

Rotary -When is it OK to resume face to face meetings?

Is there a more relevant question at the moment?

Is there a more difficult question to answer?

The restrictions have challenged our communities, our Rotary clubs and ourselves.

Overall, Australians can feel proud of their response and results in limiting the spread of COVID-19 and Rotary can feel proud of the way we have responded. The rapid transition to video conferencing platforms, and establishing new projects and fundraising activities has been nothing short of amazing. You all deserve a big and hearty congratulations.

Although there has recently been a slight easing of the restrictions, there is a real need to proceed with caution in recommencing face to face meetings or public events and activities.

I have been asked by many over recent weeks for the District or Rotary to provide some guidance around Rotary clubs resuming meetings and events.

So, whilst not wanting to dictate a particular course of action I feel it is prudent to provide some guidance on this matter. The last thing anyone wants is an outbreak or COVID -19 cluster occurring due to a Rotary meeting or activity. The public relations nightmare and reputational damage is not worth the risk.

The best advice is to hasten slowly and cautiously when deciding to recommence your face to face meetings or activities. The overarching principle is to meet face to face or hold an event '**only if you really need to**' (these words are in the Victorian Government recommendations).

Several factors need to be considered when considering getting back together including the need to meet face to face. Factors to consider include;

- The restriction requirements of your local and federal Governments
- The personal preferences of Rotarians will need to be appreciated and accommodated
- Age and pre-existing medical conditions of those attending
- Current health status of attendees and the presence of flu like symptoms (headache, runny nose, sore throat, fever). If any symptoms present, they should not attend. If symptoms develop during the event they should leave and seek medical advice
- Having received the current Influenza vaccination
- Limiting numbers in attendance
- Ability to maintain social distancing, hand sanitation and other healthy habits
- No close social contact such as handshakes, hugs or kisses
- Provision of hand washing facilities and alcohol-based hand sanitiser in all common areas
- Keeping names and contact details of all those attending in case contact tracing is required

- Avoiding buffet style meals and ensuring individual serving and utensils including the use of disposable cups (sorry to the environment)
- Regular cleaning and disinfecting of rooms, surfaces and toilets
- Minimising congestion in common areas

I realise it is a long list, but it is a necessary list.

Minimisation of unnecessary exposure and risk mitigation will lessen the risk of cross infection and should be foremost in the minds of all Rotarians.

Restrictions will be with us for a while and will need to be maintained for many months to come.

The rate at which more restrictions will be eased and not reinstated depends a lot on how we do as a society in limiting the spread of COVID 19. If the spread of the virus is contained and clusters limited then the easing will continue. If not then its back to more severe restrictions.

It is important in these challenging times to maintain focus and continue to support our communities. People judge Rotary by how we perform generally, but we will probably be judged more on how we perform during the COVID 19 restrictions.

I know when the restrictions are over that we will certainly appreciate our lifestyles, communities and Rotary experiences more than in the past. It is important to stay positive and be supportive.

Look to your leaders for guidance but the ultimate decision is yours to make. Having all the information and following advice of health professionals and government is crucial.

Congratulations on the results so far but there is a way to go before it is over. I know all Rotarians are sensible and will do the right thing to lead the way and be an example to the community.

Most importantly stay safe and stay well.

Grant Hocking

District Governor

Rotary International District 9800