect of COVID-19 should be founded in expert health advice and that the following principles operate subject to the measures agreed and implemented by governments through the National Cabinet process
- a) All workers, regardless of their occupation or how they are engaged, have the right to a healthy and safe working environment.
  - b) The COVID-19 pandemic requires a uniquely focused approach to work health and safety (WHS) as it applies to businesses, workers and others in the workplace.
  - c) To keep our workplaces healthy and safe, businesses must, in consultation with workers, and their representatives, assess the way they work to identify, understand and quantify risks and to implement and review control measures to address those risks.
  - d) As COVID-19 restrictions are gradually relaxed, businesses, workers and other duty holders must work together to adapt and promote safe work practices, consistent with advice from health authorities, to ensure their workplaces are ready for the social distancing and exemplary hygiene measures that will be an important part of the transition.
  - e) Businesses and workers must actively control against the transmission of COVID-19 while at work, consistent with the latest advice from the [Australian Health Protection Principal Committee \(AHPPC\)](#), including considering the application of a hierarchy of appropriate controls where relevant.
  - f) Businesses and workers must prepare for the possibility that there will be cases of COVID-19 in the workplace and be ready to respond immediately, appropriately, effectively and efficiently, and consistent with advice from health authorities.
  - g) Existing state and territory jurisdiction of WHS compliance and enforcement remains critical. While acknowledging that individual variations across WHS laws mean approaches in different parts of the country may vary, to ensure business and worker confidence, a commitment to a consistent national

approach is key. This includes a commitment to communicating what constitutes best practice in prevention, mitigation and response to the risks presented by COVID-19.

- h) Safe Work Australia (SWA), through its tripartite membership, will provide a central hub of WHS guidance and tools that Australian workplaces can use to successfully form the basis of their management of health and safety risks posed by COVID-19.
- i) States and Territories ultimately have the role of providing advice, education, compliance and enforcement of WHS and will leverage the use of the SWA central hub in fulfilling their statutory functions.
- j) The work of the National COVID-19 Coordination Commission will complement the work of SWA, jurisdictions and health authorities to support industries more broadly to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic appropriately, effectively and safely.

## 1.6 Risk Assessment

- 1.6.1 The owner or operator of an aquatic facility should develop, implement, monitor and continually improve a risk management framework that includes the potential of someone being exposed to the infection of COVID-19.
- 1.6.2 The framework should be consistent with the AS/NZS ISO 31000:2018 Risk management- Principles and Guidelines, the Guidelines for Safe Pool Operations - Aquatic Risk Management and any of their amendments.

Specific guidance on risk assessment as it pertains to COVID-19 can be found <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/key-considerations-undertaking-risk-assessment-covid-19>

Specific Examples for a Risk Assessment is:

- Checklist – [Key considerations when undertaking a COVID-19 risk assessment](#)
- Template - [Template and Example COVID-19 risk register](#)
- Workplace checklist - [What can I do to keep my workers safe at the workplace and limit the spread of COVID19?](#)

## Aquatic Activity Risk Assessment

1.6.3 As part of an overall risk assessment the owner or operator of an aquatic facility should consider specific assessment for each of the activities that it does within its facilities. Owners and Operators of Aquatic Facilities should refer to the following GSPO SV4 Aquatic Activity Risk Assessment.

1.6.4 The aquatic activity risk assessment in relation to COVID-19 should consider at a minimum the following:

- **Physical Distancing of parents** to other parents/children/teacher/coach in the water
- **Physical Distancing of children** to other children/parents/teacher/coach in the water
- **Physical Distancing of parents** to other parents watching or teachers/coaches
- Requirements to touch the child in order to assist them in their learning activities (i.e. assisting the child to float)
- Requirements to support the student in their learning activities
- Supervision requirements if student is unable to support themselves in the activities
- **Social practices of children in managing their own hygiene** (i.e. wiping their nose in the water)
- **Physical distancing of other aquatic activities** within the pool / area that may cause social distancing to be compromised
- **Sharing of Teaching and Pool Equipment** from one class to another or within the same class
- **Placement / Location of personal items and their vicinity to others** (i.e. Water Bottles on the side of deck)
- **Additional supervision requirements** in order to allow the social distancing to occur both in the water and out of the water

## 1.7 Risk Treatment

1.7.1 The owner or operator of an aquatic facility should consider a range of risk treatments to minimise the risk of COVID-19. These include but are not limited to the following risk treatment strategies:

- Emergency Planning and Response
- Vulnerable Persons
- Staff, Contractor and Visitor Health Monitoring
- Physical Distancing
- Hygiene
- Cleaning
- Personal Protection Equipment

## 1.8 Vulnerable Persons

1.8.1 Some people are at greater risk of more serious illness with COVID-19. These include:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 50 years and older with one or more chronic medical conditions
- People 65 years and older with one or more chronic medical conditions
- People 70 years and older, and
- People with compromised immune systems

Specific guidance on vulnerable person as it pertains to COVID-19 can be found <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces/industry-information/general-industry-information/vulnerable?tab=tab-toc-employer>

## 1.9 Supervision Planning

- 1.9.1 Owners and/or operators of an aquatic facility should review and update their supervision plan as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic in accordance with the Guidelines for Safe Pool Operations – Supervision
- 1.9.2 At a minimum all owners and operators of an aquatic facility should include within their supervision plan arrangements for Lifeguards to proactively minimise the risk of COVID-19 within the Aquatic Facility.
- 1.9.3 Owners and/or operators should also test their updated arrangements they have developed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Specific guidance on supervision planning as it pertains to COVID-19 can be found at [www.guidelines.royallifesaving.com.au](http://www.guidelines.royallifesaving.com.au)

## 1.10 Emergency Planning and Response

- 1.10.1 Owners and/or operators of an aquatic facility should have an emergency plan in accordance with the Guidelines for Safe Pool Operations - Emergency Planning
- 1.10.2 Owners and/or operators of an aquatic facility should review and update their emergency plan as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 1.10.3 At a minimum all owners and operators of an aquatic facility should include within their emergency plan response arrangements following the detection of COVID-19 within the Aquatic Facility.
- 1.10.4 Owners and/or operators should also test their new emergency planning arrangements they have developed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Specific guidance on **emergency planning** as it pertains to COVID-19 can be found <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces/industry-information/general-industry-information/emergency-plans?tab=tab-toc-employer>

Specific guidance on an **emergency response** as it pertains to COVID-19 can be found <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces/industry-information/general-industry-information/covid-19-your?tab=tab-toc-employer>

## 1.11 Health and Fitness

1.11.1 In consultation with your workers, owners and operators of aquatic facilities must put in place policies and procedures relating to COVID-19, including what workers must do if they or a patron are diagnosed or suspect they may have COVID-19.

1.11.2 Owners and operators of aquatic facilities should monitor your workers for key symptoms of COVID-19 which are:

- fever
- coughing
- a sore throat
- fatigue, and
- shortness of breath.

Specific guidance on health monitoring as it pertains to COVID-19 can be found <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces/industry-information/general-industry-information/health-monitoring?tab=tab-toc-employer>

## 1.12 Physical Distancing

1.12.1 Physical distancing (also referred to as 'social distancing') refers to the requirement that people distance themselves from others. The current advice from the [Department of Health](#) is that everyone must keep at least 1.5 metres apart from others (outside of their family unit) where possible. In addition, in a given space, there must be a 4 square metres of space per person where possible.

### Specific consideration of Physical Distancing for staff in Aquatic Facilities

1.12.2 It will not always be possible for workers and others to keep 1.5 metres apart at all times at the workplace. For example, workers may have to work closely with each other or others because of the nature of the task, such as:

- Lifeguard performing a rescue or first aid.
- Swimming and Water Safety Teaching



1.12.3 Working in close contact increases the risk of workers and patrons being exposed to COVID-19. You must consider whether the work task must be completed or could be rescheduled to a later date. If the task must be completed and your workers will be in close contact, you must undertake a risk assessment to determine what control measures are reasonably practicable in the circumstances to eliminate or minimise health and safety risks from COVID-19.

1.12.4 If close contact with others is unavoidable, owners and operator of aquatic facilities must implement other control measures such as:

- minimising the number of people within an area at any time.
- Limit access to the workplace or parts of the workplace to essential workers only
- staggering start, finish and break times where appropriate
- moving work tasks to different areas of the workplace or off-site if possible
- if possible, separating workers into dedicated teams and have them work the same shift or work in a particular area and consider whether these dedicated teams can have access to their own meal areas or break facilities, and
- ensuring each worker has their own equipment or tools.

### **Specific consideration of Physical Distancing for patrons in Aquatic Facilities**

1.12.5 If close contact with others is unavoidable, owners and operator of aquatic facilities must implement other control measures such as:

- Change or modify the activity – Extend the size of the activity area and activities to allow for social distancing
- Implement Zoning Barriers which permit 1.5m distancing
- Reduce or Restrict numbers suitable for the size of the pool or zone of the pool
- Reduce the length of sessions
- Modify the program to ensure no team/group activities are conducted
- Modify the program to restrict use of equipment such as kick boards / noodles etc that may be used from class to class
- Moving the location of the activity to other pools

- 1.12.6 Where these risk mitigation measures do not reduce the risk to acceptable levels the owner and operator of the aquatic facility should consider cancelling the activity.
- 1.12.7 Owners and operator of aquatic facilities should refer to the National Principles for the Resumption of Sport and Recreation Activities, which provides the pathway for a safe return to sport in conjunction with the following:

Specific guidance on physical distancing as it pertains to COVID-19 can be found <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces/industry-information/general-industry-information/physical?tab=tab-toc-employer>

## 1.13 Ventilation

- 1.13.1 Owners and operators of aquatic facilities should increase the introduction and circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors, using fans, or other methods. However, do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety risk to staff, patrons, or swimmers.

Further advice on Ventilation in Aquatic Facilities can be obtained from the Guidelines for Safe Pool Operations – Aquatic Facility Design [www.guidelines.royallifesaving.com.au](http://www.guidelines.royallifesaving.com.au)

## 1.14 Hygiene Measures

- 1.14.1 Owners and operators of aquatic facilities should require workers and patrons to practice good hygiene.

Specific guidance on hygiene measures as it pertains to COVID-19 can be found <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces/industry-information/general-industry-information/hygiene?tab=tab-toc-employer>

## 1.15 Cleaning

1.15.1 Owners and operators of aquatic facilities should ensure aquatic facilities are cleaned at least daily. Cleaning with detergent and water is sufficient.

Specific guidance on hygiene measures as it pertains to COVID-19 can be found <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces/industry-information/general-industry-information/cleaning?tab=tab-toc-employer>

Checklists for cleaning can be found here:

<https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/how-clean-and-disinfect-your-workplace-covid-19>

## 1.16 Person Protection Equipment

1.16.1 Owners and operator of aquatic facilities should implement additional measures for PPE to patrons and workers that can be used to protect against COVID-19. This includes but is not limited to:

- masks
- gloves
- eye protection, and
- screens.

Specific guidance on **PPE measures** as it pertains to COVID-19 can be found <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces/industry-information/general-industry-information/ppe?tab=tab-toc-employer>

Specific guidance on **Face Masks** as it pertains to COVID-19 can be found <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces/industry-information/general-industry-information/masks?tab=tab-toc-employer>

Specific guidance on **gloves** as it pertains to COVID-19 can be found <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces/industry-information/general-industry-information/gloves?tab=tab-toc-employer>

## 1.17 Staff Training and Induction

1.17.1 Owners and operator of aquatic facilities should implement additional measures for staff training and induction in relation to COVID-19. This includes but is not limited to:

- The COVID-19 hazard and its impact
- Legal requirements
- The risk assessment
- Additional risk treatment measures
- Use of equipment including PPE
- New policies and their roles and responsibilities in response to enforcement of policies
- Emergency planning
- Emergency response to a COVID-19 incident

1.17.2 Where applicable training and induction information may be delivered in the native tongue of employees. Specific COVID-19 information is available in a range of languages here: <https://covid19inlanguage.homeaffairs.gov.au/>

### Swimming and Lifesaving Training in Aquatic Facilities for the purpose of employment.

1.17.3 Owners and operator of aquatic facilities should ensure additional measures are met by external organisations providing face to face staff training and induction in relation to COVID-19. This includes but is not limited to the provision of updated information in relation to:

- ARC Guidelines relevant to the provision of CPR during COVID-19
- COVID-19 safe work practices to minimise risks and potential hazards
- COVID-19 infection control principles and procedures, including use of standard precautions
- Reasonable adjustments to training and assessment in line with this Guideline, and the training package rules for Registered Training Organisations.

## 1.18 Signage

1.18.1 Owners and operator of aquatic facilities should implement additional signage measures that support their policies and health and safety guidance in relation to COVID-19. This includes but is not limited to signs and posters around the aquatic facility to remind workers and others of the risks of COVID-19 and the measures that are necessary to stop its spread. Sample posters are below

- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Know the signs](#)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Stop the spread](#)
- [Simple steps to help stop the spread poster](#)
- [Good hygiene practices poster for businesses](#)
- [How to hand wash poster](#)
- [How to hand rub poster](#)
- [Keeping your distance poster](#)
- [Keeping mentally healthy](#)
- [Change of hours poster for businesses](#)
- [Temporary changes poster for businesses](#)
- [Temporary closure poster for businesses](#)

1.18.2 Owners and operator of aquatic facilities should provide visual clues or guides i.e. tape on pool deck, at reception etc) to ensure that patrons are able to understand physical distancing measures easily.

## 1.19 References

- Guidelines for Safe Pool Operations – Risk Management  
[www.guidelines.royallifesaving.com.au](http://www.guidelines.royallifesaving.com.au)
- Guidelines for Safe Pool Operations – Emergency Planning  
[www.guidelines.royallifesaving.com.au](http://www.guidelines.royallifesaving.com.au)
- Guidelines for Safe Pool Operations -Incident Management  
[www.guidelines.royallifesaving.com.au](http://www.guidelines.royallifesaving.com.au)
- Guidelines for Safe Pool Operations - SV4 Aquatic Activity Risk Assessment  
[www.guidelines.royallifesaving.com.au](http://www.guidelines.royallifesaving.com.au)
- Safe Work Australia  
<https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces>
- Australian Governments COVID -19 Social Distancing advisories  
[www.health.gov.au/covid19-resources](http://www.health.gov.au/covid19-resources)
- Australian Health Protection Principal Committee Advisories [Australian Health Protection Principal Committee \(AHPPC\)](#)
- Australian Government Department of Health [Department of Health](#)
- Specific COVID-19 information in a range of languages  
<https://covid19inlanguage.homeaffairs.gov.au/>



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