

Variety NSW/ACT COVID-19 Response Plan

Version 1.0
Updated 10 March, 2020

Overview

This document outlines Variety NSW/ACT's response to the coronavirus (COVID-19). The Response Plan will be updated regularly as the situation develops and further information is made available.

As at 9 March 2020, there have been 80 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 3 deaths in Australia. 40 of these cases are in NSW, with currently no confirmed cases in ACT.

Impacts on business operations may include staff ability to get to work due to disruptions to the public transport system, a level of discomfort amongst staff at travelling by public transport, and the closure of childcare centers and schools. After a period of natural disasters including fires, drought and floods, staff may also experience anxiety over COVID-19 and need additional support.

It may be necessary for some or all staff to work-from-home, which will impact our normal business operations and require increased capacity for remote working.

Our events and program delivery may also be impacted if there are restrictions on public gatherings, an increase in virus transmissions in locations events are planned for, or travelling through, or if one of our event participants (including staff and volunteers) is diagnosed with COVID-19 during or after an event.

The procurement of event merchandise, food supplies etc may be impacted, and there may be disruptions to business and services required to support events, or in locations where events are travelling through.

The response plan outlines the immediate actions that are being implemented, as well as identifying future actions that may be required as the situation continues to evolve. The current response stage is preventative and preparation. An escalation in the spread of the virus will require an increased level of action in response to the triggers outlined.

Immediate Actions

Preventative Health Measures

- **Staff illness** – staff who become unwell will be advised to not attend work. In consultation with the staff-member's Manager, a decision may be made to WFH or take sick leave depending on how unwell the staff member feels.
- **Flu vaccine** – to be arranged for Sydney office as per previous years. Due to low staff numbers in the Newcastle office, staff will be encouraged to have the flu injection from their doctor and be reimbursed by Variety. The flu vaccine is not effective against COVID-19, however is part of preventative health measures to reduce incidence of staff sickness from influenza.
- **Hand sanitizer** – will be made available in multiple office areas including bathrooms, reception area, front door, lounge and office areas.
- **Hand washing** – staff to be encouraged to wash hands regularly. Signs to be placed in kitchen and bathrooms.
- **Cleaning** – staff to be encouraged to wipe down desk and IT equipment regularly. Wipes will be provided for IT equipment and phones, and desks. Paper towels will be used instead of sponges and use of the dishwasher rather than hand-washing dishes. Frequency of office cleaning will be considered.

Staff support

- **EAP** – The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available to all staff. Following a challenging year with recent natural disasters, staff may feel anxious about the threat of COVID-19 and are encouraged to make use of EAP and also maintain open communication with their Manager.

Risk of Exposure

- **Leave** – staff are required to provide information to their Manager as to travel plans when taking leave (Local and International), including any stopovers. If travel includes high-risk areas, a period of self-isolation and/or medical clearance may be requested prior to returning to work.
- **Contact Disclosure** – staff are required to advise Variety of any close contact with people who have recently travelled in high-risk areas, such as family members or international visitors.

Communication

- Regular updates will be provided to staff via email and at weekly staff meetings.
- COVID-19 will be a standing agenda item for Executive team meetings.
- Staff are encouraged to stay informed using reputable sources. Information sources will be included in the regular updates.

Remote Working

- Ensuring the business is equipped for remote working will be prioritized in preparation for possible future requirements should the situation require work-from-home (WFH) to be implemented.
- The roll-out of Office 365 will be fast-tracked to support WFH including video meetings and cloud-based file access.
- Staff are encouraged to take laptops home regularly to develop the habit. Laptop bags to be purchased.
- A trial WFH day to be implemented to test systems and processes (except DS, BM and

MC). Meetings and collaboration via video calls and chat functionality will be encouraged on the trial day to replicate a normal working day.

- WFH policy to be formalized and WH&S self-evaluation to be completed by all staff asap.
- If an extended period of WFH is required, the potential for smaller groups to work together who are geographically close can be explored.

Other Office Considerations

- **Procurement** - Review what items are ordered from offshore (eg event merchandise) and assess any impacts on timings and costs with suppliers.
- **Hair with Heart volunteers** – additional hygiene initiatives to be implemented including supply of gloves for unpacking hair deliveries.
- **Deliveries** – alternative delivery arrangements to be identified in the event that the office is unattended for a period of time.
- **Air Conditioning** – regular servicing of air-conditioning units to be implemented.
- **Visitor Sign-In** – Visitors to Variety offices in Artarmon and Newcastle will be required to sign visitor books to provide a record of who has attended the offices and their contact details.

Variety Events and Kids Support Program Delivery

- **Events and Motoring events** – teams to identify potential risks and impacts, and develop contingency plans should planned events be impacted by procurement issues, food supplies, localized virus outbreaks (eg on Bash routes) and restrictions on public movements and gatherings.
- **Kids Support Program Delivery** – discussions with EY and Sport NSW as to potential impacts to JLY and AISD program delivery due to school closures and/or restrictions on public gatherings.
- **Fundraising impacts** – consideration given to possible impacts on planned fundraising activities such as events (Bash, VOC etc) not able to go ahead, Woolworths promotions cancelled etc.

Future Response

The following provides an outline of the triggers and actions that may be taken should the spread of the virus increase in Australia, and specifically NSW. It should be treated as a guide only, with future decisions to be made with consideration to the situation at the time and level of risk to Variety staff and community of volunteers, fundraisers and supporters, as well as any advice from Government and other bodies.

Potential Triggers

- Increase in person-to-person transmission rates between people who are not close relatives/living in the same house and outside of a hospital setting, occurring within the commuting radius of the Variety offices in Artarmon and Newcastle.
- Any government quarantine actions in the commute range of a Variety office.
- Government implements restrictions on general people movement in the community due to an increase in infections.
- Government implements restrictions on domestic travel due to an increase in infections.
- A member of the Variety staff or community is infected with COVID-19 (or suspected of but undiagnosed).
- A member of the Variety staff or community comes in close contact with someone who is infected with COVID-19 (or suspected of but undiagnosed).

Potential Actions

- We may ask staff to WFH in the impacted area (e.g. if there is a hotspot of transmission).
- We may ask individual staff to self-isolate if potential exposure to COVID-19 has occurred.
- We may offer optional WFH for staff in the impacted area (especially those who are; reliant on public transport, impact by school or childcare closures, those who may have vulnerable people at home).
- We may enhance office cleaning schedules to be more frequent/in-depth, especially around areas of high traffic (meeting rooms, bathrooms, food areas) along with specific mask disposal bins.
- We may limit office visitors to essential personnel only and encourage video meetings.
- Whilst the eventuality is considered unlikely, we may need to review whether events are able to go ahead as planned or need to be modified, dependent on the current situation and level of risk to staff and event attendees/participants.

Resources

- [Coronavirus Health Information Line - 1800 020 080](tel:1800020080)
- [World Health Organisation](https://www.who.int/)
- [Australian Department of Health](https://www.health.gov.au/)
- [ACT Department of Health](https://www.health.act.gov.au/)
- [NSW Health](https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/)
- <https://www.abc.net.au/news/story-streams/coronavirus/>
- [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\) - brochure attached](#)

Communications

For distribution Tuesday 10 March, 2020

To: SydneyStaff, NewcastleStaff, Variety NSW/ACT Board, Office Volunteers

Subject: An update on the coronavirus

Hi all,

We all share concerns around the increasing risk of coronavirus COVID-19. Whilst the number of transmissions in Australia remains relatively low comparative to other affected countries, it's important that we take necessary measures to minimize the risk to our staff and community, and be prepared should the risk increase.

We have developed a Variety NSW/ACT Response Plan, which we will continue to review and update as the situation evolves. A number of initiatives are being implemented as preventative measures, and as preparation for potential escalation of the situation.

What we know

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness caused by a new virus. Symptoms range from a mild cough to pneumonia. Some people recover easily, others may get very sick very quickly. There is evidence that it spreads from person to person. Good hygiene can prevent infection.

It is primarily transmitted by aerosolized droplets (e.g. the droplets you release when you cough or sneeze). Unlike most other coronaviruses, the period of maximum contagiousness appears to occur early in the virus' life cycle, somewhere between 1 and 3 days after the first sign of symptoms. Some number of individuals that contract coronavirus remain asymptomatic, but can still spread the virus. The virus' incubation period appears to be somewhere in the 5-7 day time period on average.

For most people who contract the virus, the symptoms are mild and look a lot like the flu or other viral respiratory illness and may include coughing, fever, body aches, etc. About 14% of cases develop severe symptoms (including pneumonia or shortness of breath) and will require medical care. Some people (estimated at about 6%) will get very sick and need intensive medical support. So far it appears that older people and those with underlying medical conditions are more likely to get very sick.

What we're doing

Our Response Plan outlines the actions that we are taking now, and possible future actions should the spread of the virus get worse.

This includes preventative health measures at this stage. You'll notice an increase in hand sanitizers around the office, and additional cleaning materials. It's important that we keep the office as clean as possible and that includes wiping down desks and IT equipment. All staff are encouraged to wash hands regularly and to not come to work if you're feeling unwell.

We are rolling out Office 365 to all staff. This will make it easier for staff to work-from-home (WFH) should that be necessary.

The Response Plan also includes potential future actions that may be implemented should the spread of the virus increase in the community.

It's understandable that people might feel anxious about COVID-19. A reminder that the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a free and confidential support service that all staff can access. Also be open with your Manager, or any member of the Executive team if you are feeling nervous or anxious.

What kind of precautions should we be taking?

The best preventative measures to take are the same as with the common cold or the flu:

- If you become unwell and think you may have symptoms of coronavirus, seek medical attention
- Do not come to work if you feel unwell. Discuss with your manager WFH or sick leave arrangements
- Speak to your manager if you come in contact with someone who has recently travelled to the regions where travel restrictions are in place, or who may have been infected with COVID-19
- Washing your hands frequently (after traveling on public transportation, before and after eating etc)
- Coughing/sneezing into your elbow, not your hand
- Wipe your desk and computer down at the end of each day.

Where can I get more information?

It's understandable that you might want to find out more information about the virus. We encourage everyone to stay informed, using reliable information sources.

The Response Plan includes a number of links to reliable information sources, and the Australian Government Department of Health Fact Sheet can be downloaded [here](#). There is also a Coronavirus Health Information Line which can be accessed 24 hours a day, seven days a week on 1800 020 080.

Thanks,

David Sexton
CEO, Variety – the Children's Charity NSW/ACT