



Planning to re-open



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As COVID-19 lockdown regulations that apply to museums and galleries are set to be lifted, it is important to ensure that your re-opening is well planned and adheres to official guidelines.

Re-opening will not be a simple return to business-as-usual, it is important to follow the advice of your Local, State and Federal Government, other stakeholders and health authority guidelines, when planning a safe return for staff, volunteers and audiences.

This document outlines some of the important aspects that should be closely considered when planning the re-opening of museums, galleries or Aboriginal cultural centres.

1. Adhere to official Government advice

For NSW, the opening of museums and galleries has been scheduled for Step Two of the Federal Government's 3-Step Framework for a COVIDSafe Australia. <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/3-step-framework-for-a-covidsafe-australia>

The NSW State Government has announced 1 June 2020 as the date from which museums, galleries and libraries will be permitted to re-open. Under Public Health Orders, you must have a COVID-19 Safety Plan that details how your organisation will re-open responsibly and comply with Government and public health authority guidelines, physical distancing and containment measures: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/industry-guidelines/museums-and-galleries>

The National COVID-19 Coordination Commission has created an online tool to help businesses develop a plan to keep workers, customers and the community safe as they reopen or increase their activities in the weeks and months ahead: <https://pmc.gov.au/nccc/resources/planning-tool-help-businesses-reopen-and-be-covidsafe>

2. Develop a timeline and strategy for re-opening

Re-opening will not mean a straightforward recommencement for many institutions. Develop a timeline and strategy to ensure your staff, volunteers and visitors are kept safe.

Do a risk assessment to ensure the conditions for all staff, volunteers and visitors are safe and secure.

Set out a timeline for your reopening and revise it as restrictions and conditions change.

Develop an operations plan and communicate it with all staff and volunteers to ensure they are familiar with each stage. Continue to offer digital experiences if you are able, such as online activities, tours, or talks to audience members who may choose to stay at home for a longer period.

Celebrate your full re-opening. It's been a difficult time for everybody, including

your local communities. This is a time to welcome people back but remember to follow social distancing guidelines at all times.

3. How to make your space COVID safe

It is important to demonstrate that you are adhering to health precautions including maintaining 1.5 metres social distancing between people and increased hygiene requirements.

Visitors should feel safe while in your space. In order to do so:

Calculate the limit of people you can have in your space, as determined by the four square metre rule <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/what-you-can-and-cant-do-under-rules/four-square-metre-rule>

Monitor and control the number of visitors in your premises at all times, ensuring to stay within your limit, while adhering to the four meter rule. To control numbers, you may consider:

- Timed tickets (even on free admission) to limit on the number of visitors at any given time.
- Entry for select groups at particular times.

Set out guidelines for interactions between staff and visitors. Ensure these are communicated to your staff and display them in a clear and obvious place for visitors to see when they enter.

Put systems in place, such as:

- Clear queue markers outside your premises and at queuing points and counters, to help keep your visitors comfortable and to avoid confusion.
- Clearly mark separate entry and exit points and circulation markers if possible.
- Clearly display your gallery or museum's COVID-19 health and safety protocols and conditions of entry on your website, online ticketing platform, social media platforms and at all entrances to your museum or gallery. If applicable, email this information to your organisation's mailing lists, members/friends.

Consider physical distance controls, such as screens, to protect staff and visitors at social interaction points.

Consider keeping doors open to avoid multiple people touching door handles (only if appropriate and safe).

Close, redesign, or remove hands-on exhibits and interactives.

Remove or reconfigure seating that does not abide by social distancing protocols.

Display safety posters around your venue to help communicate community messages (<https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/signage-and-posters-covid-19>) about:

- physical distancing (<https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/social-distancing>)
- hand hygiene, cough and sneeze behaviour (<https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/how-to-protect-yourself-and-others>)



- posters in community languages where appropriate (<https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/resources-other-languages>)

Avoid handling cash or credit cards.

Alternate options could include:

- Tap-and-go/PayPass options.
- Square Reader or CommBank Albert EFTPOS tablet.
- Coin donations into a donation box (cash should be removed and stored at the end of the day by a staff member/volunteer wearing appropriate protective equipment. Cash can also be cleaned by wiping with disinfectant or washing in soapy water).

Clean and disinfect surfaces that are frequently touched, regularly, and have a cleaning and disinfecting schedule in place (<https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces/industry-information/general-industry-information/cleaning>), that is visible to the visiting

public. Pay particular attention to all high contact areas such as:

- doors and handles.
- toilets (if regular cleaning cannot be maintained, consider closing access).
- point of sale and EFTPOS systems.
- counters and displays – including display cases.
- interactive displays and touch screens (consider removing these if regular cleaning is not possible).
- handrails - especially on stairs.
- phones .
- back of house or staff access only areas.

Have hand sanitiser near all entrances to your venue, at the cash register and next to any other high-contact points. Make sure hand sanitiser is at a height and in a position where it cannot be reached by small children.

Ask contractors or work-related visitors to complete a COVID-19 Visitor Declaration Form prior to entering your venue. This form should contain the visitor's name and contact details, and a series of questions such as:

- 'Do you have any symptoms of cold, flu or other illness?'
- 'Have you had contact with anyone who has been exposed to COVID-19 in the past 14 days?'
- 'Have you recently returned from overseas?'

Responses to these types of questions will help you to determine if it is safe for the contractor or work-related visitor to enter your museum or gallery. This information should be stored

confidentially and securely for the purposes of only tracing COVID-19 infections.

For general visitors attending exhibitions, they should be asked to complete a 'visitor's book' style entry, listing their name, email address and/or mobile phone contact. Preferably this should be done online prior to arrival. Similarly, this information should also be stored confidentially for 28 days for the purposes of contact tracing only.

All contractors and visitors should be required to use their own pen, or a freshly sanitised one, if completing their tracing documentation on arrival.

Employers should encourage, but not mandate, all staff and volunteers to download the contact tracing app to support COVID-19 contact tracing if required.

If your museum or gallery operates a café, the NSW Government is relaxing some restrictions on hospitality businesses, but some rules apply. <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/businesses-and-employment/covid-safe-workplaces/hospitality>

If your museum or gallery operates a retail space, the NSW Government has provided guidelines in what you need to know to make your retail space safe, look after your employees and give your customers confidence to shop with you. <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/businesses-and-employment/how-to-make-your-retail-space-covid-safe>



With increased activity, ensure to maintain vigilant collection care protocols:

HVAC systems should be checked, and filters will need to be changed regularly and should be factored into your cleaning schedule.

Do not disinfect or sanitise your collection items or artworks as it could damage them.

Do not use large scale disinfecting methods such as spraying or fogging in your museum or gallery as they may contaminate collection items.

It is critical that you manage dust levels during your museum or gallery's closure, as dust can attract insects and moisture.

Use HEPA filter vacuums and wear Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) for your own safety when removing dust from collection items and follow this

recommended order for cleaning:

- Step 1: dust objects;
- Step 2: dust plinths; then
- Step 3: vacuum and mop floors to reduce the spread of dust.

Inspect for mould throughout the building. Get air circulating through the spaces again.

Check insect blunder traps, record any movement and put out new ones to monitor insect and rodent activity.

4. Supporting staff and volunteers

It is important that your staff and volunteers feel safe in their workplace and are protected from potential contact with COVID-19.

Measures to support your staff and volunteers include:

Communication – management should ensure that everyone is informed and kept in the loop with protocols and safety measures.

Check your colleagues and volunteers wellbeing and ask for feedback on the new measures.

Consider alternative work arrangements, such as staggered working hours if space is limited, or employees or volunteers have specific requirements.

Provide hand sanitiser and face-masks to employees and volunteers.

Always maintain social distancing and good hygiene measures such as:

- **Stay home** if you are sick, even if your symptoms are minor, and seek medical advice if you have a fever, cough, sore throat or shortness of breath (call your doctor or healthdirect on 1800 022 222).
- **Stay 1.5m away** from other people (two arms' length).
- **Avoid touching** your mouth, eyes, and nose with unwashed (or gloved) hands.
- **Regularly clean** your hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds using soap and water, or with alcohol-based hand rub.
- **When you cough or sneeze** cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or a flexed elbow. Put tissues in the bin immediately.

Provide clear guidelines on how to respond to someone who does not adhere to your gallery or museum's COVID-19 health and safety protocols and conditions of entry. This may include reporting it to a supervisor or staff member in higher authority.

If your museum or gallery is entirely **volunteer-run**, it is strongly recommended that you comply with public health authority guidelines and Workplace Health & Safety legislation. In the interests of your volunteers' health and wellbeing, your organisation may choose to delay reopening to the public or implement a staged return to roster.

For further information on supporting volunteers in the workplace see

Volunteering Australia's COVID-19: Information for Volunteer Involving Organisations resource: <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/volunteer-involving-organisations-and-covid-19/#/>

Resources

NSW Government - COVID-19 Safety Plan and printable checklist <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/industry-guidelines/museums-and-galleries>

Australian Government, Department of Health - 3-Step Framework for a COVIDSafe Australia <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/3-step-framework-for-a-covidsafe-australia>

NSW Government - What you can and can't do under the rules <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/what-you-can-and-cant-do-under-rules>

Australian Government - Have a COVID-19 Plan <https://pmc.gov.au/nccc/have-covid-19-plan>

The National COVID-19 Coordination Commission - Planning tool to help businesses reopen and be COVIDSafe <https://pmc.gov.au/nccc/resources/planning-tool-help-businesses-reopen-and-be-covidsafe>

3 Step Framework for a Covidsafe Australia <https://www.pm.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/three-step-framework-covidsafe-australia.pdf>

Safework NSW - guide is to help you stay safe at work during the COVID-19 pandemic <https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/resource-library/COVID-19-Coronavirus>

NSW Government - Four square metre rule <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/what-you-can-and-cant-do-under-rules/four-square-metre-rule>

Safework Australia - Signage and posters - COVID-19 <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/signage-and-posters-covid-19>

NSW Government - Physical distancing <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/social-distancing>

Volunteering Australia - COVID-19: Information for Volunteer Involving Organisations <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/volunteer-involving-organisations-and-covid-19/>

NSW Government - CoVID19 - Translated resources <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/resources-other-languages>

Safework Australia – Cleaning <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces/industry-information/general-industry-information/cleaning>



All images from United Nations COVID-19 Response on Unsplash

Museums & Galleries of NSW



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