

HIGHLANDS GARDEN SOCIETY BOWRAL - INC.

POLICY & PROCEDURE: Infectious Respiratory Disease Control

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POLICY

It is the policy of the Highlands Garden Society Bowral Inc. to comply with Work, Health & Safety laws. HGSB seeks to take all reasonable care for the wellbeing of members. Equally it is incumbent on members to ensure they do their utmost to prevent infection of others from contagious illness.

While each individual member is responsible for their own health, the Society deems it necessary to introduce measures to minimise risks associated with viruses, such as COVID-19 (in 2019-20) and the forthcoming season of winter flu. These procedures may be amended at short notice if circumstances require, or new information on the transmission of the virus or flu becomes available, demanding changed actions. Remember: We want you to continue to enjoy HGS meetings, healthy and safely.

BACKGROUND

There are now cases of transmission of COVID-19 in the Australian Community between people with no apparent connection to overseas travel or those who have travelled to countries/towns in which this virus is active. There are 73 cases recorded in Australia (as of 8.3.'20) with 3 deaths to date. Based on available WHO data the mortality rate is between 2 and 3% of all reported cases, between 20 & 30 times that of seasonal flu, which averages 0.1%¹. As more data and cases are recorded, this number will change. Of special concern is that older people are more adversely affected. Mortality in older persons who get the COVID-19 Virus is a significant 8-15%. depending on whether the patient suffers any pre-existing medical conditions. Your Committee has sought the best available information to guide us.

While there are seasonally updated vaccines for the flu, which most older Australians get each autumn, no preventive medication is available for COVID-19. Hospitalisation for severe cases involves respirator breathing assistance, fever control and intravenous fluids. Mild cases may be self-medicated to control fever under medical guidance at home combined with self-isolation/quarantine.

Health authorities indicate that once the virus is in the general population and transmitted by those without obvious connections to overseas travel in risk areas, the best defence is to slow down its transmission through improved hygiene practices, to enable limited hospital facilities to cope.

A full Q&A on the Coronavirus can be found on this [World Health Organisation](#) (WHO) site or [Australian Government Health](#).

Organisations, such as the Highlands Garden Society Bowral, must assist in slowing down the virus's spread to protect its members and members have an obligation to do likewise. If the Pandemic becomes widespread the Society reserves the right to suspend events at short notice in the interests of member safety. (A pandemic means the worldwide spread of a new disease.)

Even if people do become infected with the virus, the vast majority will return to good health. The attached Procedures which the Highlands Garden Society Bowral are adopting, are to minimise risk of transferring illness between members. It's not only for COVID-19 but taking similar actions for the flu season, which has already ramped up earlier than usual in 2020.

March 9th, 2020

¹ Sources: CDC&P USA; WHO; Australian Chief Medical Officer, Safework Australia, Australian Government Health.
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This document is aimed at maximising the ability of the Highlands Garden Society Bowral to maintain normal meetings and gatherings, while enhancing members' safety in the current COVID-19 pandemic and through the winter flu season.

THE 6 KEY THINGS WE'D LIKE YOU TO REMEMBER, RELATED TO CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) & FLU

- 1. If you are feeling unwell, please don't attend. Call your medical practitioner by phone for advice.**
- 2. On arrival please rub your hands with the antibacterial sanitiser provided. Don't touch your face. Don't shake hands or embrace.**
- 3. Please wash your hands or reapply the sanitiser before & after putting out/stacking chairs.**
- 4. If you must cough please use a handkerchief, or your elbow away from others.**
- 5. Continue to bring your own cups for monthly meetings.**
- 6. If preparing or serving food, wipe all preparation surfaces with kitchen disinfectant and wash hands.**

THE DETAILED PROCEDURE to minimise transmission of Coronavirus (COVID-19) or Seasonal Flu within the membership of Highlands Garden Society Bowral - March 9th, 2020

1. Based on advice from the Federal Government & Health NSW, organisations promoting events, where people are gathered, require added precautions to reduce the transmission or acquisition of the COVID-19 virus, as well as the winter flu. Remember the vast majority of those who get the virus or flu get better. What this is about is trying to prevent more people getting ill.
2. Highlands Garden Society Bowral has a majority of older members, some of whom live in retirement villages. The Society is taking appropriate extra precautions in your interests and asks you to play your part. If you have travelled to a government-designated risk region, you cannot attend an HGSB event for 15 days after return from that country.
3. Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a virus transmitted by aerosol droplets (i.e. sneezing/coughing). So, we need to limit exposure to anyone infected, to slow cross-infection. Touching your face, eyes or nose speeds transmission. You should really try to avoid this. We all do it.
4. Prior to attending a HGSB event, if you have any flu, cough or cold symptoms, or shortness of breath, you should not attend that month's meeting. (The Society is not a medical authority, so we do not give medical advice.) Unwell members should call (not visit) their medical practitioner to self-report illness and seek guidance on further steps, such as self-isolation or attend the Bowral Hospital Emergency department for testing. If in doubt refer to the [HEALTH NSW](https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/) web site.
5. Before you leave home, wash both sides of your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap. Rinse well. On arrival all please use the anti-bacterial lotion provided, prior to signing-in to the meeting. After assembling chairs/tables, the set-up crew should again clean their hands with the provided anti-bacterial lotion. It is recommended people do not shake hands or embrace. If you do need to cough, please do so into a handkerchief which you should dispose of, or cough into your elbow. With such measures, the use of available pens, handling money or tickets, is unlikely to be a significant risk. Top-up uses of hand sanitiser during the evening, or at the supper interval strengthens your protection and that of others.
6. Coronavirus droplets can lie active for at least 3 or 4 hours. Indeed, some tests indicate it can live for up to 4 days on a hard surface!² Those who prepare food for suppers or other events should only do so on dry surfaces that have been cleaned with a kitchen cleaning agent containing recognised anti-viral effect, such as bleach. Members are asked to take extra time to thoroughly wash your hands for at least 20 seconds. This reduces inadvertent transfer of infection from a surface or one's face/nose/eyes. A member of the committee will wipe microphones and the podium with a suitable disinfectant wipe prior to use.
7. When the evening's meeting concludes, after chairs & tables have been put away, you should again make use of the hand cleanser, so you depart with minimal risk of infection on hands. Remember: COVID-19 is a virus. Hand cleanser neutralises bacterial contamination. Washing hands with Soap & Water when you return home, for at least 20-seconds, washes off almost all viruses and bacteria.
8. To enable those who cannot attend, and to enhance membership value for those who historically have not attended due to travel concerns or weather, the Committee is pursuing ways to broadcast meeting proceedings in a 'live-stream' on the Facebook social platform. For those interested a guide on how to view these broadcasts will be provided to members as soon as trials have been successfully completed.

² Source: [WHO https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses](https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses)

PUTTING IT ALL ANOTHER WAY.

1. Of the people who catch the COVID-19 Coronavirus, the overwhelming majority get better.
2. Remember that thanks to strong measures to slow the virus's spread in China, less than 0.01% of the Chinese population have actually caught the virus after three months, as of March 9th.
3. Your own health is best managed by you. Changing a few personal habits will make a big difference. By doing so you are also strongly contributing to your health and the health of your friends and family.
4. If you have a cold, cough or shortness of breath, don't attend meetings. Call your health provider.
5. By avoiding touching others or standing/sitting for extended periods close to others, you significantly reduce the chances of infection passing between people.
6. Before going out to shops or to a meeting, thoroughly wash your hands on both sides with soap and water and rinse well for at least 20 seconds. Do the same on your return home.
7. On arrival at a venue, before touching anything, use the hand sanitiser to further disinfect your hands.
8. Avoid shaking hands or embracing others. Don't touch your face if at all possible. You may even wish to wear gloves when seated, because for most of us touching our faces is almost an involuntary action.
9. If you do need to cough, cough into a handkerchief, or at worst into your clothed elbow.
10. When seated, ensure you space yourself more than usual. Highlands Garden Society will change seating layouts to spread people out, until further notice.
11. If you are preparing or putting out food, make sure that all surfaces on which the food is prepared have been wiped first with a kitchen disinfectant wipe, which will be provided.
12. After touching chairs or tables, make use again of the hand sanitiser pump to disinfect your hands.

Useful Links for Highlands Garden Society Members to keep you up to date during the current spread of the COVID-19 Virus. Much of this information and guidance also applies to seasonal winter flu.

HEALTH NSW: <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/diseases/Pages/coronavirus.aspx>

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HEALTH: <https://www.health.gov.au/covid19-resources#find-the-facts>

Q&A

WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION (WHO): <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>

The Committee will update this document for members when circumstances change. Updated versions will appear on the [Highlands Garden Society website](#).

We thank you for observing these precautions, so we can continue to enjoy Friendship Through Gardens.