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**Subject:** Message from Sport Australia | COVID-19 guidance regarding Community Sport

**Date:** 17 March 2020 at 5:09:31 pm AEDT

Dear Colleagues,

Apologies for the frequent updates, however it is important to keep everyone up to date.

I appreciate these are unprecedented times, and the rapidly moving situation regarding COVID-19 is a significant stress for all of your teams, your SSO's and affiliated clubs, associations and volunteers.

We have been inundated over the last 48 hours from across the sporting landscape from very concerned members in relation to what clubs and associations should be doing regarding community sport. I understand there is confusion regarding many aspects and we are trying to represent sport, however as you can imagine there are many communities across the country with individual needs, particularly the elderly, that the Department of Health is applying its attention.

I have just finished a long call with all major professional sports, The Minister of Sport, and the Department of Health regarding the latest information regarding COVID-19.

At this point, whilst all advice has been to refer to the Department of Health guidelines for Sports to assess the risk of continuing Community Sport, today's call with the country's senior Medical experts **indicated that currently they do not have a definitive position regarding whether school and community sport should be cancelled, or whether it should continue.**

The guidelines provided by the Department of Health regarding social distancing and ensuring sound conservative practices are adopted regarding illness remain, however the Medical experts understand the significance that sport plays particularly in children's development, and the community impact of broader participation at all levels. The Department of Health, its Medical experts and advisors, are working as fast and hard as they can to weigh up the impacts of both decisions on participants, families and the community.

The direction from the Health Department to all sports, is unless there is evidence of risk in the particular sport, to delay taking definitive action until the Department of Health communicates its latest policy update.

I appreciate that some sports have taken action in accordance with their own risk assessment, and timetable, and I stress that all sports do need to consider their own circumstances.

If you do have any specific issues that need clarification, please contact the Department of Health directly. I have outlined the key aspects of the latest DOH guidance that has been issued, however I do stress that the Department of Health have assured me that their revised guidelines updated to reflect participation in Community Sport is imminent.

- The Australian Government has advised, effective from Monday 16 March that organised, non-essential gatherings should be limited to 500 people.
- Exercise and participation in sport remains an important part of physical and mental health for everyone. For those who are well, they should continue to be active by engaging in exercise and playing sport
- However, for community sporting events under 500 people, there are a number of additional risk mitigation strategies that clubs and event organizers should consider to help limit the spread of COVID-19
  - Hand hygiene remains the single best action individuals can take to reduce their risk of acquiring any respiratory or gastrointestinal tract infection. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water and where possible, place freely accessible hand sanitisers at your venue. Strategic placement may include at the entry/exit, and other high throughput areas.
  - If you are coughing and sneezing, do so away from people and into a tissue, your elbow or hands. Dispose of tissues immediately and wash your hands.

- Understand that crowd attendance at sporting events in Australia is likely to facilitate the rapid spread of COVID-19. Consider the nature of crowd attendance for crowds of under 500 people and facilitate social distancing
- Clean all communal sporting equipment after each use.
- If manual therapies are deemed an absolute necessity, additional time per patient should be allocated to complete cleaning with appropriate surface disinfectant of all equipment. Changing a disposable covering is not a sufficient infection control strategy. If the therapist is unwell themselves, they should not provide manual therapy while unwell.
- Do not share drink bottles. Individuals should label their drink bottle and clean it in soap and water after each training session.
- Print and place signage throughout your 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>
- Close physical contact with an opponent may expose an athlete to risk. This exposure will vary by sport. For example, tennis has effectively no contact between opponents. Combat sports, however, may involve significant close contact for minutes at a time.
- If a case of COVID-19 has been confirmed in a member of your sporting club or a confirmed case has attended your event, please contact your state health authority to get further advice on what steps need to be followed. Sporting clubs can assist the state public health authorities to provide prompt advice by:
  - Keeping a record of who has attended training, what day and time training or the event took place
  - Provide the contact details of those who have attending the event or training.

Regards,  
Rob

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