



SPORT CLIMBING AUSTRALIA

Climb Again Initiative COVID Safe Framework

Background

Sport Climbing Australia is the National Sporting Organisation for the Sport of Sport Climbing.

Sport Climbing Australia welcomes and supports the direction of the Federal and State/Territory Governments on the activities to combat the pandemic COVID -19 and minimise the impacts on society in general. We also recognise and thank the governments for the economic stimulus packages that have already been injected into the community, supporting our organisation but also businesses at all levels across the industry.

As one of four reasons provided to leave home, we appreciate that the governments value the benefits of exercise to the physical, mental and community health. This Position Paper aims to show how as an industry we are ready to re-open the facilities to continue the health benefits while managing the continued challenge of limiting the spread of COVID -19.

The Australian Institute of Sport published a framework for rebooting sports with general and sport specific guidelines for returning to sport. The National cabinet agreed on May 8 that this framework provides a guide to the staged resumption of sport and recreation in Australia. However, it is important to note:

“National Cabinet also agreed that the resumption of sport and recreation activity at any level must not compromise the health of individuals or the community; **must be based on objective health information to ensure potential transmission rates are conducive to the safe conduct of sport and recreation**; and should only occur where activity-specific, stringent, public and personal health measures are observed, and meeting minimum standards.”

On 8 May 2020 Sport Climbing Australia coordinated a call inviting all climbing facility managers across the country to receive an update on the 3-stage plan from the AIS, as well as the need for a consistent, transparent and collaborative approach across Australia for climbing again in an indoor environment.

Commitment

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and as the restrictions ease, Sport Climbing Australia recognises that the sport of Sport Climbing in competition and community environments requires specific guidelines to be created for a staged return to climbing. We are committed to ensure the safety of employees, the climbing community and all users involved within the Sport Climbing Industry.



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It is time for the industry to assist all levels of Government to continue to manage the spread of COVID -19 by embracing risk mitigation strategies in the way we manage and provide opportunities for the community to be active in a safe environment. This Framework aims to provide local government and industry service providers and facility managers with a Roadmap on how to re-open the industry facilities and start providing greater opportunities to the community to be more active

The aim of this document is to encourage all service providers to consider a standardised approach for re-opening. The following framework should be read in conjunction with the Federal Government's advice on Rebooting Sport.

Federal restriction stages

The table below is valid as of 8 May 2020 and is subject to change. Also, please be aware that state governments may not follow a staged approach in line with the stages below.

	Federal Government 3 step framework	AIS framework
Stage 1	No indoor physical activity including gyms Community centres, outdoor gyms, playgrounds and skate parks allow up to 10 people Outdoor sport (up to 10 people) consistent with the AIS Framework for Rebooting Sport	Restricted training. Aerobic and resistance training (solo). Climbing on home wall and equipment. Outdoor climbing (if allowed by local government).
Stage 2	Up to 20 people allowed to participate in outdoor sports consistent with the AIS Framework for Rebooting Sport Up to 20 people allowed to participate in all indoor sports, including gyms Need to maintain an average density of 4m ² per person Pools open with restrictions	Full training. Use of hand sanitiser prior and after the use of each climb/belay station. Use of liquid chalk only. Daily cleaning of floor equipment including bouldering mats.
Stage 3	All venues allowed to operate with gatherings of up to 100 people. Need to maintain an average density of 4m ² per person Community sport expansion to be considered consistent with the AIS Framework for Rebooting Sport	Full training and competition



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Disclaimer

This document and associated framework are designed to assist climbing wall operators to develop sound policies in response to COVID-19. Specific ways of implementing this guidance may vary depending on each facility and community.

Ultimately, requirements from the federal government, **each state government** and the health ministry will inform the framework that each individual facility and business will need to operate within.

We want this guidance to provide a certain level of flexibility in its implementation. This framework represents an effort to outline responsible practices however, identifying risks and hazards and developing appropriate and adequate plans to address those risks is the responsibility of each operator. This framework does not advocate any one specific solution to every risk and hazard.

Information and restrictions keep changing as we learn more about COVID-19 and items in this framework may not be up to date as recommendations evolve.

We did not attempt to encompass every possible policy, procedure, or practice that could be implemented in each circumstance. Furthermore, implementing these procedures does not guarantee, as it is not possible, that a climbing facility will be risk free for employees or guests or a workplace where workers will be free from all risk of Covid-19.

Template Covid-19 Climbing Facility Policies

Last reviewed: xx

In this document the term user includes any staff, patron, contractor, management or any other individual in the facility.

Key Strategies

We have identified 6 categories of strategies to be put in place within this plan:



1 Policies

The facility has reviewed its policies and procedures in the context of COVID-19. In particular this includes reviewing all procedures that require interaction between users and staff:

- sales and transactions
- induction and training
- supervision and assessments

All risk management policies and procedures which may be impacted have been reviewed

Our facility has a privacy policy in place which allows the sharing of personal data with authorities if required by law. These policies are known by staff and communicated to users as necessary.

Our introduction waiver/agreement has been reviewed or complementary documents with COVID safe practices are in place to inform and engage users with the new rules and policies

2 Communication

It is vital that users know what is expected of them and what they can expect to find in the facility.

We have set up a communication plan to inform users prior to, during and after the activity of their new rules and responsibilities. This includes, information on our website, social media campaigns and at our venue to warn users about the general risk of contracting COVID-19 in any public space. It highlights our commitment to public safety and communicates the steps we are taking as well as what we expect from users.

Our facility has clear signage - with graphics where possible, online communication and induction protocols to increase user awareness of the rules they are expected to follow and give staff the power to enforce those rules.

- Statements and policy documentation explaining what new policies and procedures are in place along with links to the public health authorities and to any guidance used to shape these policies.
- Customers are clearly informed to not enter the gym if they are experiencing illness, symptoms of COVID-19, or have been in contact with a high-risk individual.

Posters and signage are placed throughout the facility:

- At the entrance, post occupancy limits and instructions for access.
- Throughout the facility, posters should remind users of what behavior is expected.
- Throughout the facility use social distancing marking on floor and walls where appropriate
- In bathrooms and at hand washing or sanitising stations, provide instructions for proper hand hygiene.
- At entrances to areas with different occupancy limits, highlight the difference, e.g. bathrooms, yoga rooms, fitness rooms, boulder caves.

3 Staff Management and protection

The facility has implemented a communication plan with staff which:

- Uses graphics and clear brief language
- Staff can acknowledge new policies and procedures and changes to existing policies and procedures
- Is open to questions and comments from staff to allow ongoing review and updates as required

The facility has implemented a system to limit any risk of contamination across staff. This includes:

- multiple teams working on independent shifts which do not overlap
- new procedures to allow social distancing at all times
- minimising the number of shared equipment or tools and cleaning between usage
- online meetings or limited number of participants physically present
- physical barriers to separate people where appropriate
- staff uniforms management, cleaning and storage
- keep off-site all activities that are possible

All staff have undergone additional training including:

- Covid safe plan implementation
- New staff responsibilities and awareness
- Communication and interaction with users
 - Customer induction and awareness-raising
 - How to handle users who do not want to comply with the new policies.
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) required for each situation (use, storage and disposal)
- Practicing good hygiene including how to correctly wear and maintain PPE.
- Additional cleaning protocols
- Increased requirements for data collection from all users and staff
- Involvement of staff in the development and fine tuning of your COVID-19 planning, gathering front-line feedback.
- Answering questions about why you have chosen certain policies and how to talk about the cleanliness and infection risk in a climbing gym.

If an employee contracts or exhibits symptoms of COVID-19 there are clear communication protocols in place which describe:

- Who is notified and which details need to be provided?
- Whether self-isolation is required by other staff

4 Capacity and Contact Management

The local authorities and state government have put in place the maximum number of users that may be in the facility at one time. Our facility management and staff are aware of these limits and operating accordingly.

Our facility has put in place an attendance record system. The attendance records must include any individual entering the facility. As part of this process all users are asked to update their personal details before proceeding past the reception area.

Additionally, according to our floor plan we have determined that the capacity of our facility is ____ based on 4 square meters per-person in the climbing area plus allowance for staff and capacity within flow through zones.

Additional zoning has been implemented within the facility with different capacity allowances to encourage physical distancing with clear signage.

- Zone 1; Description: _____ Capacity _____
- Zone 2; Description: _____ Capacity _____
- Zone 3; Description: _____ Capacity _____
- Zone 4; Description: _____ Capacity _____
- etc

Staff will monitor the occupancy levels of these various areas and instruct users to disperse as necessary.

During a staged reopening process we will implement various measures and communicate these measures (social media, emailing our members, on site signage, website..). These measures will include:

- Limiting access to members only could make controlling access easier. It will also minimise training and assessment required for each user. This will be implemented as a starting point and then reviewed depending on facility attendance.
- Booking systems allow for reservations and prepayment of timeslots. The timeslots system does not allow for any crossover in between groups
- The booking system allows for triage of new vs returning users to minimise the size of the training/induction sessions (eg, only ... new users at a time)
- Displaying real time occupancy
- Account for appropriate waiting areas and queues should be considered for when occupancy limits at a particular time are hit.
- Breaks in a daily schedule may occur to allow for cleaning.
- Identifying distances in between each zone/belay station to ensure social distancing. This may require to open specific areas/stations on different days and implement a rotation process.
- Separate entrance and exit points will be implemented with clear signage.
- Queues will account for physical distancing with ground markers.
- sitting areas are in place to enforce social distancing.

Personal belongings management:

- users and staff are required to limit the number of items brought into the facility
- personal belonging storage and management is in place
- users and staff are asked to keep belongings in one unique bag
- customers and staff are requested to arrive at the facility already dressed appropriately (closing or limiting access to changeroom)

Routesetting is used to encourage physical distancing. This includes:

- More space between routes or lines.
- Creation of time specific lines/zones e.g., have certain routes or colors assigned to specific times/days.
- Consider fall zones and lowering top of climbs if required
- considering blank areas in between sectors
- consider grade separation and impact on user's flow

5 Facility Hygiene Protocols

We have researched and considered the type of cleaning agent used in the facility and in particular:

- When looking for cleaning agents make sure that chemicals do not react with any of the materials we are cleaning and that we do not mix chemicals.
- Pay close attention to the instructions for any products used and understand that there is usually a contact time required for proper disinfection.
- When necessary or recommended for cleaning, we require and provide employees with proper PPE such as gloves and masks.

Cleaning of the facility will increase in frequency and include:

- Visibility of cleaning to increase customer confidence
- Regular wiping down of surfaces which are frequently contacted with disinfectant
- Cleaning of matting
- Regular cleaning of bathrooms
- Cleaning of belaying systems
- Following manufacturer guidelines to regularly clean fixed ropes and auto-belay systems
- Carabiners and other devices
- Reception desks
- Handrails
- High traffic areas including bathrooms
- Door handles and other contacts with doors
- Tablets or other equipment that users may be in contact with

Showering facilities will be closed.

Shared water stations will be closed except to refill water bottles.

Pets will not be allowed in the facility.

Other protocols for food catering, coffees and drinks as required by regulation covering restaurants. This includes storage, preparation, serving, cleaning and disposal as required.

Cleaning when routesetting including washing of climbing holds:

- Routesetters will take additional precautions when stripping walls, preparing holds for storage, or washing holds by wearing proper PPE such as face covering and eye protection
- A cleaning agent is used in the hold washing process and holds will be isolated for a minimum of 72 hours prior to any pressure washing.

6 Climber Protection Measures

If a user is sick, experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, or has recently been in contact with a high-risk individual they should not go to the gym.

- Staff are trained to identify and understand symptoms
- Staff are trained to ask users if they have experienced any symptoms recently
- Staff are empowered to refuse service or remove users who do not follow your desired hygiene protocols or display known symptoms with clear planning and protocol about how to handle the situation.

Induction of all users entering the facilities on rules and procedures for Covid safe practices in the facility. Customers should respect physical distancing guidelines and allow for appropriate space between other climbers, belayers, and staff. In particular this may require the implementation of a new buddy check procedure.

Users should practice proper respiratory etiquette and not cough or sneeze without appropriately covering their nose and mouth.

Users should limit the number of partners that they climb with to either household members or a select few partners. Customers are encouraged to stay with the same climbing partner for the whole session when possible (exceptions may occur for users coming with children)

Face coverings may be used in a gym:

- If users are choosing to wear a face covering do not require them to remove their covering.
- training of staff on face covering management and disposal

Climbing Specific measures:

Customers should wash or sanitise their hands frequently. Specifically, they should sanitise hands on entry and between every distinct route or boulder problem. This also applies prior to and after the use of any belay station.

Users should not touch their face while climbing or without first washing or sanitising their hands. This includes discouraging climbers to place rope in their mouth.

Also,

- Only the use of liquid chalk will be permitted
- Liquid Chalk with alcohol content of 70% or more is recommended
- Our facility will provide adequate hand sanitising stations

Climbing Equipment

- Encourage users to use their own equipment and not share items.
- If users ask for advice regarding cleaning their personal climbing equipment, remind them to consult the manufacturer's instructions for doing so.

Rental equipment will only be available to users if:

- each item can be clearly identified and linked to all individuals that have used it
- items are cleaned and sanitised thoroughly in between each use (contact manufacturer to follow proper procedures and recommendations)
- if the item cannot be cleaned it will be quarantined for 72 hours

- procedures and storage are in place to hand over and return equipment

Clothing and shoe wear:

- no shirtless climbing allowed
- no bare feet in the facility
- use of climbing shoes for climbing strictly (eg not walking around the facility with the climbing shoes and not climbing with anything other than climbing shoes)

Other measures to be put in place for specific activities:

- workout area guidelines and recommendation, cleaning procedures
- stretching, fitness and yoga area
- other areas