

1 Background

- 1.1 As you are all aware, the attempts to limit the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in Australia and globally mean we are living in unprecedented times.
- 1.2 Our priority is the health of our paddling community and minimising the risk to members of contracting COVID-19. We also seek to ensure that the practices of Paddle Australia (PA), our affiliated organisations, including our State Paddle Associations (SPAs) and Paddle Clubs, do nothing to increase the likelihood of the spread of COVID-19 amongst the broader Australian community and those more vulnerable people in particular.
- 1.3 The Australian Government has today issued [COVID-19 Community Sport Guidelines to National Sporting Organisations](#). Paddlers and Paddle Clubs are asked to make themselves familiar with these guidelines. This note has been written consistent with them.
- 1.4 PA has been liaising with the Sport Australia (SA), the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS), the Australian Olympic Committee (AOC) and Paralympics Australia as well as other National Sports Organisations (NSOs) to ensure a coordinated approach to the current risks.

2 Advice from Paddle Australia

- 2.1 PA and our SPAs have had several requests from Paddle Clubs and disciplines seeking guidance in relation to the decisions that they are making as to what activities can take place and what extra precautions should be considered to minimise the risk of the spread of COVID-19. PA stresses that decisions need to be made by each Paddle Club taking into account the different and unique circumstances in which they operate.
- 2.2 The guidance below is provided based on the best information available as at 19th March 2020. Further updates will be provided as new advice on the control of the spread of COVID-19 becomes available. Paddlers and Paddle Clubs are advised to refer to advice on the dedicated pages on the [PA Website](#) and the regular updates on that page in particular.
- 2.3 Paddlers and Paddle Clubs should always act in accordance with the general advice available from the Department of Health and any Federal or State recommendations or requirements that are applicable. Links can be found on the [COVID-19 page on PA Website](#).
- 2.4 This guidance is provided for the general paddling community. Additional and more tailored guidance will be provided to those training regularly in state and national teams and squads.
- 2.5 As our community well knows, exercise and participation in paddling is an important part of maintaining physical and mental health. With the current uncertainty, PA and our SPAs seek to ensure that the very real benefits of paddling can continue to be enjoyed, albeit in a more limited way than normal. This will require all paddlers to assume an even greater level of personal responsibility than usual.

Paddle Australia offers the following information and advice:

3 Paddling Activities

- 3.1 The activity of paddling outdoors generally meets the requirements of 'social distancing', with paddlers normally more than the required 1.5 metres apart, even during competition. 'Social distancing' should be a consideration when afloat and when launching and coming off the water, particularly when paddling for recreation.
- 3.2 Club activities generally involve limited numbers of paddlers that paddle together regularly. Interclub and/or open competitions create greater risks and involve additional travel. PA's advice is that, until further notice, club activities and events should be limited to club members only and those participants undertaking training.
- 3.3 The use of team boats often involves paddlers being closer than 1.5 metres apart. In certain circumstances, where the same individual's paddler together regularly, protocols may be put in place that address the requirements for social distancing. However, very regrettably PA's general advice is that team boat activity at Paddle Clubs should not take place until further notice.
- 3.4 Physical contact with an opponent may expose a paddler to greater risk. Again, very regrettably PA's strong advice is that canoe polo competitions should not be held until further notice. In the meantime, we encourage canoe polo paddlers to participate in training drills and other forms of competition that provide for appropriate social distancing.
- 3.5 The training of new participants is an important activity for many Paddle Clubs. Clubs may consider continuing this activity providing all the advice contained in this note can be followed and that social distancing requirements can be adhered to, other than to ensure the safety of new participants.

4 Gatherings

- 4.1 The Australian Government has advised that organised, non-essential gatherings outside should be limited to 500 people and 100 people at indoor venues. Clearly non-essential social gatherings, particularly those that involve larger numbers, should not take place.
- 4.2 Even with limited numbers, briefings and face to face meetings, especially when held indoors, often mean that 'social distancing' can be difficult. PA's advice is that such briefings and meetings should be avoided, with information provided in writing or online. Where briefings do take place, this should be in an area large enough to allow social distancing.
- 4.3 Where a club has changing facilities, these can often become crowded, again making 'social distancing' difficult. During this period, paddlers should be encouraged to make other arrangements if practical and to take showers at home. Clubs should consider more frequent cleaning of all common areas, and especially toilets and changing rooms. Where practical, changing rooms should be closed.

5 Health and Hygiene Practices

- 5.1 Paddlers who are unwell, symptomatic, who have returned to Australia within the last 14 days, or who have been exposed to anyone that has COVID-19 within the last 14 days should not attend events or club premises and should seek medical advice.
- 5.2 Paddlers with pre-existing medical conditions that are known to be impacted by COVID-19 should not attend events or club premises until further notice.
- 5.3 Hand hygiene remains the single best action individuals can take to reduce their risk of acquiring or spreading any respiratory or gastrointestinal tract infection. Hands should be washed frequently with soap and water.
- 5.4 Hand sanitisers should be freely accessible at your venue. Strategic placement may include at the entry/exit, and other high traffic areas.
- 5.5 Those coughing and sneezing should do so away from other people and into a tissue, or their elbow. Tissues should be disposed of immediately and hands washed thoroughly.
- 5.6 Avoid touching your face and hair unless you have just washed/sanitised your hands.
- 5.7 Avoid close contact with others including personal greetings, such as touching, handshakes, kisses and hugs.
- 5.8 Drink bottles should not be shared. Individuals should label their drink bottle and clean it in soap and water after each session.
- 5.9 All communal or shared sporting equipment should be thoroughly cleaned with disinfectant after each use. This should include paddles in particular.
- 5.10 Clubs should print and place signage throughout their venue to remind people of the recommended infection control practices. These resources can be found here <https://www.health.gov.au/news/launch-of-the-coronavirus-covid-19-campaign>

6 COVID-19 Cases at Your Paddle Club

- 6.1 If a case of COVID-19 has been confirmed in a member of your Paddle Club or a confirmed case has attended your activity or event, please contact your state health authority immediately to get further advice on what steps need to be followed. Clubs can assist the state public health authorities to provide prompt advice by:
 - 6.1.1 Keeping a record of who has attended an activity or an event and what day and time the activity or the event took place; and
 - 6.1.2 Providing the contact details of those who have attended the event or activity.

7 Insurance and Event Entry Waiver

- 7.1 Having made their own assessments based on the guidance contained above and more generally, Paddle Clubs may conclude that some paddling activities and events where the risks can be appropriately managed can continue.

7.2 Where a Paddle Club does proceed with an activity or an event, the impact of the current COVID-19 situation on Paddle Australia's insurance program is as follows:

7.2.1 **Personal Accident insurance** – NO CHANGE. Paddlers still receive the same 24/7 cover for injuries. However please note that 'illness' is not and has never been covered under this policy, whether for COVID-19 or any other illness.

7.2.2 **Public Liability** – NO CHANGE. Paddlers and Clubs still have the same 24/7 protection around loss or damage. While illness (such as COVID-19) is not specifically excluded from this policy, in the event that a claim is received alleging that COVID-19 was contracted as a result of participation in an event, the advice from our insurers is that it would be very difficult to trace the original source of infection and to prove negligence on the part of the Club. Clubs must be able to show:

- a) reasonable care has been taken to prevent bodily injury; and
- b) there is compliance with all government restrictions, statutory obligations and regulations

7.2.3 **Directors and Officers** – NO CHANGE. Clubs will remain covered for honest mistakes made. In the current context Club officials will need to be aware of government requirements, such as the recent declaration in Victoria of a state of emergency and the prohibition of certain activities. Clubs will not be covered for actions which are illegal or contravene these Government Orders.

The exact wording of all Paddle Australia's policies can be found [here](#).

7.3 We are aware that many Paddle Clubs use the Event Entry Waiver developed by Paddle Australia. It has been recommended that PA add the following wording to this waiver under clause 5, **Warning: exposure to potential or actual medical conditions and/or illnesses**. The link takes you to a full, updated version of the [Event Entry Waiver](#).

7.4 This waiver is effective from 19th March 2020 and has been updated in GoMembership. Any participants that have registered for an event or activity in GoMembership or via another registration system under a previous version of the PA Event Entry Waiver should be made aware of this change and be asked to reaccept the terms of the new waiver. For GoMembership, this can be achieved by logging into the system on or after 19 March 2020.

8 General

8.1 If you need clarification on any of the advice above, please let us know via email at info@paddle.org.au. Whilst social media is helpful in getting information out there, we can't monitor all posts.

8.2 We won't have thought of everything in this guidance note. We are keen to ensure that 'best practice' is shared so if you see or hear of something being done well, please let us know. We will provide more information as and when we can. Again, please check regularly for updates on the [COVID-19 page on PA Website](#).

8.3 We are in uncharted waters. Many of us are encountering issues we have not seen or had to deal with before. Now, more than ever, be supportive and check up on your fellow paddlers. If you feel at any time that you are not coping, ask for help.

8.4 Enjoy your paddling, keep healthy and stay safe.

Phil Jones
CEO
Paddle Australia

19th March 2020