COVID-19 Industry Re-Opening Framework

Commitment

We represent Australian industry peak bodies, facility operators and program and activity providers who collectively provide the opportunities to encourage Australians to be more physically active, to recreate and participate in community sport, including: **Industry National Peak bodies and** (Royal Life Saving Australia, Austswim, Australian Leisure Facilities Association , Aquatics and Recreation Victoria, **State Peak Bodies** Aquatics and Recreation Victoria (ARV), Aquatics and Recreation Institute (NSW), ALFAQ, Leisure Institute of Western Australia (LIWA); **Facility and Program Providers**; Aligned Leisure, Belgravia Leisure; BlueFit; Club Links; State Sports Centres – NSW and the YMCA (Aus & NSW) and supported by Smart Connection Consultancy.

With an estimated 150, 000 thousand people employed in the sector and providing participation opportunities to many millions of Australians the industry is keen to work with all levels of government to re-open the facilities and restart the provision of programs and activities to support the physical, mental and community health of all Australians. The industry represents a $2.5 billion annually benefit to the Australian economy and provides more than 130 million hours of vigorous exercise each year at public aquatic facilities.

The unique position and value of the physical activity sector – and its workforce – to our nation's health and economy must not be underestimated. Physical inactivity contributes to 20% of the burden of heart and blood vessel disease in Australia[1] and costing the economy billions of dollars annually. Our community aquatic, recreation and sport facilities are on the frontline of the prevention agenda, contributing hugely to both our national wellbeing and productivity. We cannot allow the facilities at the heart of our communities to close and worse disappear.

The Community Aquatic, Recreation and Sports Industry welcomes and supports the direction of the Federal and State/Territory Governments on the activities in combatting the pandemic COVID -19 and the impacts on society in general. We also recognise and thank the governments for the economic stimulus packages that have been already been injected into the community.

As one of only four reasons provided to leave people houses we appreciate that the governments understand the benefits of exercise to the physical, mental and community health and this Position Paper aims to show how as an industry we are ready to re-open the facilities to continue the health benefits while managing the continued challenge of limiting the spread of COVID -19.

THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF OUR EMPLOYEES AND CUSTOMERS IS OUR TOP PRIORITY

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[1] Heart Foundation – Blueprint for an Active Australia, third edition

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Background

We have developed an Industry Re-opening Framework response, which is proportionate and is committed to providing safe environments for its employees and the community who are keen to exercise, recreate and participate in community sport within our managed facilities and space.

This industry framework has been developed by benchmarking key global[234] and national organisations[567] framework and approaches to activities and sports that include social interaction while respecting the need for social distancing is critical for the containment of the spread of COVID -19. It aims to provide operators and local government have confidence in the areas that they need to explore for their facilities re-opening. The Framework should be used by the operators and local governments to jointly agree the best possible way of re-opening the facilities.

Expected Staged Re-Opening

With the anticipated relaxation of the social isolation guidelines it is time for the industry to assist all levels of Government in appreciating that we are ready to do our part to continue to manage the spread of COVID -19 by embracing risk mitigation strategies in the way we manage and provide opportunities for the community to be active in a safe environment. This **Re-Opening Framework** aims to provide local government and the industry service providers and facility managers with a Roadmap on how to re-open the industry facilities and start providing greater opportunities to the community to be more active

The Alliance encourages all service providers to consider a standardised approach for re-opening across all States and Territories to be recognised and implemented through local government and with the support of the industry sector. To realise this the Alliance has drawn up the following Framework and this should be read in conjunction with the Federal Governments advice on Rebooting Sport, with the AIS Framework for Rebooting Sport, which we recommend that all local governments, operators and providers embrace.

We believe that this will provide confidence to the public to return to the facilities and program providers. The Plan has embraced the Australian Business Excellence Framework and used the ISO Risk Assessment Principles (ISO 31,000) in its development which can be seen the General Principles below.

General Principals

    I.   **Leadership**

The local government, facility management organisations and service providers (e.g. sport, program coaches, schools etc) will collaborate together and with Industry Peak Bodies to continue to embrace the Governments

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[2] IAKS – the International Association for Sport and leisure facilities (https://iaks.sport/news/easing-covid-19-restrictions-sport)

[3] Sport New Zealand (https://sportnz.org.nz/covid-19/alert-level-information/)

[4] UK Active (https://www.ukactive.com/covid-19/)

[5] Fitness Australia Reopening Framework (https://fitness.org.au/articles/most-recent/fitness-industry-ready-and-committed-to-strict-reopening-framework/50/2026/184)

[6] AIS Framework for Rebooting Sport (https://ais.gov.au/health-wellbeing/covid-19#ais_framework_for_rebooting_sport)

[7] LSV COVID -19 Pandemic and Case for Reopening Aquatic and Swim Schools (https://www.royallifesaving.com.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/27943/Royal-Life-Saving-CEO-Note-on-COVID-19-and-Aquatics-Recovery-V300420-FINAL-VERSION.pdf)

guidelines on COVID -19 and Industry Guides to ensure that the environments are safe to embrace the community, employees and service providers back once re-opened.

II.   Customer and Market Focus

The organisations will have Policy and systems in place that minimise the physical interaction of customers and patrons to reduce the probability of spread of COVID -19. In addition, there needs be a system in place, either embracing technology or manual (E.g. the COVIDsafe App, Membership and POS systems or collection of name and phone number for contact) that can track users that come into contact with other COVID cases unknowingly) that can be used by authorities for alerting customers and patrons if there is an outbreak of COVID in the environment or facility.

III.   Strategy and Planning

The organisations shall develop Strategies, policy and plans to mitigate risk against the spread of COVID – 19 recognising the guidance from Governments and industry peak bodies and reflect them in the way they do business. This may include specific policy regarding numbers in key parts of centre, social distancing, risk assessment and business continuity plans.

IV.   People

Our industry people are critical to the experience of the community and so their health and wellbeing is critical to the success of the industry. The industry is committed to reducing the risk to them of contracting COVID – 19 and need to work locally for practical solutions and have policy in place to ensure their safety.

In addition, the industry will encourage community to take responsibility and self-manage their health and interaction with other patrons if there is any doubt regarding their health.

V.   Information and Knowledge

Understanding the containment strategies that government has developed, each facility and program delivery provider needs to have the ability to quickly identify the individuals who have been in contact with all other patrons. The embracement of the governments COVIDsafe App or use of the membership database will be critical to this

VI.   Program, Environment and Experience

Recognising the need for physical distancing to reduce the spread of COVID – 19 will need to ensure that any physical activity, recreation and participation programs are reviewed and aligned with the government guidelines (e.g. contact v non-contact programs) to encourage a gradual re-opening. This will include different approaches for different program opportunities and distinguishing between contact sports (those that come within 2m of each other, e.g. basketball, football codes, netball etc) and non-contact sports (e.g. running, golf, fitness and exercise classes, lap swimming etc)

The environments that people exercise, recreate, and participate in will need to achieve high cleanliness levels that where not the norm prior to the close down. The industry accepts that there will be parts of the facilities or outdoor environments that logistically will have to evolve to embrace the physical distancing that will be needed.

VII.   Success and Sustainability

The sustainability of the industry is dependent on all partners in collaborating to share the risk and reward of engaging with the community and government support for the changed management levels and environmental changes will be needed in the short to medium term. This could include additional investment from local government and economic packages from Federal and State/Territory governments.

Industry Framework

To achieve these principles the industry Framework a checklist has been developed to assist the industry in navigating the opportunities and has combined ideas from other individual checklists and approaches.

This Framework has been developed by benchmarking key global[8][9][10] and national organisations[11][12][13] approaches to activities and sports that include social interaction while respecting the need for social distancing is critical for the containment of the spread of COVID -19.

The Re-Opening Framework is based around the Australian Business Excellence Framework and has embraced key principles and provided suggested areas that need to be adopted as a minimum

Re-opening Framework

Key Principle and Strategies to be Deployed	External links	Resp.	By date
1. Leadership The local government, facility management organisations and service providers (e.g. sport, program coaches, schools etc) will collaborate together and with Industry Peak Bodies to continue to embrace the Governments guidelines on COVID -19 and Industry Guides to ensure that the environments are safe to embrace the community, employees and service providers back once re-opened.			
• For Local Government owned facilities, a joint agreement on how the funding and new scope is supported by both parties to meet the Government recommendations are adhered to			
• Organisational statement on commitment to community health and employee safety which then explains the 'new way' of operation to the users.			
• Re-define service offering to align with:			

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[8] IAKS – the International Association for Sport and leisure facilities (https://iaks.sport/news/easing-covid-19-restrictions-sport)

[9] Sport New Zealand (https://sportnz.org.nz/covid-19/alert-level-information/)

[10] UK Active (https://www.ukactive.com/covid-19/)

[11] Fitness Australia Reopening Framework (https://fitness.org.au/articles/most-recent/fitness-industry-ready-and-committed-to-strict-reopening-framework/50/2026/184)

[12] LSV COVID -19 Pandemic and Case for Reopening Aquatic and Swim Schools (https://www.royallifesaving.com.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/27943/Royal-Life-Saving-CEO-Note-on-COVID-19-and-Aquatics-Recovery-V300420-FINAL-VERSION.pdf)

[13] AIS Framework for Rebooting Sport (https://ais.gov.au/health-wellbeing/covid-19#ais_framework_for_rebooting_sport)

Key Principle and Strategies to be Deployed	External links	Resp.	By date

o COVID - 19 restrictions
   o Economic affordability of service provider and Local Government
   o Review off-peak usage to explore if need to be open or provide virtual offerings instead
   o Targeting of specific programs for specific community cohorts			

• Review this Framework with industry specific guidelines and develop a join Framework with you own service provider and facility owner (e.g. local government)	IAKS – the International Association for Sport and leisure facilities (https://iaks.sport/news/easing-covid-19-restrictions-sport) [1]Sport New Zealand (https://sportnz.org.nz/covid-19/alert-level-information/) UK Active (https://www.ukactive.com/covid-19/) [1] Fitness Australia Reopening Framework (https://fitness.org.au/articles/most-recent/fitness-industry-ready-and-committed-to-strict-reopening-framework/50/2026/184) AIS Framework for Rebooting Sport (https://ais.gov.au/health-wellbeing/covid-19#ais_framework_for_rebooting_sport) LSV COVID -19 Pandemic and Case for Reopening Aquatic and Swim Schools (https://www.royallifesaving.com.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/27943/Royal-Life-Saving-CEO-Note-on-COVID-19-and-Aquatics-Recovery-V300420-FINAL-VERSION.pdf)		
• Alignment of opening of facilities will be guided by the State/Territory Government which need to be aligned with reference to the ability to open up and also the number of people in the facility or key areas of a facility.	Refer to your State / Territory notifications		
2. Customer and Market Focus The organisations will have Policy and systems in place that minimise the physical interaction of customers and patrons to reduce the probability of spread of COVID -19. In addition, there needs be a technology system in place (E.g. the COVIDsafe App, and or Membership and POS systems that can track users that come into contact with other COVID cases unknowingly) that can be used by authorities for alerting customers and patrons if there is an outbreak of COVID in the environment or facility			
2.1 Entrance and Interaction with Customers			
• Introduce App or web-based reservation and payment systems to reduce length of time in reception			
• Improve opportunities for cashless and non-contact payments where possible			
• Additional signage and notices at the entrances and flyers for patrons with instructions on the changed rules of conduct when visiting the facilities and their responsibility	https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces		

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Key Principle and Strategies to be Deployed	External links	Resp.	By date
• Distance markers (1.5m) on the ground for queue in front of reception, key points around the facility and, if necessary, use barricade tape			
• Reception points where possible to be fitted with cough protection made plastic glass, or reception staff to have PPE in place	https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-the-health-and-aged-care-sector#using-personal-protective-equipment-ppe		
• Hand sanitiser at key points around reception and key areas of facility			
• Reduce the number of seats and the distance between them			
• Close café areas and only offer take away service			
2.2 Managing Customer Experience			
• Encourage patrons not to attend if they show any symptoms of COVID -19	https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/202003/2001628_COVID-19%20Self%20assessment%20for%20risk.pdf		
• Provide clear and transparent explanation of any changes that have had to be made prior to them taking part to allow easier management of their expectations			
• Establish clear protocols and reporting procedures for suspicious or suspected cases including guidelines for patrons, reporting to authorities, and informing other users and staff			
• Deactivate mouth-based drinking fountains and advise patrons to bring along an adequate supply of water or continue to operate drinking fountains but only for filling up water bottles and not for mouth usage. Provide disinfectant wipes and signage near the fountains asking patrons to disinfect all surfaces of the fountain before and after each use			
• Recommend personal sweat towels and water bottles for all facility users			
• Explain that all patrons need to disinfect their equipment that they have used			
• Mandate the need for all patrons to take showers prior to and post aquatic activities and provide guidance on duration			
• With group exercise indoors practice social distancing and disinfecting afterwards			
• Include Virtual offerings to members – especially the at-risk groups (older, chronic diseases etc)	https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/management-and-operational-plan-for-people-with-disability https://www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/healthdirect-coronavirus-covid-19-symptom-checker		
3. **Strategy and Planning**			

Key Principle and Strategies to be Deployed	External links	Resp.	By date
The organisations shall develop Strategies, policy and plans to mitigate risk against the spread of COVID – 19 recognising the guidance from Governments and industry peak bodies and reflect them in the way they do business. This may include specific policy regarding numbers in key parts of centre, social distancing, risk assessment and business continuity plans.			
• A risk assessment is conducted of the facility or program identifying all possible risk, and embrace industry guidance in developing the mitigation strategies			
• Work with Local Government if under contract to re-position the facility offering to achieve government recommendations and meet economic and community expectations			
• Development of staff policy to guide interaction with patrons, customers and members and have readily available			
• Develop Business Continuity Plan with clients addressing re-opening and contract commitments	https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/05/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-employers_0.pdf		
• Develop strategy with landlord and re-negotiate funding to ensure sustainability for 2020/21			
• Development of a Re-opening plan for each areas of the facility that will re-open in stages			
• Collaborate with the bodies that award operating grants (City Council, Committees, Shareholders' Meeting, Supervisory Boards) about the current situation and, if necessary, request for an increase in the operating grant, based on the adjusted economic plan			
• Adjustments to emergency management plans / evacuation plans to enable the safe implementation if required			
• If service under contract or lease request review of contract to ascertain new expectation (temporary or permanent)			
4. People Our industry people are critical to the experience of the community and so their health and wellbeing is critical to the success of the industry. The industry is committed to reducing the risk to them of contracting COVID – 19 and need to work locally for practical solutions and have policy in place to ensure their safety. In addition, the industry will encourage community to take responsibility and self-manage their health and interaction with other patrons if there is any doubt regarding their health.			
• PPE equipment available to appropriate staff in risk situations as part of complete risk assessment that will need to be completed for each venue.			
• Ensure First Responders who are providing emergency medical response are to prioritise their own safety	https://lsv.com.au/wp-content/uploads/First-Responder-Checklist-V11-1504202011.pdf		
• Additional disinfection and cleaning products in all staff areas of the facility	https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-environmental-cleaning-and-disinfection-principles-for-health-and-residential-care-facilities		

Key Principle and Strategies to be Deployed	External links	Resp.	By date
• Hand hygiene (washing or using alcohol-based hand sanitiser) is performed by staff at certain intervals throughout the workday (e.g. every 30 minutes) and after certain tasks (e.g. cleaning, touching a patron's credit card, etc			
• Additional cleaning of staff facilities between shift changes	https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces/industry-information/general-industry-information/cleaning		
• Clear understanding and ability to show the facilities pandemic policy			
• Identify how many staff and additional staff will be needed to prepare for reopening and then re-opening			
• Identify any additional and ongoing training and support that will need to be in place for staff once re-opened	https://www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/covid-19-infection-control-training		
• Amend work plan and review with works council/staff council	Australian Health Protection Principal Committee Recommendations for Managing Vulnerable Workers		

5. Information and Knowledge			
Understanding the containment strategies that government has developed, each facility and program delivery provider needs to have the ability to quickly identify the individuals who have been in contact with all other patrons. The embrace of the governments COVIDsafe App or use of the membership database will be critical to this			
• To align with the governments 'traceability and contact' strategy all patrons of the facility should be either recorded or utilising the COVIDsafe App			
• Membership and Point of Sale system to be reviewed to ensure that the key information is available in a manner to be able to quickly contact all users if needed.			
• Regular meetings with Council to monitor finances, patronage and usage, key operational issues and integrate findings into following meetings Action Plans			
• Bookings and usage by third parties (e.g. sports clubs) who would normally offer either contact or non-contact activities need to be monitored by the centre management team to ensure government measures are adhered to			
• Record all measures and complete review at and of each shift to identify any trends across the facility			

6. Program, Environment and Experience			
Recognising the need for physical distancing to reduce the spread of COVID – 19 will need to ensure that any physical activity, recreation and participation programs are screened to encourage a gradual re-opening. This will include different approaches for different program opportunities and distinguishing between contact sports (those that come within 2m of each other, e.g. basketball, football codes, netball etc) and non-contact sports (e.g. running, golf, fitness and exercise classes, lap swimming etc)			

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The environments that people exercise, recreate and participate in will need to achieve high cleanliest levels that where not the norm prior to the close down. The industry accepts that there will be parts of the facilities or outdoor environments that logistically will have to evolve to embrace the physical distancing that will be needed.			
6.1 Aquatic, Pool and Sports Facility Areas			
• Review RLSS GSPO and impacts on any changes will be needed	https://www.royallifesaving.com.au/aquatic-centres/managers/guidelines-for-safe-aquatic-venues/guidelines-for-safe-pool-operations		
• Consider the number of lifeguards supervising the pool and water, and if necessary, determination of the maximum number of users in the pool with access control by the staff			
• In relaxation and informal areas reduce the number of loungers and seating options and maintain a clear distance (1.5 m); place distance markings on connected-seating areas			
• In front of attractions (slides, diving towers, etc.), place distance markers on the ground for the queue			
• Modify the width of the lanes to meet the AIS guidelines for lap swimming			
• In the case of air bubble benches and whirlpools, mark distances between the lying areas or take these attractions out of service			
• Regular disinfection of the surfaces including handrails, tabletops, sports equipment frequently used etc			
• Encourage patrons to shower before and after swimming and preferably at home			
• Additional hygiene supplies and instructional signage around the facility where it can be seen and used freely by patrons without asking for access to them			
• Identify maximum number of people allowed in each area of the facility and manage that number			
• Review maintenance program to reflect part opening and usage of the facility			
• Increase Free Chlorine levels, to the top end of the regulation parameters			
• Consider increased sample frequency of pool water testing if manually testing is carried out.			
6.2 Contact Sports Facilities			
• No-contact sports allowed to be played, but skill and fitness training encouraged until government guidelines expanded			
• Ensure that sports hiring agree to non-contact use			
• Group size to be within the government guidelines			

Key Principle and Strategies to be Deployed	External links	Resp.	By date
• Any skill development drills should ensure that physical distancing guidelines are adhered to and that the participants are not to be within 1.5m			
• Sharing equipment not allowed (e.g. balls, weights etc)			
• Identify maximum number of people allowed in each area of the facility and manage that number			
6.3 Non-contact Sport Facilities			
• Any activity that can be enjoyed without people coming within 1.5m of each of each other. Certain activities may need additional space between participants and should be assessed program by program			
• Reduction of people in swimming pool lanes – and manage overtaking			
• Golf -courses to have distancing guidelines identified and adhered to especially at peak points of course / facility			
6.4 Changing Rooms and Washrooms			
• Notices on the changed rules of conduct in all changing rooms			
• Identify distances between the users by marking on the floor or the communal benches			
• Increase regular cleaning and increase scope of cleaning to be more disinfection focused and align to the intensity of patrons and health guidelines of probably length that COVID -19 can last on each surface type	https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/04/coronavirus-covid-19-information-about-routine-environmental-cleaning-and-disinfection-in-the-community_0.pdf		
• Ensure that the soap dispensers are checked regularly and introduce hand sanitisers			
• Identify maximum number of people allowed in each area of the facility and manage that number			
6.5 Fitness Facilities			
• Distances between the devices according to the COVID -19 protection specifications (1.5m)			
• Notice on each device requesting disinfection of the touched surfaces before and after use			
• Group exercise classes to have appropriate distance between participants that is proportional to the likelihood of them touching each other.			
• Repositioning or disabling of fixed equipment (eg treadmills, squat racks) to allow for minimum of 4 square metres between each individual whilst operating the equipment in its intended fashion			
• Identify maximum number of people allowed in each area of the facility and manage that number			

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Review of all classes and alterations made where necessary. Must include the following alterations and restrictions: 1. No shared equipment 2. Positioning of fixed equipment to maintain 4 square metres of distance throughout class 3. Number of square metres per person per room, e.g. one person per 4 square metres. 4. Distance between individuals, e.g. a minimum of 1.5m			
• Minimum of 15mins between classes for cleaning and safe member transfer			
• Thorough cleaning and disinfecting of all equipment by both members and staff following conclusion of class			
• Facility supervision to ensure adequate staff to manage the safety of the patrons and assist with additional cleaning responsibilities			
7. Success and Sustainability The sustainability of the industry is dependent on all partners in collaborating to share the risk and reward of engaging with the community and government support for the changed management levels and environmental changes will be needed in the short to medium term. This could include additional investment from local government and economic packages from Federal and State/Territory governments			
• Agree performance measures prior to opening to include: ○ Economic performance ○ Usage of each area / program ○ Qualitative feedback from users and staff ○ Number of outbreaks of COVID -19 or people that have come into contact			
• Measure weekly and monthly performance against the annual performance targets to ensure that sustainability can be achieved			