COVID-19 Best Practice Guidelines

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RESTAURANT & CATERING AUSTRALIA

Restaurant & Catering Australia (R&CA) is the national industry association representing the interests of more than 47,000 restaurants, cafés and catering businesses across Australia. The café, restaurant and catering sector is vitally important to the national economy, generating over $37 billion in retail turnover each year as well as employing 450,000 people. Over 92 per cent of businesses in the café, restaurant and catering sector are small businesses, employing 19 people or less.

R&CA delivers tangible outcomes to small businesses within the hospitality industry by influencing the policy decisions and regulations that impact the sector's operating environment. R&CA is committed to ensuring the industry is recognised as one of excellence, professionalism, profitability and sustainability. This includes advocating the broader social and economic contribution of the sector to industry and government stakeholders, as well as highlighting the value of the restaurant experience to the public.

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 has undoubtedly forced a re-engineering of food service business – with a clear view to reduce as many touchpoints and risks of transmission of coronavirus will undoubtedly bring about a 'new normal' for sit down dining.

The following set of best practice guidelines has been developed by R&CA to allow businesses to set out some best practise aimed at giving consumers confidence that food businesses – from the small café to the largest restaurant – are taking concrete steps to ensure their businesses is safe in a post COVID-19 world.

As they struggle to stay in business during this crisis, all operators are trying to figure out what the what kind of venue they will feel comfortable going out to eat in and what they will expect in terms of practices and procedures in food service businesses across the country.

This document seeks to set out clearly a best practice guide for these venues. Whilst not being mandatory, R&CA believes adherence to these guidelines gives businesses the best opportunity to show the dining public that their venue is safe and welcoming for dine-in customers and sets a practicable set of recommendations that can be adopted within their business at short notice.

States and territories have instituted their own requirements and obligations that businesses will need to follow to re-open, please note that these guidelines complement these requirements and do not replace them. In some instances, R&CAs guidelines have been adopted by State Governments.

Businesses should first ensure they are compliant with local requirements prior to re-opening. For information on requirements in your state check R&CAs Coronavirus Information Hub for more information.

These guidelines have been reviewed by esteemed epidemiologists including Dr Richard B. Clark of Richard Bertrand Clark and representatives of Monash & Deakin Universities.

COVID-19 BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES

1. BOOKINGS AND CONDITIONS OF ENTRY

Bookings/Tracking:

- Encouraging pre-bookings or sign ins to dine in (where practicable) with name, address/email address and contact number.
- When no booking was made, walk-in patrons are encouraged to then sign into or scan into the booking app/program or reservation book of the restaurant.
- Encourage patrons to download federal government's Tracking App.

Refusing Entry to Patrons:

- Everyone has an obligation to stay at home while displaying any symptoms such as fever or coughing. Businesses have the right to refuse service and insist that anyone with these symptoms leaves the premises.
- Placing signs at entry points to request customers not to enter the shop if they are unwell or have COVID19 symptoms.

Waiting Areas:

- Remove waiting area seating, clearly mark on floor social distancing requirements.

2. FRONT OF HOUSE/CUSTOMER INTERACTION:

Queuing and Interaction between Patrons

- Create floor markings that provide minimum guide distances between customers queuing for service.
- Set up different areas for ordering and collection.
- Use separate doors for entry and exit, if practicable, to avoid contact between people.
- Ensure customers wait outside and practice social distancing, if safe to do so, for takeaway collection.

Delivery Drivers (For Restaurants who Self-Deliver):

- Frequently clean and disinfect your vehicle including frequently touched surfaces such as the steering wheel, door handles, controls or buttons, seatbelt and keys.
- Clean and disinfect your phone or electronic device used to help deliver food or parcels. Disinfect these often by using a lint-free cloth and 70% isopropyl alcohol if you can, or disinfectant wipes.

3. DINING IN AND SERVICE

Table/Seat Distance:

- Social distance between table edges/centres to adjacent tables (minimum 1.5m between patrons seated at different tables) and no more than 1 patron per 4 square meter on average across the dining area.
- Tables, chairs, stools and booth seating must be sanitized after every booking.

Condiments/BYO:

- No condiments left on tables (including salt & pepper), all serves of condiments should be disposable and not stored or disseminated from a common container.
- No communal water stations.
- Business should refuse to accept keep-cups, BYO alcohol bottles or containers for safety reasons.

Food & Beverage Choices

- Menu's should either be laminated to facilitate easy cleaning or completely disposable after each use or chalk board as appropriate.
- No bar service, no waiting at the bar.
- Outdoor Service will require same table distance requirements and booking/tracking requirements as indoor.
- Limit all shareable items from menus.
- No buffets or shared 'serve yourself' sections such as salad bars etc.
- No open food displays or food on display meant for consumption.

Cutlery:

- Non-disposable crockery/cutlery/glassware permitted when cleared after each course and washed using a commercial grade dishwasher or glasswasher only.
- If not practicable use disposable/recyclable cutlery, crockery and glass ware.

Hygiene:

- Make automatic hand sanitisers freely available throughout the business based upon capacity for customer use.

4. COMPLETING SERVICE AND PAYMENT

Payments:

- Electronic payment preferred on Tap&Go, ApplePay, etc.

- Where practicable, introduce plexiglass barriers at tills and counters as an additional level of protection for staff.
- Encourage patrons to set-up online ordering and pre-payment (e.g. Paypal/The Fork), take extra steps to promote this offering to reduce face to face interaction with FOH staff.
- Make provision for customers leaving the venue to do so via a different entrance to those entering as per above if practical.

5. STAFF PRACTICES

General Measures:

- Limit physical interactions between workers, workers and clients, and workers and other persons at the site (e.g. deliveries) and use other methods such as mobile phone or radio to communicate.
- Where it is practical and safe to do so, review tasks and processes that usually require close interaction and identify ways to modify these to increase physical distancing between workers.

Cleaning

- Usual cleaning schedules will need to be increased.
  - Frequently touched surfaces (such as handrails, scanners, plant controls, machinery and doors) should be cleaned regularly using appropriate detergent solutions. Once cleaned, they should ideally be disinfected regularly using appropriate disinfectant solutions.
  - Personal items used in the workplace such glasses and phones should be cleansed and ideally disinfected frequently (e.g. by using isopropyl alcohol wipes).
  - Workplace amenities including kitchens, lunchrooms, communal areas, change rooms, toilets, drink fountains and vending machines, should be cleaned industrially and the frequency of this cleaning should increase.
- Food preparation areas and equipment and front of house areas where customers access should be cleaned in line with Safe Work Australia's guidance on Cleaning and COVID-19 and the frequency of cleaning should be increased.
- Frequently touched surfaces, including counters, menus, handrails, doors, till, phones, keyboards and EFTPOS facilities, should be cleaned regularly using appropriate detergent solutions where possible. Once cleaned, they should ideally be disinfected regularly using appropriate disinfectant solutions.
- Also consider reducing the number of touch points for workers. For example, leaving access doors open, where appropriate. If possible, make hand sanitiser available at entry and exit points so workers can use it when arriving and leaving.
- Gloves and alcohol-based hand sanitiser should be made available. The workplace should provide closed bins for workers where appropriate to hygienically dispose of waste and rubbish such as used tissues, immediately (or if away from amenities, as soon as possible) after use. Hand washing facilities or alcohol-based hand sanitiser should be available for workers to use after they dispose of their waste.

6. MANAGING AN OUTBREAK IN YOUR BUSINESS

Safework Australia has prepared the following guide for hospitality businesses who require advice and information relating to COVID-19 in the workplace.

A person who has recently been at your workplace such as a worker, client or customer may inform you they have, or may potentially have, COVID-19. Depending on the circumstances (e.g. how recently the person was at your workplace and how closely they were in contact with others) you may have reasonable concerns about the health of others in your workplace.

You must always continue to meet your WHS duties. This may mean taking steps above and beyond public health requirements to eliminate or minimise, so far as is reasonably practicable, the risk of workers and others in your workplace (such as customers) contracting COVID-19.

1. Seek advice and assess the risks

Seek government health advice by calling your state or territory helpline. Follow the advice of your state and territory public health unit. You can also contact the National Coronavirus Helpline on 1800 020 080, which operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The National Helpline can provide advice on when and how to seek medical help or about how to get tested for COVID-19.

Ensure that you have current contact details for the person and make a note about the areas they had been in the workplace, who they had been in close contact within the workplace and for how long. This will inform you about risks to others and areas to clean and disinfect. This information may also assist your state and territory public health unit if they need to follow up with you later.

2. Identify and tell close contacts

The state or territory public health unit will identify close contacts of a confirmed COVID-19 case and provide them with instructions, for example, in relation to quarantine requirements.

In the meantime, for the purposes of undertaking a workplace risk assessment and to assist your state and territory public health unit, consider who the affected person may have had recent close contact with. If instructed by health officials, tell close contacts that they may have been exposed to COVID-19 and the requirements for quarantine. You must maintain the privacy of all individuals involved.

Seek information about the areas that close contacts have been in the workplace, who they have been in close contact within the workplace and for how long. This will inform you about possible risks to others, and additional areas that may also need to be cleaned and disinfected.

3. Clean and disinfect

Close off the affected areas and do not let others use or enter them until they have been cleaned and disinfected. Open outside doors and windows if possible, to increase air flow.

All areas, for example offices, bathrooms, kitchens and common areas as well as equipment or PPE that were used by the person concerned must then be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.

Cleaners must wear appropriate PPE, for example disposable gloves or gloves appropriate to the cleaning chemicals being used, and safety eyewear to protect against chemical splashes. If there is visible

contamination with respiratory secretions or other body fluids in the area, the cleaners should also wear a disposable apron.

Your state and territory public health unit may also provide you with further information about how and where to clean. You must follow those instructions.

4. Review risk management controls

Review your COVID-19 risk management controls, in consultation with your workers and assess and decide whether any changes or additional control measures are required.

You must always continue to meet your WHS duties. This may mean taking steps above and beyond public health requirements to eliminate or minimise, so far as is reasonably practicable, the risk of workers and others in the workplace (such as customers) contracting COVID-19.

Do I need to close my workplace for cleaning?

There is no automatic requirement to close an entire workplace following a suspect or confirmed case of COVID-19. It may be unnecessary if the person has only visited parts of your workplace or if government health officials advise you the risk of others being exposed are low.

Whether you need to suspend operations in your workplace will depend on factors such as the size of the workplace, nature of work, number of people and suspected areas of contamination in your workplace.

7. TRAINING: HOSPITALITY SOCIAL DISTANCE PROGRAM

Hospitality Business Operations in response to COVID-19

- Ensuring Staff are re-trained through a short accreditation course to be completed by food service businesses (either owner, manager, licensee or all holders of food safety supervisor certificate).
- Certification should then be displayed at entrance to business.
- As hospitality businesses start to prepare to come back into the industry, cafes, restaurants and catering businesses need to understand their obligations and best practice operations for themselves and their employees.
- Restaurant & Catering Association have developed and designed the "COVID-19 Hospitality Best Practice" micro-credential to equip the industry with an online training tool that will assist in preparing them for returning to business.
- The topics covered from this credential are:
    o Social Distancing understanding
    o Creating a Social Distancing Plan (SDP) to suit your organisation
    o Staff Induction for working during COVID-19
    o Working during COVID-19
    o Managing customers during social distancing
    o Cleaning premises and equipment during COVID-19
- This training also provides you with:

- o Hospitality Business Blueprint
- o Employee temperature check release form
- o Hospitality best practice plan
- o Staff induction post COVID-19
- o Digital badge which can be added to your LinkedIn profile, digital streams and CV and/or resume
- For more information, click here.