



ABSC Guidelines for Resumption of Billiards and Snooker During the COVID19 Pandemic

1. Introduction

The Australian Billiards & Snooker Council (ABSC) is the National Sporting Organisation responsible for the management and promotion of billiards and snooker in Australia. The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to ABSC members, operators of billiards room facilities, players and officials on requirements for the resumption of billiards and snooker, and to help them comply with public health guidelines for a COVID-19 safe environment.

In accordance with the gradual easing of restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic in Australia, governments have provided recommendations for a staged return to sport and leisure activities over the following months. Resuming sports must occur in the context of Federal, State/Territory and Local Public Health Authority requirements including the maximum number of people allowed within an indoor venue, which may vary in different states and territories. These government requirements must take precedence over all other forms of advice, including these guidelines.

These guidelines align with public health and SafeWork Australia recommendations for workplaces, and the “AIS Framework for Re-booting Sport in a COVID-19 Environment”. They will be reviewed and updated regularly in accordance with changes to public health guidelines and government requirements. The level of restrictions in force in each place should be kept under constant review by everyone involved with billiards and snooker, and the priority at all times must be to take the necessary steps to preserve public health by minimising the risk of community transmission of the virus. A checklist that organisations can use to assess their preparedness to return to sport is available at https://www.sportaus.gov.au/return-to-sport#simplified_checklist.

Communication via member newsletters, posters and signage within billiard rooms will reinforce COVID-19 related policies and procedures, and will support effective action and enhance member confidence in their ability to safely resume their sport.

Key Public and Occupational Health Recommendations

The key health recommendations to minimise transmission of coronavirus are:

- physical distancing between people (at least 1.5 metres between people and 4 square metres per person in an indoor environment);
- minimise the use of shared equipment, and disinfecting shared equipment;
- adequate cleaning and disinfecting of environments where people gather;
- people must stay at home if they are unwell with symptoms of COVID19;
- contact tracing; and
- consideration of vulnerable players.



Responsibility for Implementing Recommendations

Responsibility for implementing the measures outlined below to prevent the spread of COVID-19 (**measures**) will vary depending on the nature of the play, the organising body and the type of venue. In all circumstances, venue management and sports organisations should ensure that they have a clear understanding of the role that they, and other parties, play to keep their environments safe.

Social Play

- Where billiard rooms are a part of larger venues (such as licensed clubs or RSL's), the responsibility for measures required to ensure safe social play will need to be agreed between the venue management and the snooker & billiards committee of that venue.
- For stand-alone billiard rooms the management committee or owner of the venue will be responsible for all measures required to ensure safe social play.

When Competition Resumes

- Competition play will require additional considerations such as the safety of referees and officials, and more extensive periods of contact for some players.
- Where competitions sanctioned by state and territory billiards and snooker organisations are being held in a venue, the venue management and the sanctioning body will need to agree on specific responsibilities to implement the required measures.
- Where competitions sanctioned by the ABSC are being held in a venue, the venue management and the ABSC will need to agree on specific responsibilities to implement the required measures.

It is recommended that all venues, billiards and snooker committees, state and territory billiards and snooker organisations and the ABSC take the following steps to ensure that they have a clear understanding of their responsibilities at all times:

- Appoint a COVID-19 safety coordinator. Guidance on this role can be found at https://www.sportaus.gov.au/return-to-sport# covid-19_safety_coordinator.
- Develop a COVID-19 safety plan and keep it updated as circumstances change. For a template visit https://www.sportaus.gov.au/return-to-sport# covid-19_safety_plan.
- Document an agreed allocation of responsibility for every type of play and event between the involved parties (venue management, players, tournament organisers, officials, governing bodies).

Comment on these Guidelines and Further Information

If you have any comment on these guidelines, or would like further information or clarification, please contact either:

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2. Physical Distancing

The maximum number of people within an indoor space for activities such as billiards and snooker will be dependent on state and territory public health advice at any given time. You can check the advice for each jurisdiction on the following Australian government website <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/coronavirus-covid-19-social-gatherings-and-business-closures>.

Whatever the maximum number of people allowed at any time, to minimise transmission of the virus a minimum of 4 square metres per person is required when people gather in an indoor space. To determine the number of players and officials allowed in a room at any one time, the width and length should be measured (in metres), multiplied together and divided by 4. Of course, venues can elect to accommodate a lower number of people than the maximum allowable if they choose.

All players and officials (when permitted) must remain a minimum of 1.5 metres from each other at all times.

Activity should currently be limited to players only (other than billiard room supervisors). In the first stage of re-opening no competition matches will be permitted, and officials and spectators will not be able to attend venues in that capacity. Players should leave immediately after the completion of games and not linger in billiard rooms.

It is recommended that signage and posters are in place within billiard rooms to remind players of the physical distancing and hygiene requirements. A selection of posters is available here: https://www.sportaus.gov.au/return-to-sport#covid-19_hygiene_guidance. The ABSC has produced an A3 poster setting out the steps to be taken in billiard rooms by operators and players to minimise the risk of infection. This is available at www.absc.com.au.

Billiard rooms should be monitored at all times to ensure that physical distancing and hygiene standards are maintained.

Consideration should be given to:

- Use of separate entry and exits where possible, to avoid close contact in shared spaces.
- Avoiding people gathering within small areas such as reception areas and lobbies.
- Taking adjacent tables out of play in order to facilitate physical distancing.
- Maintaining physical distancing from staff supervising billiard rooms.
- Use of barriers or markings on floors to indicate the minimum 1.5 metre distance from staff.

3. Sanitise and Minimise the Use of Shared Equipment

Players should bring their own cues and chalk and avoid sharing other equipment where possible. They should be allocated one cross rest each when playing.

All shared equipment including cushion rails, cross rests, long rests, triangles, balls and rack cues should be cleaned and disinfected (see next section) by the players or venue operators at the beginning of play, and ideally after use.

Venues should note that prolonged disinfection of cushion rails may damage timber finishes, and great care should be taken with antique or valuable tables.

Billiard table beds should be ironed regularly as heat greater than 70°C inactivates coronavirus. (Ref: 1)



It is not possible to disinfect cushions in this way, and players are encouraged to wear a full-fingered glove on their bridge hand to minimise the possibility of virus transmission. If players are unable to wear a glove on their bridge hand, they should sanitise hands frequently whilst playing.

Players should bring water in their own bottles and there should be no use of communal crockery, cutlery or glasses unless they can be cleaned adequately in a commercial kitchen environment such as an attached restaurant or cafe.

4. Hand Hygiene, Cleaning and Disinfecting

Hand Hygiene

All people entering a billiard room should sanitise their hands upon arrival and upon re-entry if they leave the room. It is also recommended that players sanitise hands regularly during the course of play. Hand sanitiser must have a minimum of 60% alcohol to be effective.

People should avoid using their hands to cover their mouth and nose in the event of sneezing and/or coughing. A disposable tissue should be used to cover the mouth and nose and immediately deposited in a bin lined with a plastic bin liner. If a tissue is not available people should sneeze or cough into their upper arm or elbow region. People should use hand sanitiser after they touch their face, sneeze or cough.

Hand sanitiser should be readily available within the facility.

In the event that, a player or other person sneezes or coughs over a table, play should be ceased on the table until it can be adequately disinfected or alternatively the table should be quarantined for a minimum of 48 hours.

Once referees are permitted to officiate competition matches, they should wear clean gloves when handling balls and avoid touching their face. Referees should change their gloves in the event of sneezing or coughing and potential contamination of the gloves, and can launder the gloves as required with normal fabric washing methods on a hot wash.

Wearing a Mask

Wearing a mask is not mandatory in any Australian state or territory, however players may wish to consider this measure if they are to spend extended periods in an enclosed environment with others.

It is important to note a few issues about masks:

- Simple face masks such as surgical and cloth masks are designed to stop the wearer spreading respiratory droplets to others. They do not act as an effective barrier to inhaling viral particles in the atmosphere
- N95 or P2 masks are designed to stop the wearer inhaling particles in the atmosphere. They are effective to a high standard.
- All masks need to be fitted properly in order to work effectively.
- Correct removal and disposal of masks is critical to prevent spread of particles from the mask to hands or the environment.
- Some helpful information about masks and their correct usage can be found here:
https://www.majacmedical.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/About_Face_Masks.pdf



Cleaning of Billiard Rooms

All billiard rooms should be cleaned thoroughly at least once daily with special attention to areas that are commonly handled such as door knobs, benchtops, bathrooms and seating. When cleaning and disinfecting areas, disposable gloves should be worn.

Cleaning can be undertaken by vacuuming carpets and washing hard surfaces with a detergent and wet cloth or mop for floor surfaces. Leather seats may require cleaning according to the manufacturer instructions and cloth seats that cannot be wiped down could be covered with removable sleeves that can be laundered or disposed of.

Disinfection

Following cleaning, surfaces which are frequently touched or handled by multiple people should be disinfected. Suitable hard surface disinfectants are:

- alcohol in a concentration of at least 70%,
- chlorine bleach in a concentration of 1000 parts per million,
- oxygen bleach, or
- wipes and sprays that contain quaternary ammonium compounds.

These chemicals will be labelled as 'disinfectant' on the packaging and must be diluted or used following the instructions on the packaging to be effective.

Disinfectant is not suitable on fabric surfaces as it only works with extended contact time with the surface.

Additional information on cleaning and disinfecting of workplaces and venues is available at:

https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces/industry-information/general-industry-information/cleaning#heading--7--tab-toc-how_often_should_i_disinfect

Waste Management Procedures

Public health authorities and waste management services have advised that normal waste management procedures for worksites can be utilized with the addition of:

- Lining all bins with a plastic bin liner bag which ideally can be tied at the top.
- All disposable tissues, paper towel and cleaning materials are to be placed in a bin immediately after use and not left on surfaces.
- Regular emptying of bins inside the venue to avoid overflow onto surfaces.
- When emptying bins staff should wear gloves and dispose of the gloves into a bin after use. Face masks are not required.
- Bags of rubbish which contain materials used to clean, disinfect or tissues etc. are to be placed in a second plastic bag prior to placing in larger bins for removal as per usual waste management.

Venues may wish to consult with their regular waste management service to confirm their requirements.

5. Stay Home if Unwell

Public health authorities advise all people to stay at home if they are unwell or display any symptoms of COVID19 infection. People are advised to seek medical advice and testing for COVID19 if they suspect they have the infection.



Players should not attend billiard venues if they suspect they may have been infected with COVID19 (including close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID19) or have been advised by health authorities to self-isolate.

It is recommended that the **‘Stay at home if unwell’** message is communicated in signage in billiard rooms and via club member newsletters and/or player information.

If a player is noted to be unwell with symptoms of COVID19, the venue operator can request that the person leaves immediately and advise them to seek medical advice.

6. Contact Tracing

A key component of managing the COVID-19 pandemic and reducing transmission of infection in the community, is rapid and effective contact tracing. Contact tracing is undertaken by public health authorities.

To support public health authorities with contact tracing all billiard room facilities must maintain a Register of Attendance (sign-in and sign out) either digitally or manually of all persons attending the billiard room venue which should include full name, time of attendance (arrival and leaving) and a contact phone number. A template attendance register produced by SportAus is available here: https://www.sportaus.gov.au/return-to-sport#attendance_register. If the billiard room is located within another venue where these details are taken then additional sign into the billiard room is not required. Attendance details must be provided to relevant health authorities upon request.

The ABSC supports the Australian government COVIDsafe App and strongly recommends that all players to download the app and have it turned on whilst playing.

7. Vulnerable Players

Vulnerable players are people who are at increased risk of infection and /or severe illness if they contract COVID19. This includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 50 years and older with one or more chronic medical conditions; people 65 years and older with one or more chronic medical conditions; people 70 years and older; and people with compromised immune systems.

All players who may be vulnerable or are concerned about their own personal health risk should check with their own doctor regarding the resumption of leisure activities such as billiards and snooker.

8. Resources and References

Safework Australia's COVID19 information

<https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces>

Australian Government Coronavirus Advice

<https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert>

<https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/coronavirus>

Australian Institute of Sport

https://ais.gov.au/health-wellbeing/covid-19#ais_framework_for_rebooting_sport

Ref: 1

[Chin A. et al Stability of SARS-CoV-2 in different environmental conditions. *Lancet Microbe* April 2020](#)