

## **COVID-19 Return to Play Guidelines - Victoria**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Golf Australia is the governing body for golf in Australia and in conjunction with Golf Victoria provides the following Return to Sport Plan for all golf clubs and facilities in Victoria to utilise. Golf Australia understands that some clubs/facilities have created internal resource documents to assist this process and seeks to provide, through this document, further detail that can be utilised by clubs/facilities to finalise their return to play plans under the updated government guidelines.

This plan addresses how golf clubs and facilities in Victoria can successfully manage operations under the loosening of Victorian government restrictions which will take effect from Wednesday, May 13.

The nature of our sport is that it is played over vast spaces of land in comparatively small groups. We are in the privileged position of being able to resume operations ahead of many other sports. That being said, Golf Australia and our clubs/facilities must ensure that steps to modify both play and behaviour to ensure that the risk of transmission is minimised are in place.

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## GOLF OPERATIONS

Based on the Victorian Government announcement loosening COVID-19 restrictions within Victoria, Golf Australia provides the following recommendations.

Please note, this information should be read in conjunction with Play Management guidelines that are located at <https://www.golf.org.au/club-guidance-managing-play-in-the-covid-19-environment>.

- All bookings should be made online, via phone or via text message. There should be no 'roll-up play'. For clubs/facilities with online time sheets, these bookings should be strictly enforced to ensure no congregation in the pro shop or around the first tee. For those without online time sheets, it is recommended that bookings are made via phone.
- Golf can be played in groups of four
- Club competitions can be run
- Shotgun starts should be avoided in order to manage outdoor mass gathering restrictions
- All submission of scorecards should be done via non-contact measures as outlined below:
  - MMS
  - App
  - E-Mail
  - Phone call

### General hygiene principles required, including cleaning of facilities

Golf Australia has previously communicated to clubs that their staff and volunteers should exhibit a heightened awareness of personal hygiene as has been encouraged by state and federal health departments and they should display a heightened regard for the sanitation of surfaces, of which their cleaning chemical provider will be able to provide guidance on.

Golf Australia has provided Club & Facilities with specific easy to implement changes to regular operations to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. These include:

- Placing social distancing signage around the clubhouse along with hand sanitisers
- Sanitise motorised carts, rental clubs, push buggy and sand bucket handles and air compressor handles before and after use on all occasions.
- Sanitise all greenkeeping machinery before and after use on all occasions
- Encourage golfers to wear their putting glove when removing the flag stick and when raking bunkers. Refer temporary modification of the rules section which gives clubs the choice to adopt policies around flagsticks and bunker rakes.
- Remove cash transactions and encourage 'Pay-Wave' transactions where no contact is required
- Remove small pins from practice putting greens
- No dollar bets
- No hand shaking

Please note, especially with regards to sanitation of motorised carts and rental clubs, that if clubs/facilities are not confident in ensuring adherence to COVID-19 hygiene principles then consideration should be given to not offering these options to players.

## **Participation Programs**

An announcement on the resumption of MyGolf (junior) and launch of Get Into Golf (adult) will be made as soon as practicable.

With regards to club-operated participation programs, you should observe all limits on social distancing and mass gatherings and limit participants to nine (plus the deliverer).

## **Management of people who present who are unwell, experiencing any cold, flu or fever type symptoms**

As per health guidelines Golf Australia continues to recommend to clubs/facilities to advise their members and guests if they are experiencing any cold, flu or fever type symptoms they must not visit the golf facility. Additionally, we recommend that these persons should seek to get tested for COVID-19 as soon as possible.

## **Access and egress protocols**

Players should arrive at your facility no more than 10 minutes prior to their tee time. Upon arrival, players should head directly to the Pro Shop or check-in area, whilst adhering to density protocols. If the pro shop is part of the licenced area, then it is recommended that entry be limited to the doorway. Scorecards, if in use, should be collected and players should head directly to the tee.

At the conclusion of the round, players should immediately return to their car and depart the facility. Unless utilising a food and beverage service (following prescribed gathering guidelines), at no stage should players remain at the facility. Clubs/facilities should ensure that there are no mass gathering opportunities available to players in any area of your facility.

## **Staff**

Many clubs and facilities have implemented split shifts across greenkeeping staff and this will continue to be encouraged by Golf Australia.

## **Requirements of non-sporting attendees such as parents**

Per published Australian Institute of Sport Principles, community sport and recreation activities should limit those present to the minimum required to support the participants (e.g. one parent or carer per child if necessary), who are to keep away from all participants and observe social distancing guidelines of 1.5 metres per person.

## **Special circumstances that apply to your sport/recreation**

Golf is a sport that lends itself naturally to social distancing, with players rarely within 1.5 metres of each other, and low density over a larger playing surface than most other sports. The sport is uniquely positioned to be played during times of social distancing and is set up well to cater for all government requirements through the COVID-19 period, as demonstrated by the behaviour of Victorian golf clubs and facilities over the past weeks. It is important that this behaviour continues to ensure our sport can continue to be played during the COVID-19 recovery period.

## **FACILITY MANAGEMENT**

### **Use of other club facilities**

#### Clubhouse

At this stage, clubhouses should remain closed for food & beverage operations. Take-away alcohol can only be consumed off the licenced premises. For further enquiries please contact Community Clubs Victoria.

#### Change rooms / Toilets

Change room facilities and indoor toilets can be used, with a maximum of 10 people only, with a limit of one person per four square metres.

Golf Australia recommends that items such as shoe cleaners, sun creams, hairbrushes and combs, hair gel and hair dryers from locker rooms should be removed.

Where possible, leave doors ajar so the need to push doors open or turn door knobs is removed. Per above, it is important that clubs/facilities are comfortable in managing these restrictions.

#### Carparks

Recommendation for players to remain in (or next to) their cars until close to their starting time eg 10 minutes prior. Some clubs (with available resources) across the country have gone to the extent of stationing a staff member (or volunteer) with a microphone/radio in the car park to manage these requirements.

Players should leave the facility immediately after completing their round, unless they decide to utilise the food and beverage offering at the club/facility. No presentations can be held at the conclusion of play.

#### Greenkeeping operations

Clubs/facilities should continue to consider the use of split shifts for greenkeeping operations.

### **Readiness to advance to next level if restrictions ease**

Clubs and Facility Boards and management are recommended to begin planning for Step 2 restrictions to be implemented from June 1, and Golf Australia will provide a list of further 'return to play' recommendations based on the most up to date information received from government.

## TEMPORARY MODIFICATIONS TO THE RULES OF GOLF

On 19/3/2020, the R&A (who are the ruling authority of golf throughout the world except in north America) announced a series of temporary measures to combat the hygiene implications associated with some of the requirements of the Rules of Golf. These temporary measures allow the Rules of Golf, and Model Local Rules, to be modified as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.

This information can be accessed at <https://www.golf.org.au/club-guidance-managing-play-in-the-covid-19-environment> and it is recommended that clubs/facilities familiarise themselves with these modifications.

When considering these new options, clubs should be mindful of the following:

- In order to take advantage of these new Local Rule options, your club will need to announce which options it is bringing into effect for play at your facility – these options do not automatically come into effect at your facility as a result of the R&A announcement.
- Scores returned from competitions with any of the new Local Rules in effect must be processed through GOLF Link unless your club has been instructed otherwise by Golf Australia or your State Association.
- These Local Rule options are temporary and are related to COVID-19 concerns. They will be available to clubs until Golf Australia advises otherwise.

Kind Regards,



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