



MEMORANDUM

TO NSWRL Club Administrators

FROM David Trodden, Chief Executive Officer

DATE 12 March 2020

SUBJECT **COVID-19—IMPORTANT GUIDELINES**

After considering Department of Health recommendations and consulting medical experts we are issuing the following guidelines that will apply from today for all NSWRL competitions.

The guidelines are focused on the risk of COVID-19 and are shaped by our priority to protect the health and safety of our employees, players and fans. The guidelines also reflect our collective obligation to take measured and sensible actions to reduce the potential transmission of COVID-19 within the community.

These guidelines will limit interactions between players and the public and will alter traditional activities that are commonplace within Clubs. The NSWRL expects Clubs to take all reasonable steps to implement the guidelines described in this memo. They are important steps for us all to implement to protect the health of the people in our ecosystem and to do our best to assist the broader community effort to slow the spread of the virus.

The situation with respect to the virus is fluid and advice from experts is likely to change rapidly. Consequently, these guidelines will apply from today (12 March 2020) but are likely to be updated as our advice changes.

Finally, we recognise that these guidelines will require changes in behaviour from clubs, players, fans and other stakeholders. Some of the changes will present logistical challenges, particularly given the short notice. Our expectation is that Clubs and players will take all reasonable steps to comply with the guidelines in the same way that the broader community is making adjustments to maximise the collective effort to stem the spread of the virus.

Match-day

- Players are to minimise contact with the public and non-essential personnel. This will include players:
 - changing how they interact with fans. It remains important to engage with fans but for the time being that engagement needs to be done differently such that physical contact is limited.

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Players should avoid handshakes and other close contact with the general public, including pre- and post-match on the field. Players to consider clapping or acknowledging fans from the touchline as an alternative.

- taking reasonable steps to avoid contact with fans as players enter and exit the field
 - replacing pre- and post-match handshakes with alternatives (e.g. back slap etc)
 - steering clear of selfies, and avoid taking items (pens, etc) directly from the general public to sign
 - avoiding non-essential gatherings with fans or the general public as far as reasonably possible.
- Clubs are to take reasonable steps to minimise match-day contact between players and non-essential football personnel, corporate partners and media. These steps include:
 - limiting access to changerooms to essential match-day personnel.

This limitation should apply to non-essential club staff, friends and family, corporate and other partners and media (other than limited host-broadcaster access).

There may be circumstances where it is appropriate for non-essential personnel to access change rooms and this should be considered by each Club with the advice of its Chief Medical Officer on a case-by-case basis.

Community activities

- Clubs are to take reasonable steps to limit club-organised player contact with community organisations such as hospitals and schools. This will help mitigate the risk of players contracting the virus and it will reduce the burden on these facilities and organisations that are already facing challenges with hygiene supervision.
- Players are to take similar steps with respect to their own personal initiatives with community organisations.

Specific medical and hygiene considerations for training, travel and matches

- Clubs should take the advice of their Chief Medical Officers with respect to enhanced medical and hygiene initiatives. Such steps will include:
 - regular cleaning of surfaces with antiseptic solution – gym, equipment, floors/mats, treatment areas, massage tables
 - thorough handwashing by treating medical/paramedical staff between every treatment (maintain standard universal infection control precautions)
 - disposable gloves changed and appropriately disposed of between every player contact
 - avoid sharing of towels, water bottles etc (including in treatment areas)
 - no contact to be made with water bottle spouts
 - appropriate and regular cleaning of water bottles and other water/sports drink dispensers
 - consider the use of disposable paper cups for individual use (where appropriate)
 - towels used for injuries or to wipe the face/body during matches/training should not be shared and should be washed appropriately

- no spitting in communal areas
- food preparation and provision of food hygiene must be maintained at the highest levels
- CMOs should ensure all players receive the latest flu vaccine (when available) and are up-to-date on other vaccinations (this may limit other illness that could be confused with a possible COVID-19 diagnosis).

Travel

- All Players should have personal alcohol-based hand sanitiser for use throughout trips
- Where viable, consider buses instead of planes for shorter trips to reduce public contact
- Avoid general public contact as much as possible in airports; consider staying as a single group and finding less populated areas to wait for flights
- Group seating (if available) may help minimise player contact with the general public.

Hotels

- Minimise contact with hotel staff and the general public as much as possible
- Discuss with hotels prior to arrival specific cleaning and hygiene requirements; including ensuring to your satisfaction that rooms (team and player rooms) are cleaned appropriately
- Supply alcohol-based hand sanitiser to all team and player rooms and encourage regular use as per general hygiene guidelines
- Discourage all sharing of utensils, drinks etc
- Discuss with hotel and club medical staff the best ways to minimise potential food contamination.

General hygiene

- All players and Club personnel should continue to practice good hygiene as this is the best defence against most viruses. These practices are well publicised and include:
 - avoiding touching the face and mouth
 - washing hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water
 - covering coughs and sneezes, disposing properly of tissues, and using alcohol-based hand sanitisers
 - if unwell, avoiding contact with others
 - reducing contact with the general public (especially unknown people) as much as possible.

Reporting obligations

- All players and Club personnel must report any illness to their Club Medical Officer (CMO) immediately. This is especially important for any fever or respiratory illness (cough, sneeze, sore throat, shortness of breath etc). This is considered essential to help contain spread of infection within a Club.
- Players and Club personnel should report to their CMO if any close contacts/family are unwell.
- Until seen and assessed by their CMO any player or staff member with a possible illness or contact must not attend any training session, functions, matches or have any contact with any other players or Club personnel.

- All suspect and confirmed cases, players and staff within the NSWRL must be reported by the relevant Club Medical Officers to the NRL Chief Medical Officer by phone (0414 543 093) as soon as possible.

Questions and Contacts

Questions about these guidelines should be directed to:

Medical – your first contact should be your Club Medical Officer. He or she should have contact with the NRL CMO, Dr Paul Bloomfield (0414 543 093)

Media – your first contact should be your Club Media Manager, who should contact the NSWRL Head of Public Affairs, Tracie Edmondson (0416 258 342)

Football competitions – NSWRL General Manager – Football, BJ Mather (0428 684 633)