



Restaurant
& Catering

COVID-19 Best Practice Guidelines

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RESTAURANT & CATERING AUSTRALIA

Restaurant & Catering Australia (R&CA) is the national industry association representing the interests of more than 47,000 restaurants, cafés and catering businesses across Australia. The café, restaurant and catering sector is vitally important to the national economy, generating over \$37 billion in retail turnover each year as well as employing 450,000 people. Over 92 per cent of businesses in the café, restaurant and catering sector are small businesses, employing 19 people or less.

R&CA delivers tangible outcomes to small businesses within the hospitality industry by influencing the policy decisions and regulations that impact the sector's operating environment. R&CA is committed to ensuring the industry is recognised as one of excellence, professionalism, profitability and sustainability. This includes advocating the broader social and economic contribution of the sector to industry and government stakeholders, as well as highlighting the value of the restaurant experience to the public.



INTRODUCTION

The mass shutdown of restaurant and café dine in options have forced operators to rethink their entire business model and way of operating. This re-engineering of food service business – with a clear view to reduce as many touchpoints and risks of transmission of coronavirus will undoubtedly bring about a ‘new normal’ for sit down dining. The following set of best practice guidelines has been developed by R&CA to allow governments to set out a clear set of obligation and requirements that food businesses, from the small café to the largest restaurant, can follow to ensure they remain best practice once health advice states that limited dine-in is permissible.

While some of these measures may be required for a shorter period than others, food service businesses are currently implementing that will endure far beyond the current crisis.

For example, takeaway and delivery, once an afterthought for some, is now vital to their survival. Suggestions include reconsidering the menu mix and how to optimize selection to boost razor-thin margins, scrapping their shared-plates models and reimagining the future of catering without buffets or shared ‘serve yourself’ sections.

As they struggle to stay in business during this crisis, all operators are trying to figure out what the post-coronavirus customer will want to eat, how much they will want to spend, what kind of venue they will feel comfortable going out to eat in and what they will expect in terms of practices and procedures in food service businesses across the country.

This document seeks to set out clearly a best practice guide for these venues. R&CA believes adherence to these guidelines should be considered mandatory to re-open, coupled with a short accreditation process ensure customers can feel safe eating out again, once it is declared safe to do so.

COVID-19 BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES

I. BOOKINGS AND CONDITIONS OF ENTRY

Bookings/Tracking:

- Best practice would require pre-bookings or sign ins to dine in (where practicable) with name, address/email address and contact number.
- When no booking was made, walk-in patrons must then sign into or scan into the booking app/program or reservation book of the restaurant as a condition of entry.
- Best practice would be use of federal government's Tracking App.

Refusing Entry to Patrons:

- Everyone has an obligation to stay at home while displaying any symptoms such as fever or coughing. Businesses have the right to refuse service and insist that anyone with these symptoms leaves the premises.
- Placing signs at entry points to request customers not to enter the shop if they are unwell or have COVID19 symptoms.

Waiting Areas:

- Remove waiting area seating, clearly mark on floor social distancing requirements.

2. FRONT OF HOUSE/CUSTOMER INTERACTION:

Queuing and Interaction between Patrons

- Create floor markings that provide minimum guide distances between customers queuing for service and using physical barriers where possible.
- Set up different areas for ordering and collection.
- Use separate doors for entry and exit, if practicable, to avoid contact between people.
- Ensure customers wait outside and practice social distancing, if safe to do so, for takeaway collection.

Delivery Drivers:

- Frequently clean and disinfect your vehicle including frequently touched surfaces such as the steering wheel, door handles, controls or buttons, seatbelt and keys.

- Clean and disinfect your phone or electronic device used to help deliver food or parcels. Disinfect these often by using a lint-free cloth and 70% isopropyl alcohol if you can, or disinfectant wipes.

3. DINING IN AND SERVICE

Table/Seat Distance:

- Social distance between table edges/centres to adjacent tables (minimum 1.5m between patrons seated at different tables).
- Tables, chairs, stools and booth seating must be sanitized after every use.

Condiments/BYO:

- No condiments left on tables (including salt & pepper), all serves of condiments should be disposable and not stored or disseminated from a common container.
- No communal water stations.
- Business should refuse to accept keep-cups, BYO alcohol bottles or containers for safety reasons.

Food & Beverage Choices

- Menu's should either be laminated to facilitate easy cleaning or completely disposable after each use or chalk board as appropriate.
- No bar service, no waiting at the bar.
- Outdoor Service will require same table distance requirements and booking/tracking requirements as indoor.
- Limit all shareable items from menus.
- No buffets or shared 'serve yourself' sections such as salad bars etc.
- No open food displays or food on display meant for consumption.

Cutlery:

- All disposable/recyclable cutlery/glass ware when available, or strict table clearing guidelines requiring gloves.
- Non-disposable crockery/cutlery/glassware permitted when cleared after each course and washed using a commercial grade dishwasher or glasswasher only.

Hygiene:

- Make automatic hand sanitisers freely available throughout the business based upon capacity for customer use.

4. COMPLETING SERVICE AND PAYMENT

Payments:

- Electronic payment only etc Tap&Go, ApplePay etc.
- Remove pin requirement for Tap&Go purchases over \$100.
- Introduce plexiglass barriers at tills and counters as an additional level of protection for staff.
- Encourage businesses to set-up online ordering and pre-payment, take extra steps to promote this offering to reduce face to face interaction with FOH staff.
- Make provision for customers leaving the venue to do so via a different entrance to those entering as per above.

5. STAFF PRACTICES

General Measures:

- Limit physical interactions between workers, workers and clients, and workers and other persons at the site (e.g. deliveries) and use other methods such as mobile phone or radio to communicate.
- Where it is practical and safe to do so, review tasks and processes that usually require close interaction and identify ways to modify these to increase physical distancing between workers.

Cleaning

- Usual cleaning schedules will need to be increased.
 - Frequently touched surfaces (such as handrails, scanners, plant controls, machinery and doors) should be cleaned regularly using appropriate detergent solutions. Once cleaned, they should ideally be disinfected regularly using appropriate disinfectant solutions.
 - Personal items used in the workplace such glasses and phones should be cleansed and ideally disinfected frequently (e.g. by using isopropyl alcohol wipes).
 - Workplace amenities including kitchens, lunch rooms, communal areas, change rooms, toilets, drink fountains and vending machines, should be cleaned industrially and the frequency of this cleaning should increase.
- Food preparation areas and equipment and front of house areas where customers access should be cleaned in line with Safe Work Australia's guidance on Cleaning and COVID-19 and the frequency of cleaning should be increased.
- Frequently touched surfaces, including counters, menus, handrails, doors, till, phones, keyboards and EFTPOS facilities, should be cleaned regularly using appropriate detergent solutions where possible. Once cleaned, they should ideally be disinfected regularly using appropriate disinfectant solutions.
- Also consider reducing the number of touch points for workers. For example, leaving access doors open, where appropriate. If possible, make hand sanitiser available at entry and exit points so workers can use it when arriving and leaving.
- Gloves and alcohol-based hand sanitiser should be made available. The workplace should provide closed bins for workers where appropriate to hygienically dispose of waste and rubbish such as used tissues, immediately (or if away from amenities, as soon as possible) after use. Hand washing facilities or alcohol-based hand sanitiser should be available for workers to use after they dispose of their waste.

6. TRAINING: HOSPITALITY SOCIAL DISTANCE PROGRAM

Hospitality Business Operations in response to COVID-19

- Introduction of a mandatory short accreditation course to be completed by food service businesses (either owner, manager, licensee or all holders of food safety supervisor certificate). Should be enforced by state food safety regulators and local Councils.
- Certification will need to be displayed at entrance to business.
- Key Competencies to include:
 - What is Social Distancing?
 - Creating a Social Distancing Plan.
 - Staff Induction for Working During COVID-19.
 - Work Practices During COVID-19.
 - Managing Customers During Social Distancing.
 - Cleaning Premises and Equipment During COVID-19.
 - COVID-19 FAQs

CONCLUSION

R&CA welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission to help set a roadmap to allowing dine-in options for restaurants, cafes and catering companies through the current COVID-19 crisis once health advice deems appropriate. These best practice guidelines, coupled with a sensible accreditation scheme are designed to provide governments, businesses owners and customers with a greater degree of certainty as to what is expected in a post COVID-19 world.

We welcome any further opportunity to discuss this submission with you.

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