



# Return To Play Guide



## Introduction

Rugby League plays an integral role in the health and wellbeing of the people involved in our sport at all levels, whether as a player, volunteer or employee. While there are more than 170,000 active players annually, there are many tens of thousands more who make valuable contributions in creating the Rugby League community.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had devastating effects on communities, which has led to the introduction of restrictions targeted toward stopping the spread of the virus. Sport has a significant role to play in contributing to the re-establishment of normality in society, and Rugby League aims to play a leading role in this regard across Australia.

Community Rugby League and its valued volunteers will need to navigate a path through what is a continually changing and complex environment to guide our participants back to doing what they love, playing and supporting Rugby League.

The purpose of this document is to provide Rugby League stakeholders with a set of general recommendations as they develop plans for the return of Rugby League training and competition in their communities.

The following guidelines are not intended or implied to be mandates, firm policies

or industry standards. They have been developed in consultation with the relevant authorities and State bodies and align with the "Australian Institute of Sport Framework For Rebooting Sport In A COVID-19 Environment".

**Note:** These guidelines may be changed over time under advice received from the relevant Government and Health authorities. This document will be housed on [playrugbyleague.com](http://playrugbyleague.com) and will be revised in accordance with the relevant amendments as required.



## Background

On 1 May 2020, the Australian Institute of Sport released a framework on the "reboot" of Community and Individual Sport in Australia in the COVID-19 situation (Framework). The development of the Framework was guided by a set of National Principles to ensure the safe and responsible re-introduction of sporting activity. While the State and Territory Government agencies

have ultimate authority in regard to the level and application of COVID-19 restrictions in their jurisdictions, it is recognised and accepted that all sporting activities nationwide are to be compliant with the AIS Framework.

These recommendations are based upon current guidelines set forth by the Federal Government and align with the Framework. The knowledge surrounding COVID-19 is continually changing, and circumstances are different based on geographic region. While the three phases (A, B and C) of the AIS Framework provide a general guide; individual jurisdictions may guide the timing of introduction of the various levels of sport participation with regard to local authority recommendations depending on the epidemiology, risk mitigation strategies and public health capacity in the area. Therefore, individual Leagues and Clubs must consult and adhere to directives released by respective State and Local Authorities in their area(s) when developing commencement policies and procedures.

### **Proposed Criteria for the Resumption of Sporting Activity**

Initial resumption of community and individual sport will be governed by public health policy and Federal, State/Territory Government directives. It is worth noting that different States/Territories may permit the resumption of some sporting





activities at different times, dependent on local COVID-19 transmission, resources and other variables influencing local policy. Even within a State/Territory there could be geographical variability.

All community sporting organisations must ensure that the activities undertaken in training and competition are consistent with the applicable guidance from the relevant Local Public Health Authorities.

Resumption of sporting activity may not be linear. Relaxing/increasing restrictions may be required in response to fluctuating numbers of COVID-19 cases.

An initial resumption of sporting activity is dependent on several factors:

1. A sustained decrease in COVID-19 transmission;
2. Healthcare system capacity;
3. Community sport clubs/groups and individuals making their own risk assessment guided by their Local Public Health Authorities (i.e. community sports clubs and individuals cannot restart sport before permitted by Local Public Health Authorities but may decide to delay a restart due to their own circumstances/risk assessment).

**Three levels (Levels A, B, C) of sporting activities are recommended in the context of a COVID-19 environment within the Framework.**

## Description of recommendations for Level A, B, C activities in community and individual sport

All Sports	Level A	Level B	Level C
<p><b>General Description</b></p>	<p>Activity that can be conducted by a solo athlete or by pairs where at least 1.5m can always be maintained between participants. No contact between athletes and/or other personnel. Examples for all sports – general fitness aerobic and anaerobic (e.g. running, cycling sprints, hills).</p> <p>Strength and sport-specific training permitted if no equipment required, or have access to own equipment (e.g. ergometer, weights).</p> <p>Online coaching and resources (e.g. videos, play books).</p>	<p>As per Level A plus: Indoor/outdoor activity that can be conducted in small groups (not more than 10 athletes and/or other personnel in total) and with adequate spacing (not more than 1 person per 4m<sup>2</sup>).</p> <p>Some sharing of sporting equipment permitted such as kicking a football, hitting a tennis ball, use of a skipping rope, weights, mats.</p> <p>Non-contact skills training. Accidental contact may occur but no deliberate body contact drills. No wrestling, holding, tackling or binding.</p> <p>Commercial gyms, bootcamps, yoga, Pilates, dance classes (e.g. barre, ballet, hip hop, not partnered), cycling ‘spin’ classes permitted if other measures (above) are met.</p>	<p>As per Level B plus: Full sporting activity that can be conducted in groups of any size including full contact (competition, tournaments, matches). Wrestling, holding, tackling and/or binding (e.g. rugby scrums) permitted.</p> <p>For larger team sports, consider maintaining some small group separation at training.</p> <p>For some athletes full training will be restricted by commercial operation of facilities</p>

All Sports	Level A	Level B	Level C
<p><b>General Hygiene Measures</b></p>	<p>No sharing of exercise equipment or communal facilities.</p> <p>Apply personal hygiene measures even when training away from group facilities – hand hygiene regularly during training (hand sanitisers) plus strictly pre and post training. Do not share drink bottles or towels. Do not attend training if unwell (contact doctor).</p> <p>Spitting and clearing of nasal/respiratory secretions on ovals or other sport settings must be strongly discouraged.</p>	<p>Communal facilities can be used after a sport-specific structured risk assessment and mitigation process is undertaken.</p> <p>‘Get in, train and get out’ – be prepared for training prior to arrival at venue (minimise need to use/gather in change rooms, bathrooms). Minimise use of communal facilities (e.g. gym, court) with limited numbers (not more than 10 athletes/other personnel in total). Have cleaning protocols in place for equipment and facilities.</p> <p>Hand hygiene (hand sanitisers) on entry and exit to venues, as well as pre, post and during training. Thorough full body shower with soap before and after training (preferably at home). Where possible maintain distance of at least 1.5m while training.</p> <p>No socialising or group meals.</p>	<p>Return to full use of sporting facilities. Continue hygiene and cleaning measures as per Level B.</p> <p>If any massage beds being used, hygiene practises to include no bed linen except single use towels/paper towel, cleaning treatment beds and key surfaces after each athlete and hand hygiene.</p> <p>Limit unnecessary social gatherings.</p>

All Sports	Level A	Level B	Level C
<b>Spectators, Additional Personnel</b>	No spectators unless required (e.g. parent or carer).	Separate spectators from athletes. Spectators should maintain social distancing of at least 1.5m.	Minimum contact of non-essential surfaces to occur and hands on treatment should be kept to essential only.  Non-essential personnel should be discouraged from entering change rooms.

**Description of recommendations for Level A, B, C activities in Community Rugby League.**

	Level A	Level B	Level C
<b>Rugby League</b>	Running/aerobic/agility training (solo), resistance training (solo), skills training (solo) including kicking, passing, ball skills (e.g. against wall) to self.	Skill drills using a ball, kicking and passing.  No tackling/wresting.  Small group (not more than 10 athletes/staff in total) sessions.  <b>Note:</b> Confirm local advice for group numbers as there are variations between jurisdictions	Full training and competition with groups of up to 100 allowed.

## General Considerations.

- Encourage all members to download the **COVIDSAFE App**.
- Change rooms, surfaces and objects in other relevant spaces should be cleaned between exercise sessions/matches with disinfectant.
- 'Get in, train and get out'**. Athletes should prepare for exercise at home, to minimise need to congregate in change rooms/ sporting facilities. Athletes should get dressed to train/compete at home and shower at home on completion.
- Any tasks that can be done at home, should be done at home (e.g. recovery sessions, online meetings)
- When practical, athletes and other personnel should maintain social distancing of at least 1.5m (e.g. between training drills/ efforts)
- There should be no unnecessary body contact (e.g. hand shaking, high fives)
- Community sport organisations should minimise unnecessary groups of spectators. Spectators should be encouraged or directed to spread out and maintain social distance.
- Consideration should be given as to whether it is appropriate to serve food and drink at community events, as this will likely encourage spectators to come into close proximity with each other.
- Hand hygiene stations should be placed in high traffic areas and entry/exit points of venues/ facilities.















---

## COVID Resource Links

Below you will find a series of links to resources that will provide you with a detailed understanding of COVID-19 and the standards and practices encouraged nationwide. We encourage you to share these throughly with your community members and complete the COVID-19 Online Education Module.

-  [Good Hygiene For Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
-  [Hand Washing Guidance](#)
-  [Keep That Cough Under Cover](#)
-  [Self-isolation \(self-quarantine\) For COVID-19](#)
-  [Advice For People At Risk Of COVID-19](#)
-  [COVID-19 Resources](#)
-  [Good Hygiene Is In Your Hands](#)
-  [Good Hygiene Practices Poster For Business](#)
-  [COVID-19 Online Education Module](#)
-  [COVID-19 Resource Print Portal \(Skoop\)](#)

---

## Suspect a Positive Case? Follow these steps:

- 1.** If at the Club/facility/fields immediately direct the person to seek medical treatment and self-isolate
- 2.** Check if the person is using the COVID Safe app
- 3.** Advise all Club members who may have been in contact with the person in last 14 days of the incident and direct them to seek medical advice and self-isolate until the suspect case is confirmed negative or medical advice directs otherwise.
- 4.** Club to advise Local League Manager of suspected positive case. Local League Manager to advise Regional/Division Manager and local Health authority.
- 5.** Regional Manager/Division Manager to advise State organisation.
- 6.** State organisation to advise NRL.
- 7.** Advise all Club members who may have been in contact with the person in the last 14 days of the test outcome.
- 8.** Club to advise Local League Manager of the test outcome.
- 9.** Local League Manager to advise Regional/Division Manager.
- 10.** Regional Manager/Division Manager to advise State organisation.
- 11.** State organisation to advise NRL.

# Registrations & Accreditations.

## Participant Registrations

Leagues will have the discretion to relax the 30 June deadline for registrations for season 2020.

## Clearances and Permits

Leagues will have the discretion to relax the 30 June deadline for Clearance and Permit applications for season 2020.

A Clearance may still be denied for reasons as follows:

- 1. Fees in default or owing (excluding Development Fees) to a:**
  - a. Club
  - b. League/District
  - c. State
- 2. Fees on property owing to a:**
  - a. Club
  - b. League/District
  - c. State
- 3. Pending tribunal or judiciary matters with a:**
  - a. League/District or State
- 4. Contractual agreements in dispute with a:**
  - a. Club
  - b. League/District
  - c. State

**Note:** Applications are still subject to local by-laws and criteria.

## Coach Accreditations

Coaches must be registered with their Club and team and complete all online modules relevant to the age group they are coaching prior to taking on any coaching duties.



Coaches will not be fully accredited until completion of the face to face course component relevant to the team's age category. The face to face course component must be completed no later than four (4) weeks prior to the end of their team's regular competition.

## Coach Re-Accreditations

Coach accreditations which expire throughout season 2020 will have the expiry date extended to 31 October 2020. Re-accreditation will be required to continue coaching in the 2021 season. Extension of Coach accreditation is a one-off event for the 2020 season in response to difficulties presented by regulations imposed in response to COVID-19 and is not to be considered a precedent for seasons beyond 2020.

## Referee Accreditations

An online re-accreditation module has been developed to



provide accredited referees with the appropriate information which allows them to officiate in season 2020.

Further work is being undertaken to provide delivery of F1 and F2 accreditations however we are not yet in a position to confirm how this will take place. NRL will release updates regularly regarding delivery of F1 and F2 accreditations as we work towards providing solutions.



### Sports Trainer Accreditations

Our Safety Education  
provider, Sports Medicine

Australia, have released the following statement:

To support a smooth resumption of sport, SMA has extended all Sports Trainer Accreditations that were due to expire from 19th March 2020 to 19th September 2020 for a further six months. The six-month period applies from the date of the person's current expiry date. To view the full statement click [HERE](#).

There may be an opportunity for Sports Trainer's whose accreditation expired during February and early March to have an extension applied to their qualification, this will be on a case by case basis. Please email SMA at [safersport@sma.org.au](mailto:safersport@sma.org.au) if this applies to you.

Safe Work Australia have also advised no compliance action will be taken by

WHS regulators in relation to the first aid training requirements in regulation 42 of the model WHS Regulations where first aid training is not available because of COVID-19. [See Safe Work Australia.](#)

We are currently working with Sports Medicine Australia to deliver Safety Education courses and qualify First Responders to service competitions as they move to re-commencement.

Once a suitable solution has been finalised this will be communicated through the relevant stakeholder networks.