



Apartment Living & COVID-19 Best Practice Guide

Return to (the new) Normal *Roadmap Stage 1*

Whether you're a landlord, owner occupier, Committee member, building or body corporate manager, this guide will cover best practice to return to business and social interactions.

The Queensland Government has released its roadmap for easing COVID-19 restrictions. Stage 1, commencing on 15 May 2020 from 11.59pm (referenced as 16 May 2020 in this Guide), includes a number of relaxations that affect Bodies Corporate and the use of common property facilities.

Committees will need to pay careful attention to government advice, as well as public health experts to make the best decisions for their scheme. Committees will also need to assess what recommendations will be made for the use of common property based on the

types of facilities, and the demographics of the lot occupiers, especially for those particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 such as those over 65.

This Best Practice Guide will help Committee Members plan for the return to (the new) normal. As things change rapidly, please check the Queensland Government's COVID-19 Hub at <https://www.covid19.qld.gov.au/>

Roadmap to Easing Restrictions – Stage 1

SCA (Qld) strongly recommends that Committees check the Queensland Government's Health Directions on a frequent basis: [Click here](#)

The Queensland Government has announced its Roadmap to Easing Restrictions, [Click here](#). This guide specifically relates to Stage 1 of this roadmap. Committees will need to establish Building Management Protocols, suitable to the size of the scheme, its demographic and location.

What does this mean for the Committee?

The Committee is the designated representative of all the owners (and by default residents) that live in your development. You are responsible for ensuring the common property is maintained in a safe condition on behalf of the Strata Community and that contractors attending the site are safe.

With Home Confinement Directions eased, Bodies Corporate must return to some form of normal procedures for schemes. It is important to note that a Committee does not have the power to close common property or restrict its use beyond what must be closed or restricted pursuant to a Government direction, unless authorised to do so under the Body Corporate's by-laws. Without a by-law, the Committee may still make recommendations on the use of certain common property facilities, in the best interests of all residents, if it believes the use of that facility increases the risk of transmission to its residents.

SCA (Qld) recommends clear and appropriate communication from the Committee to the residents and owners on what the voluntary protocol and established by-laws are.

Maintaining Social Distancing Rules

Social distancing remains the cornerstone of the COVID-19 response as at time of publication, 13 May 2020. This means keeping your distance from people when using the common property and services such as hallways, stairs and lifts as applicable to your property, avoid non-essential large groups and work from home where possible.

Can we restrict elevator access?

Stage 1 of the Roadmap retains the 1.5 metre social distancing and one (1) person per 4 square metres restrictions. The current restrictions for the use of common property lifts should remain in place.

Can we open the pool or BBQ area?

Yes. From 16 May 2020, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, BBQ areas may be reopened however, the use of these areas must be restricted to no more than 10 individuals or no more than one person per 4 square metres, whichever is the lesser. SCA (Qld) strongly recommends Committees to consider the health and safety of its residents and, discourage use of certain areas of common property if they pose an increased risk of COVID-19 transmission. Re-opening of these areas may also require increased sanitisation measures.

Signage can encourage pool and BBQ users to interact contactless, sit on their own towels, remove any personal items and keep the area clean.

Can we open the gym?

No. Common Property gyms must remain closed under Stage 1 of the Roadmap. While Committee's should review the situation closer to the date, it is currently projected that gyms may re-open under Stage 2, from around 12 June 2020. This may change, so you are encouraged to check again closer to the date.

Risk Area	Risk Control	Proactive Action Recommendation
<p>POOL & SPAS - Reopen from 16 May 2020 Surface Contamination Social Gathering</p>	<p>Restricted to no more than 10 individuals or no more than one person per 4 square metres, whichever is the lesser</p> <p>Inform users:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That use of pool is at their own risk • To shower before use • Stay in their apartment if they don't feel well. • Sit on their own towels • Wipe sweat with a disposable paper towel, dispose of correctly and wash their hands after. <p>Maintain increased cleaning schedule</p>	<p>Create a sign or multiple signs and place around pool area notifying residents of established protocols and applicable by-laws</p> <p>More information: Swimming Pool and Spa Association</p>
<p>GYM - Remains CLOSED - Reopen from 12 June 2020 in Stage 2 - TBC</p>	<p>From 12 June 2020:</p> <p>Restricted to no more than 10 individuals or no more than one person per 4 square metres, whichever is the lesser</p> <p>Inform users:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That use of gym is at their own risk • To shower before use • Stay in their apartment if they don't feel well. • Use their own towels • Wipe sweat with a disposable paper towel, dispose of correctly and wash their hands after. <p>Maintain increased cleaning schedule</p>	<p>Create a sign or multiple signs and place around gym notifying residents of established protocols and applicable by-laws</p>
<p>FRONT DOOR BBQ & COMMUNITY AREA - Reopen from 16 May 2020 TOILET & SHOWERS - Reopen from 16 May 2020 LIFT ACCESS INTERCOM SYSTEM DOOR HANDLES</p> <p>Surface Contamination Social Gathering</p>	<p>Restricted to no more than 10 individuals or no more than one person per 4 square metres, whichever is the lesser</p> <p>Maintain increased cleaning schedule</p> <p>Encourage voluntary contactless interaction</p>	<p>Authorise and arrange additional cleaning regime.</p> <p>Keep permanent hand sanitizer station in each common area</p> <p>Create a sign or multiple signs and place around pool area notifying residents of established protocols and applicable by-laws</p>

Risk Area	Risk Control	Proactive Action Recommendation
<p>LAUNDRY AREAS - Reopen from 16 May 2020</p> <p>Surface Contamination Social Gathering</p>	<p>Restricted to no more than 10 individuals or no more than one person per 4 square metres, whichever is the lesser</p> <p>Maintain increased cleaning schedule</p> <p>Encourage contactless interaction</p>	<p>Keep permanent hand sanitizer station at entry to area</p> <p>Authorise and arrange additional cleaning regime to at least daily or more if high use</p> <p>Encourage residents to implement social distancing requirements.</p> <p>Consider using a booking system to manage flow</p> <p>More Information: Laundry Association Australia</p>
<p>VENTILATION/AIR CONDITIONING</p> <p>Airborne contaminants</p>	<p>Aircon arrangements that draw on outside air, as opposed to recycled air, can reduce the risk of environmental exposure to viruses such as Coronavirus.</p>	<p>Review ventilation and speak to a professional to consider increasing fresh air rates if possible.</p> <p>More Information: Australian Institute of Refrigeration, Air Conditioning and Heating</p>
<p>COMMITTEE MEETINGS GENERAL MEETINGS</p> <p>Surface contaminants Social Gathering</p>	<p>Restricted to no more than 10 individuals or no more than one person per 4 square metres, whichever is the lesser</p> <p>Wipe down tables, chairs etc. before and after use of Committee meeting area</p> <p>Committees should continue to advise their lot owners, contractors and professionals that if they have any symptoms – if they are at all unwell – to not attend meetings</p> <p>Common property and meeting areas should be equipped with hand washing or disinfection stations</p> <p>Encourage contactless interaction</p>	<p>Consider alternative meeting arrangements (virtual meetings)</p> <p>Notify (potential) attendees of the protocols established and request they comply.</p>
<p>CONTRACTORS</p> <p>Safe worksite</p>	<p>Restricted to no more than 10 individuals or no more than one person per 4 square metres, whichever is the lesser</p> <p>Responsibility to maintain a safe worksite when contractors are engaged to work on the common property.</p> <p>Contactless interaction</p> <p>Common property and meeting areas should be equipped with hand washing or disinfection stations</p>	<p>Committee to communicate contactless</p> <p>Work orders to be issued by Committee or strata community management company; request Safe Work Method Statements, including additional processes including PPE and social distancing measures.</p> <p>If the strata community is notified of a person who has tested positive to the virus all contractors should be notified.</p>

Safe Workplace Principles

Bodies corporate undertake business that requires workers and contractors to attend the scheme on a regular basis. Bodies Corporate have to be mindful of their obligation to provide a healthy and safe workplace. The Federal Government has recognised the importance of getting workers back to work and in their workplace. To assist in facilitating this, the Government has introduced [National COVID-19 safe workplace principles](#):

1. All workers, regardless of their occupation or how they are engaged, have the right to a healthy and safe working environment.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. As COVID-19 restrictions are gradually relaxed, businesses, workers and other duty holders must work in prevention, mitigation and response to the risks presented by COVID-19.
8. 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.
9. States and Territories ultimately have the role of providing advice, education, compliance and

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.

5. 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.
6. 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.
7. Existing state and territory jurisdiction of WHS compliance and enforcement remains critical. While acknowledging 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, including a commitment to communicating what constitutes best practice enforcement of WHS and will leverage the use of the SWA central hub in fulfilling their statutory functions.
10. 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.

Source - safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces/other-resources/national-covid-19-safe-workplace-principles

Financial Impact on Strata Communities

Are bodies corporate able to provide relief to those strata residents struggling to pay levies? Lot owners and the media have expressed uncertainty as to their options, so industry peak body Strata Community Association (Qld) has provided some guidance to help schemes through these confusing times.

Factors to consider

- Only the collective of owners (i.e. the body corporate) can change levies by way of a general meeting; neither the body corporate manager nor the property manager have any say in this decision.
- Committees have three options to assist owners in financial difficulties without having to call a general meeting:
 - Reinstatement of lost discounts
 - Waive penalty interest and
 - Agree to payment plans with individual lot owners.
- Reducing levies should not be done lightly, as there may still be fixed maintenance and management costs for common facilities and there is an obligation to ensure common property is in a safe condition.
- Cancellation of planned maintenance may have a severe and costly impact on future budgets.

- If lot owners do not pay levies, they may lose discounts given to those who make timely payments and become liable to pay penalty interest.

SCA (Qld) encourages all committees and lot owners to work together to reach accommodations for those who are struggling from the economic effects of the COVID-19 crisis and make decisions that suit the best interests of all in their strata community.

The [SCA \(Qld\) website](#) has some helpful videos and documents that detail the ways owners and bodies corporate can assist each other through this uncertain time, including:

- [Levy FAQs - what are they and can I change them?](#) This two-page document provides an overview of levies, explains whether bodies corporate can change them, and the options available to owners and committees in the event of non-payment.
- A [brief summary video](#) of what the options are
- A [FAQ video](#).

SCA (Qld) has also attempted to clear up some confusion by [providing guidance on this issue to the media](#) and [appearing on Channel 9 news](#).

COVID-19 SCA Guides Available (current as at date of publication):

- [Best Practice Strata Management](#), Version 25 March 2020
- [Lot Owner Guide](#), Version 1 April 2020
- [Building Manager's Guide](#), Version 8 April 2020

Government Information – Useful Links

Government Updates

These sites will link you to the latest Coronavirus news, updates and advice from government agencies:

- [Federal Guide on Government Stimulus Packages](#), Version 23 April 2020
- **Australian Government:** <https://www.australia.gov.au/>
- **QLD:** <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19>
- **Government’s financial support for businesses:** <https://treasury.gov.au/coronavirus>
- **Prime Minister Media Updates:** <https://www.pm.gov.au/media>

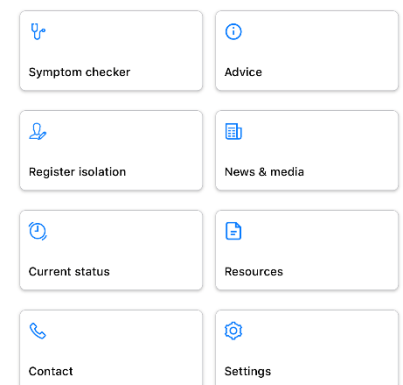
How do I keep up with what is going on?

The Federal Government has launched crisis communications channels to ensure that the public is able to receive the most accurate and the most up-to-date information.

- The free "[Coronavirus Australia](#)" app,
- [COVIDSafe](#), a tracking app to facilitate speedy tracing when cases arise



Coronavirus (COVID-19)



This publication is only a guide. Readers should make and rely on their own expert enquiries. No warranty is given about the accuracy of the material and no liability for negligence or otherwise is assumed by SCA (Qld), its servants or agents in any way connected with this publication.

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[Please visit Government Websites for regular updates.](#)

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