

## Quick Guide for Community Presenters Reopening Venues Amidst COVID-19

Last Updated by Regional Arts Victoria 7 July 2020

*This document has been prepared as a resource for regional Victorian community presenters (i.e. community groups, volunteer committees and/or arts councils who manage small venues). The information in this guide is general in nature and doesn't take into account your particular circumstances. It should not be taken as legal, health, financial or other advice. It asks questions, points you in the right direction and encourages you to look after yourselves, your committee and your community.*

### READY

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Start small.

#### **Step 1: Download & read VAPAC's most recent A Safe Guide for Re-Opening Performing Arts Venues and Safe Guide Companion Summary**

These guidelines will help you understand the necessary steps, administrative workload and resources needed to safely reopen: <https://vapac.org.au/covid-19-resources/>

#### **Step 2: Put a COVID-safe team together**

Form a working group to decide if/when you will reopen and delegate roles and responsibilities.

#### **Step 3: Familiarise yourself with federal, state and local restrictions/regulations**

Visit official government websites to develop a comprehensive understanding of the restrictions and regulations that apply to your committee and venue/s (see *Resources*). What are the state or local restrictions on activities? What guidelines do you need to adhere to? Does your local council have any restrictions around venues reopening? Are you covered by Council insurance (if Council owned)? Who can you maintain regular contact with at local council to support your decisions?

#### **Step 4: Contact your insurance brokers**

Ensure that you understand what you're covered for with Public Liability Insurance and/or Volunteer Workers Insurance. This will help you make decisions about risk management and answer questions from volunteers, Council, contractors, hirers, artists and audiences as they arise.

#### **Step 5: Check in with your volunteers**

Find out how your volunteers are feeling. Try to get a sense of whether they're willing and able to support you through reopening. You may find that you simply don't have enough willing and able volunteers to present live performances at this stage or that you may need to attract new volunteers to support you through this process.

#### **Step 6: Should we reopen?**

Ask yourself and your committee these questions:

- Do we want to work towards reopening now?
- If not now, when do we feel we will be ready? Is this about restrictions being eased, a vaccine being produced, receiving approval from Council, etc.?
- Who is available to support us through this? Volunteers, Council, Regional Arts Victoria and others.
- Do we have enough/the right people to help us through this?
- Do we feel that the benefits of reopening outweigh the risks at this stage?
- Is our community ready to come together again soon?
- Do we understand our legal responsibilities should someone contract COVID-19 at one of your events?
- What is a realistic timeline for safely reopening?
- Does anyone else need to be consulted before we move forward?

Brace yourselves.

**Step 7: Revisit VAPAC's A Safe Guide for Re-Opening Performing Arts Venues and Safe Guide Companion Summary**

The PDF Guide outlines all of the tasks to be completed and the Companion Summary breaks them down into different areas of focus: <https://vapac.org.au/covid-19-resources/>

**Step 8: Delegate tasks to the COVID-safe team and other volunteers**

Share the load. Assign roles. Consider splitting the roles/tasks according to the tabs in the Companion Summary: risk management & mitigation, volunteer management, backstage, ticketing, cleaning/hygiene, communications, contracts.

**Step 9: Write job descriptions**

Ask each person to write their own job description. Look at them altogether. Is anything missing? For volunteers who are more vulnerable and don't feel safe returning to their normal duties, consider assigning roles that don't require in-person contact but still allow them to meaningfully contribute.

**Step 10: Develop a communications plan**

Communications plans should consider both internal and external stakeholders. How regularly will the committee meet? How will you manage communication between committee members, volunteers, patrons, hirers, artists and local council (if needed)? How will COVID-19 affect your marketing plans for audiences? What messages do you want to send around their safety and comfort to better manage expectations? What platforms will you use for communication? Who is going to be in charge of communicating with who? How are you going to keep track?

**Step 11: Support the supporters**

From time to time, your committee may feel stressed trying to meet the demands of preparing to reopen. Assign someone to the role of Supporting the Supporters. This person should be a good listener, warm, impartial, non-judgmental, discreet and trusted. They are responsible for ensuring that an environment of respect, kindness and flexibility is maintained. Their job is to put their foot on the breaks if needed. Before starting, this person should nominate a trusted person that they can reach out to for support supporting the supporters. Triple-S, if you will.

**Step 12: Should we reopen?**

Ask yourself and your committee these questions:

- How do we feel? Excited, burnt out, concerned? Is our team well?
- Do we need to reassign any roles or create new ones?
- Is all of the paperwork up to date?
- Do our processes comply with federal, state and local restrictions/guidelines?
- Have we developed a process for updating our policies/procedures as needed?
- Has the paperwork been signed off by the committee of management, Board and/or local council (as needed)?
- Do we feel adequately prepared to mitigate the risks of public gatherings? Are we willing to accept responsibility for the necessary duty of care to our volunteers and community?
- Do we know exactly what to do if there is a confirmed COVID-19 case at our venue? Do we understand our legal responsibilities should someone contract COVID-19 at one of our events?
- Do we have enough/the right people to help us through this?
- Is our audience ready to return to our venue/s?
- Do we feel that the benefits of reopening outweigh the risks at this stage?
- Does anyone else need to be consulted before we move forward?

Grab the bull by the horns.

**Step 13: Prepare your artists and/or hirers**

Follow and/or adjust your safety plans, then share them. Do the artists you're working with have their own COVID-safe plan? Have they agreed to comply with your plan? Have you adequately addressed the possibility of a COVID-related cancellation in your contract/agreements?

**Step 14: Prepare your audiences**

Follow and/or adjust your communications/marketing plan. How are you preparing your audiences for a different experience at your venue (before, during & after the show)? How are you communicating these changes (social media, email, over the phone, marketing, etc.)? How has ticketing changed? What terms and conditions/codes of behaviour are they agreeing to (social distancing, hand hygiene, etc.)? You want your audience to feel excited about the event itself, with a clear understanding of safety protocols.

**Step 15: Prepare your venue**

Follow and share your safety & response plans. Has your venue been cleaned? Do you need to allocate more of your budget to cleaning staff and/or equipment? Where will people enter and where will they exit? Do you have adequate signage? Do you have hand sanitiser in all the right places? Do you have a system for keeping accurate records of contact details? Are you ready to activate your response plan if needed?

**Step 16: Prepare your volunteers**

Follow and share your plans. Volunteers should know what behaviour is expected of audience members, artists/hirers, fellow volunteers and themselves. Gather your volunteers on-site to re-train and practice their duties before any events take place. Establish clear roles. Ensure you have sanitiser, gloves, cleaning products and face masks (as needed) so that everything is exactly as it would be for a live event. Consider rehearsing interactions with patrons so your volunteers are prepared to approach patrons who are not complying with your venue's guidelines (social distancing, assigned seating, etc.). Have a list of cleaning procedures. Ask your volunteers if anything is missing. Allow enough time between the practice run and the live event to update policies/procedures/job descriptions/resources as needed.

**Step 17: Revisit and reshare your plans**

While preparing your artists, audiences, venue and volunteers, did you notice that anything was missing? Were your plans clear to others? Did anyone express doubt or concern? Is everyone on the same page? Revisit your plans and update them accordingly then share them again.

**Step 18: Open the doors**

Your volunteers know their roles and responsibilities. Your venue is safe. Your audiences are excited. Your artists take the stage.

**Step 19: Should we stay open?**

Ask yourself and your committee these questions:

- How do we feel? Excited, burnt out, concerned? Is our team well?
- Did everything go to plan?
- Do we need to update any paperwork (especially our COVID-Safe Plan), adjust any roles or create new ones?
- Do we need to communicate any changes to our volunteers, audiences, Council, etc.?
- Do we feel that the benefits of being open continue to outweigh the risks?
- Does anyone else need to be consulted before we move forward with our next event?

## RESOURCES

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Don't reinvent the wheel.

### General

Creative Victoria

- Arts & cultural sector guidelines, checklists, templates & signage: <https://creative.vic.gov.au/coronavirus/return-to-business>

Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS)

- Arts & entertainment COVID-19 restrictions: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/entertainment-and-culture-restrictions-covid-19>

Safe Work Australia

- COVID-19 Resource Kit with guides & templates: <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/collection/covid-19-resource-kit>

Victorian Association of Performing Arts Centres (VAPAC)

- A Safe Guide for Re-Opening Performing Arts Venues and Safe Guide Companion Summary: <https://vapac.org.au/covid-19-resources/>

WorkSafe Victoria

- Occupational Health & Safety (OHS) during COVID-19 guide: <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/preparing-pandemic-guide-employers>

### Risk Management & Mitigation

COVID Safe Plans

- National COVID-19 Coordination Commission template/example: <https://pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/my-business-covidsafe-plan.pdf>
- A COVID Safe Plan for Queensland's Live Performance Venues / Theatres – Example: [https://www.covid19.qld.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0015/132414/covid-safe-industry-plan-live-performance-venues-theatres.pdf](https://www.covid19.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0015/132414/covid-safe-industry-plan-live-performance-venues-theatres.pdf)
- COVID-19 Safety Plan for NSW Cinemas, Theatres & Concert Halls – Example: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-06/covid-19-safety-plan-cinemas-theatres-concert-halls.pdf>

Emergency Response Plans

- Safe Work Australia – Cultural Institutions Emergency Plans Outline: <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces/industry-information/cultural-institutions/emergency-plans?tab=tab-toc-employer>
- Safe Work Australia Emergency Plan template/example: <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/emergency-plan-template>

Policy

- Institute of Community Directors Epidemic & Pandemic Policy Template: <https://communitydirectors.com.au/policies/epidemic-pandemic-policy>

Risk Management Plans

- Safe Work Australia – Cultural Institutions Risk Assessment Outline: <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces/industry-information/cultural-institutions/risk-assessment?tab=tab-toc-employer>

- Safe Work Australia Risk Register template/example: <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/template-and-example-covid-19-risk-register>
- Volunteering Victoria COVID-19 Risk Register: <https://www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/COVID-19-Risk-Register-Template.pdf>

## Volunteers

### Supporting the Supporters

- Information, research and resources for supporting the supporters: <https://supportingthesupporters.org>

### Volunteer Management

- Volunteering Victoria COVID-19 guides & templates for volunteer managers: <https://www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/covid19volunteermanagers/>
- Volunteering Victoria Volunteer Management Toolkit including guide to writing job descriptions: <https://www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/resources-guides/toolkit2020/>
- Volunteering Victoria webinar on managing your volunteers amidst COVID-19 (start at 00:35:00): <https://zoom.us/rec/share/zt1MLOn99zJOeb0dq1zFW6Qmlobueaa81CVNqacKxUvC7tk eoC4IBV6RdChVwFzU>

## Backstage

### Safety & Ethics

- Arts Centre Melbourne's guide to safe & ethical backstage practices (pre-COVID): <https://www.artscentremelbourne.com.au/-/media/acm/files/learn/resources/2019/safeandethicaltheatrepractices.ashx?la=en&h ash=F3E8322525649C880876343D12EB867AC98CF804>

## Ticketing

### Code of Practice

- Live Performance Australia's Ticketing Code of Practice for Industry: <https://paca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/LPA-Ticketing-Code-of-Practice-Industry-Code.pdf>

### Selling Tickets Online

- EventBrite online ticketing platform: <https://www.eventbrite.com.au>
- TryBooking online ticketing platform: <https://www.trybooking.com/>

## Cleaning & Hygiene

### COVID-19 Cleaning Procedures

- Safe Work Australia cleaning and disinfecting guidelines: <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/how-clean-and-disinfect-your-workplace-covid-19>
- DHHS cleaning and disinfecting tips for non-healthcare settings: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/cleaning-and-disinfecting-reduce-covid-19-transmission>

## Communications

### Audience Attitudes

- Australia Council and PatternMakers have been conducting research on audience attitudes to the arts. By using the Dashboard, you can filter by state, artform and region: <https://www.thepatternmakers.com.au/covid19>

### Marketing

- Circuit West recently released a Marketing Guide for Audience Development: <https://www.circuitwest.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Theatre-Marketing-Guide-For-Audience-Development-FINAL.pdf>

## Contracts

### Contract Templates

- Arts Law Centre of Australia has a number of low-cost contract templates available online in their Info Hub. Remember, Organisation Members of Regional Arts Victoria are eligible for three free Arts Law contract templates per year: <https://www.artslaw.com.au/info-hub/>

### Legal Advice

- Arts Law Centre of Australia offers free or low-cost legal advice and document reviews: <https://www.artslaw.com.au/services/legal-advice/>
- Justice Connect offers free legal advice for eligible not-for-profits: <https://www.nfplaw.org.au/advice>

### Legal Resources

- Justice Connect has a number of legal guides and other resources for not-for-profit groups: <https://www.nfplaw.org.au>

We recommend that you use this quick guide alongside VAPAC's comprehensive guide to cover all your bases. Some of the above links were originally identified within VAPAC's guide. Others have been collated by Regional Arts Victoria to address community presenters' needs specifically. More resources are available to our Organisation Members via the online Members Portal.

Where resources don't exist elsewhere, RAV will continue to produce templates and guides for your use. If you're working through this guide and can't find what you're looking for, please contact Anna Kennedy, Connecting Places Manager, at [akennedy@rav.net.au](mailto:akennedy@rav.net.au) or on 0431 376 678. We're here to help!

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