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PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA  
DEPARTMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES



# COVID Safe Plan Australian Parliament House

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## 1. Background

Australian Parliament House (APH) is an iconic building of national significance and a symbol of Australian democracy.

Each year APH welcomes members of the public, national and international tourists and school groups to experience parliamentary proceedings, the art collection and the architectural design of the building. Over 1 million people visit APH each year.

The Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) is responsible for the effective stewardship of the building and for enhancing the Parliament's engagement with the community. As part of DPS' responsibilities, a variety of public programs are available including:

- free tours, exhibitions, events and visitor experiences
- paid tours and events, and
- the APH School Visit Program that includes a one-hour comprehensive guided tour and a one-hour interactive education program conducted by the Parliamentary Education Office.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and advice provided by health authorities, the Speaker of the House of Representatives (Speaker) and the President of the Senate (President) announced the closure of APH to the public effective 25 March 2020.

As a result of the closure, all upcoming booked events and public program offerings were suspended.

### 1.1 Cautious and COVID Safe Re-opening

On Friday 29 May 2020, the ACT Government moved to Stage 2.1 of the Recovery Plan. The ACT Government's *COVID-19 Easing of Restrictions Roadmap (Stage 2.1)* permitted the reopening of galleries, museums, national institutions and historic places with accompanying COVID Safe measures.

As such, the Speaker and the President announced the cautious COVID Safe reopening of APH to the public from Saturday 4 July and the recommencement of school visits from Monday 20 July 2020. Reopening plans were developed with advice from medical experts.

Exercising an abundance of caution and after consulting with medical authorities, APH was closed to the public during parliamentary sitting periods in August, September and October. Following updated medical advice, the Speaker and the President announced that APH would be open to the public all the time from November 2020.

On Saturday 20 February 2021, the ACT Government moved to a set of 'COVID-normal' restrictions as outlined in the Recovery Plan. This included mandatory use of the Check In CBR app for all visitors entering APH through the public entrance and dining at Queens Terrace Cafe.

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## 2. The Plan

The **COVID Safe Plan: Australian Parliament House** was developed in line with the ACT Public Health Direction (*Restricted Activities – Gatherings, Business or Undertakings*) Emergency Direction 2020.

DPS will review and adjust the plan, when necessary, to maintain COVID Safe measures at APH according to the latest health authority advice.

The following guided the development of this Plan.

**Risk informed approach** to reduce transmissibility risk between visitors, building occupants and parliamentarians. This includes, where possible, strictly managed public access to the private areas of APH.

**Approved by health experts** to ensure the necessary COVID Safe measures are in place to reduce the risk of transmissibility.

**Additional COVID Safe plans** for discrete areas of APH operations such as catering outlets and for our licensees.

**COVID Safe measures** to protect visitors and those who work in the building.

**Additional cleaning** of high touch points in areas accessed by visitors.

## 3. Welcoming Visitors

Like other national institutions, visitor access has been designed to be COVID Safe. The Speaker and President approved the following activities for visitors:

- small groups of booked tours – both free and paid
- school visits with groups kept separate from other visitors and people working in the building, and
- events with rigorous COVID Safe measures as detailed separately in the COVID Safe Events and Functions Framework.

### 3.1 Building Visitor Access

Visitor numbers and occupancy limits are based on the most current public health authority advice and ACT Government *Easing of Restrictions Roadmap*.

Tours run regularly and the maximum number of people in the public areas conforms to one person per two square metres.

Visitors have limited access to the public areas of APH and no access to private areas. Security points, electronic access control and tensile barriers assist to separate visitors from APH building occupants and parliamentarians.

Access to the building for visitors, schools and business visitors is managed by separating access points.

School tours remain separate from other visitors and building occupants. Tours and educational programs have been revised to implement COVID Safe measures.

### 3.2 Conditions of Entry

The standard conditions of entry for visitors to APH have been updated to reflect COVID Safe measures.

Visitors who are feeling unwell are asked not to attend APH and those with visible

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symptoms may be refused entry to the building and/or restricted from participating in public gathering events.

All visitors participating in tours at APH will be ticketed entry only and contact information is required at this point. Collection of contact information using Check In CBR app is also required on entry for all business visitors and the general public. Contact information for school visits is collected through the booking process to enable contact tracing if required.

Collection of contact information through the Check In CBR app for all visitors over the age of 16 is a requirement of the ACT Government under its Public Health Direction.

### 3.3 Physical Distancing

In accordance with the ACT Public Health Direction (*Restricted Activities – Gatherings, Business or Undertakings*) Emergency Direction 2020, the following measures were put in place.

**Supervision** by DPS Visitor Services Officers to brief visitors on COVID Safe measures, offer hand sanitiser and to monitor physical distancing throughout the visit.

**Single direction traffic flow** of groups as they move through their tour.

**Managing ingress and egress** to keep groups to time and manage maximum capacity limits in public areas.

**Floor markers** in high traffic areas to remind about 1.5m physical distancing.

**Reduced access to** areas within APH where physical distancing cannot be maintained.

### 3.4 Enhanced Hygiene & Cleaning Measures

DPS introduced the enhanced hygiene measures and cleaning practices in response to COVID-19 including:

- automated hand sanitiser dispensers available for use at entrances and throughout the building
- COVID Safe signage throughout the building including good hand hygiene signage in all bathrooms
- removal of all paper and brochures
- contactless payment at all retail outlets
- hygiene shields at customer facing areas such as the Parliament House Shop, main visitor entry security point and the concierge desk, and
- additional cleaning of high touch points, such as lift buttons and balustrades.

## 4. Employee Practices

Communications on COVID Safe measures and protocols are regularly disseminated to everyone working in the building.

Everyone working in the building is reminded to stay home if unwell and to seek medical treatment and COVID-19 testing if recommended by a medical practitioner.

Appropriate personal protection equipment (PPE) and hand sanitiser and anti-bacterial wipes are available to all employees. Face masks are available to people working in public facing roles or when physical distancing cannot be maintained.

Signage has been installed throughout APH, including at all lifts, meeting rooms, and lunch

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rooms specifying the maximum number of occupants.

Additional cleaning of high touch points is conducted. Practicing good hygiene is frequently encouraged including washing hands regularly.

Physical distancing is indicated throughout the building and floor markers are placed at all entrances and food outlets as a reminder. Where 1.5m physical distancing cannot be maintained PPE is provided.

#### 4.1 Reporting of Suspected or Confirmed Cases

There is a reporting process for suspected or confirmed cases for everyone who works in the building. The guidance for reporting is regularly disseminated.

Reporting and cleaning protocols are used to respond quickly to incidents to reduce the transmissibility risk in the building.

#### 4.2 Emergency Management

APH has formal Building Emergency Procedures and Emergency Evacuation Procedures prepared in accordance with Australian Standard (AS) 3745-2010.

Emergency exits and evacuation points described in the Emergency Evacuation Plan and Evacuation Procedures are not impacted by this COVID Safe Plan.

Fire Wardens and First Aid Officers are on-site 24-hours a day.

Fire Wardens will encourage employees and visitors to maintain physical distancing when at an assembly area.

#### 4.3 Management of this Plan

DPS is monitoring the COVID-19 situation and takes action where required to reduce the transmissibility in the building. This Plan and the COVID Safe measures in place are regularly reviewed against the latest health advice.

The **COVID Safe Plan: Australian Parliament House** is a living document and will be updated as necessary in response to public health directions, best practice advice, and local conditions.