

# COVID Safe Public Space Guide

The guide for NSW's public space managers



**> HELP US STAY  
COVID SAFE**

Updated December 2021



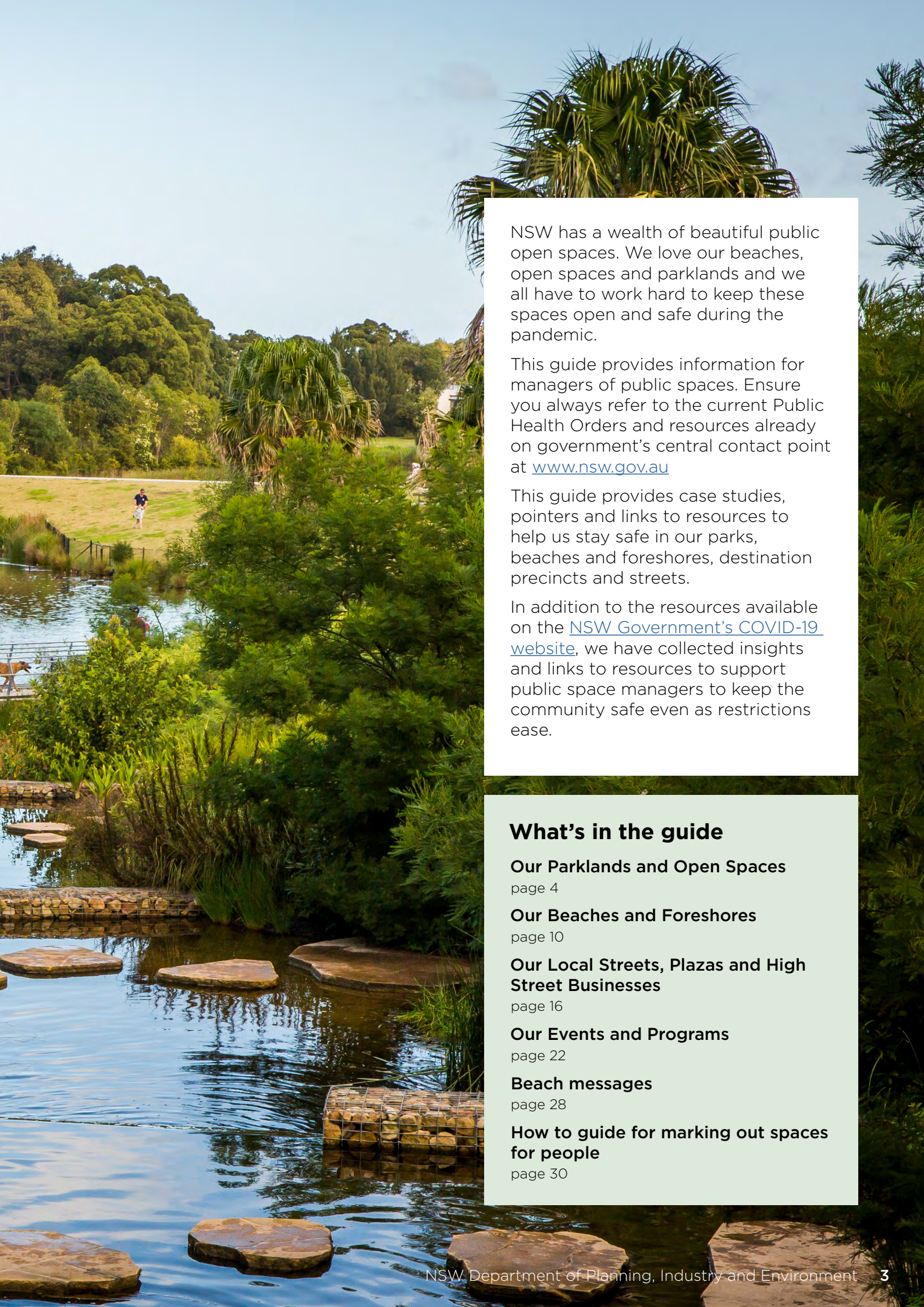
# COVID Safe Public Space



Sydney Park, St Peters  
Credit: Destination NSW

Cover: The Rocks Picnic Markets  
Credit: Place Management NSW





NSW has a wealth of beautiful public open spaces. We love our beaches, open spaces and parklands and we all have to work hard to keep these spaces open and safe during the pandemic.

This guide provides information for managers of public spaces. Ensure you always refer to the current Public Health Orders and resources already on government's central contact point at [www.nsw.gov.au](http://www.nsw.gov.au)

This guide provides case studies, pointers and links to resources to help us stay safe in our parks, beaches and foreshores, destination precincts and streets.

In addition to the resources available on the [NSW Government's COVID-19 website](https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19), we have collected insights and links to resources to support public space managers to keep the community safe even as restrictions ease.

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# Our Parklands and Open Spaces

Our state-owned parklands and public open spaces are open to be enjoyed by the public, unless advised otherwise. The health and safety of visitors and staff is important and gardens and parklands teams are implementing measures to protect the community.

Community sport and recreation organisations can use our public open spaces, ovals, fields, courts and other active spaces by implementing COVID-19 Safety Plans to keep participants, volunteers, officials and spectators COVID safe. COVID-19 Safety Plans are mandatory for outdoor public gatherings/events of more than 1000 persons.

These local public spaces, including parklets, playgrounds and gardens in our neighbourhoods have proven to be important assets in our public space network. They support our mental and physical wellbeing, allowing us to go for walks and exercise, and provide opportunities for play for children, as well as to enjoy some fresh air and green space.

Our public space managers have found new and innovative ways to ensure our open spaces are flexible and adaptable to meet the needs of the community, such as temporary change of uses.

Place managers will continue to encourage visitors to be COVID Safe by following the rules, being patient and knowing that if we all work together, we can make a difference.

“The COVID-19 crisis stresses the importance of exploring how public spaces can help combat loneliness – especially for those who are most vulnerable and are either concerned about going outside their home or are not able to easily connect virtually with family and friends.”

Henriette Vamberg  
Gehl, Copenhagen



*Paddington Reservoir Gardens  
Credit: Anna Kucera/Destination NSW*



## Recommended actions for public space managers

- 1** Provide clear signage to promote Public Health Orders and use communication and broadcast systems to promote rules and disperse visitors (these tools can be linked to smart solutions to automate messages and alerts). The gathering limit for unvaccinated adults is 2 persons.
- 2** Ensure that event organisers comply with COVID-19 Safety Plan requirements. COVID-19 Safety Plans are mandatory for outdoor public gatherings/events of more than 1000 persons. Outdoor gatherings are subject to 2 square metre rule with no upper limit. However, until 15 December 2021 (or 95% fully vaccinated), the gathering limit for unvaccinated adults is 2 persons.
- 3** Spread out activities and mark safe distancing in line with the square metre rule in the Public Health Orders e.g. paint circles where people can sit.
- 4** Ensure websites and social media remain up to date with latest local conditions and information at all public spaces and encourage the community to check websites to plan their trip in advance as there may be restrictions in place.
- 5** Promote booking systems at areas such as campgrounds to control numbers and allow contact tracing, if required.
- 6** Where possible, consider timed entry/pass systems and the ability to monitor numbers with smart technology, or change car parking arrangements and timing.
- 7** Provide mobile sanitation stations at key locations, including playspaces and outdoor gyms, and increase cleaning of public utilities, especially regularly wiping down public toilets and other high touch surfaces such as handrails.
- 8** Consider making areas car-free to increase the ability for the community to physically distance, and allowing for flexible use of space, for example, converting a car park to a scooter pump track playspace or making use of temporary measures that allow councils to use land for outdoor dining, as exempt development.
- 9** Consider temporary activation with food trucks and physically-distanced eating or activated areas to spread where people congregate, and provide additional open space at busy destinations through temporary parklets.
- 10** Use physical barriers, widen walking paths, and redirect visitors along alternate paths when too many people are in an area.
- 11** Provide rangers and ambassadors to remind visitors about physical distancing.
- 12** Work closely with local police area command to manage any overcrowding.
- 13** Work with community sport and recreation organisations to implement their COVID-19 Safety Plans for training and competition activities, including the use of QR codes at outdoor venues.
- 14** Work with community sport and recreation organisations to allow for increased use of their spaces, for example by extending lighting to allow for recreation or physical activity at night.
- 15** Consider digital forms of engagement, including education programs or virtual tours, where there are reduced visitation capacities.
- 16** Consider smart solutions like sensors, cameras (fixed or drone) or data from mobile network operators to count the number of people using public spaces, spot large gatherings and breaches of COVID Safe rules and predict peak times. These tools can provide visitors and compliance officers with real-time information.



## Advice for NSW national parks

Using green space is important for our wellbeing. Most NSW national parks are open and will welcome visitors, however there may be unforeseen closures or delays. People should check the status of their destination before setting out and be aware that popular parks and precincts are often busiest between 11am and 2pm. Visit [nationalparks.nsw.gov.au](http://nationalparks.nsw.gov.au) for more information.

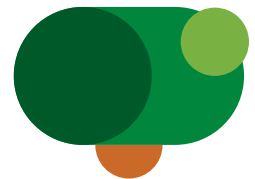
The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service will monitor popular areas. If physical distancing and COVID Safe practices are being jeopardised, areas may be temporarily closed to public access. Please check [www.nswparks.info/covid19](http://www.nswparks.info/covid19) for COVID-19 restrictions.

Rules around booking accommodation within NSW national parks differ depending on vaccination status. Before booking a stay, visitors are encouraged to check the NSW Government website: [www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/stay-safe/rules/not-fully-vaccinated#toc-travel-and-transport](http://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/stay-safe/rules/not-fully-vaccinated#toc-travel-and-transport)

If people are going camping, it's important to know all NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service campgrounds require a booking and visitors only arrive with the number of people booked and practice COVID-safe camping. All national park campgrounds are now bookable online at [www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/camping-and-accommodation](http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/camping-and-accommodation). Many campgrounds are expected to reach capacity at peak times, especially on weekends and during school holidays. Visitors are advised to travel outside the most popular times if they can. NSW National Parks with NSW Police will patrol campgrounds. If you see unsafe behaviour, report it via the NSW Police Assistance Line on 131 444.

## Useful resources for place managers

- [The NSW Government's primary portal](#) to keep up to date and access resources.
- [The NSW Government's current Public Health Orders](#).
- [The Office of Sport's links to guidance](#) for the sport and recreation sector, including for community sport.
- [The Office of Sport's COVID-19 Sport and Active Recreation Sector Resources Library](#).
- [NPWS digital park passes](#), and use of [on-park pay machines](#) that facilitate contactless visitation to National Parks.
- [Office of Local Government's Playgrounds advice](#).







An idea from the Northern Hemisphere

### **Grass Circles, San Francisco, USA**

An early, innovative idea encouraging physical distancing at San Francisco's Dolores Park has now been widely implemented as good practice. Circles on the grass provide a safe guide for park use during busy periods. Dolores Park has 177 circles with a 2.5 metre diameter, spaced 3 metres apart. The circles intend to enliven rather than detract from the park's design; park manager Phil Ginsburg calls it "behavioural art".

An example of where we trialled a similar idea

### **Grass Circles, The Rocks and Darling Harbour, NSW**

In an early initiative to help Sydneysiders enjoy the outdoors whilst managing physical distancing requirements, Place Management NSW implemented physical distancing painted circles at popular public parks in The Rocks and Darling Harbour. Sprayed on with eco-friendly white and red paint and 2.4 metre diameter each, 40 circles graced First Fleet Park at The Rocks and later were added to Hickson Rd Reserve, Tallawallodah Lawn and Tumbalong Park in Darling Harbour.

For more guidance on how to mark out spaces for people if required, please see **How to guide for marking out spaces for people on page 30** of this guide.



Tumbalong Park  
Credit: Place Management NSW



## Ideas from our own backyard

### Car-free weekends, Centennial Park, Sydney

During periods of lockdown, Centennial Park put in place measures to protect the community during challenging times by adopting car-free weekends to provide visitors with additional space for physical distancing. This solution allowed visitors to stay safe while still allowing use of the park for fresh air, exercise, and socialising when possible. Pedestrians used vehicle routes, such as Grand Drive, for additional walking space. Cycling and controlled access for emergency and service vehicles and disability permits was still permitted.

Visit [www.centennialparklands.com.au/about-us/park-notice](http://www.centennialparklands.com.au/about-us/park-notice)



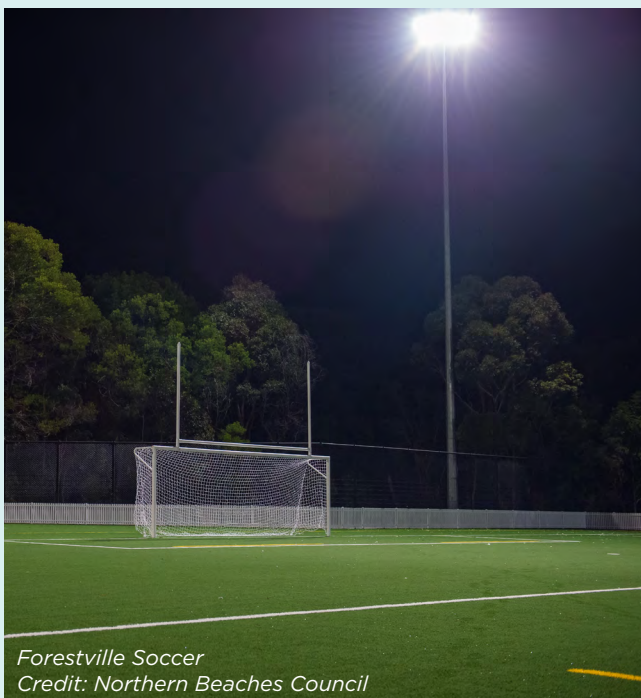
### Lunchtime Graze Picnics, Darling Harbour

In an effort to encourage CBD workers to venture outside their offices for lunch and enjoy the public spaces right on their doorstep in the heart of Sydney, Place Management NSW partnered with a number of eateries in Darling Harbour in May-June 2020 to offer a range of \$10 lunch deals which could be redeemed via reusable lunchboxes. 100 reusable lunchboxes were given away to launch the initiative. Patrons were invited to enjoy their lunches in a socially distanced picnic area and listen to live local musicians on the Tumbalong Park stage.



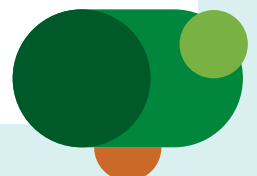
## Pop-up cycleways, Wollongong City Council

Wollongong City Council is trialling pilot pop-up cycleways along the coast through their Streets as Shared Spaces pilot project. Road space is being reallocated to provide cycling connections including separated cycleways, mixed traffic facilities and shared paths in the Wollongong CBD, Port Kembla, Towradgi and Thirroul, connecting key locations like train stations to existing coast cycle routes. The intention is to provide comfortable and safe routes that incorporate greening, while also slowing vehicles and encouraging cycling trips to school, work and for leisure, for both experienced and novice cyclists.



## Extended lighting at sports fields, Northern Beaches Council

To accommodate people wanting to exercise after work hours and ensuring there were enough locations for social distancing, Council turned flood lights on in numerous local sports fields after dark. This allowed people working at home to still enjoy some exercise as well as spread the demand across more hours of the day.





# Our Beaches and Foreshores

Our beaches, from Eden to Tweed Heads, are beautiful assets, ranging from the world-famous Bondi and Byron Bay to secluded local destinations. We love our foreshores too, along rivers, creeks, lagoons and lakes, including at Penrith, Wagga Wagga, Parramatta and the great Darling River.

They are wonderful places to walk, swim, run, play, sail, kayak, surf and enjoy the water, so we all have a duty to keep them safe. That means avoiding crowds at peak hours and following any restrictions. We encourage the community to explore alternative local beaches, foreshores and destinations to reduce congestion at our most popular locations.

Many of our beaches, and the majority of parks are managed by councils. We urge everyone to heed the advice of council rangers across NSW to ensure Public Health Orders are respected.



*Eastern Suburbs Coastal Walk  
Credit: Hamilton Lund/Destination NSW*



## Recommended actions for public space managers

- 1** Work closely with your Surf Lifesaving clubs to come up with ideas and options. For example, including designated activity zones or staggering the start time of activities.
- 2** Prior to warmer weather, work with the local police area command on your crowd management plan, including the erecting of fences and staggered entry into public spaces. Local police will communicate the plan of action as required.
- 3** Consider beach ambassadors to monitor visitor numbers at beaches and beachside parks and provide friendly advice about physical distancing and other safety measures.
- 4** Consider restricting beach or foreshore parking times to encourage turnover and minimise crowding. Create additional public space in adjacent areas with street closures or parklets to support physical distancing and movement to and from the area.
- 5** Use PA systems and variable messaging signs (VMS) at key attractor sites to provide COVID Safe advice. Where possible, these can be linked to smart solutions to provide real time information on crowding.
- 6** Actively use social media and websites to keep the community informed of local conditions, closures and crowd redirection, and to encourage the community to check your website to plan their trip in advance as there may be a range of restrictions in place.
- 7** Increase cleaning of key touch points and utilities, including outdoor showers and public toilets.
- 8** Ensure volunteer facilities for lifeguards and other staff support physical distancing.
- 9** Encourage people to walk and cycle to their local places through community campaigns and signage, and visit alternative local destinations.
- 10** Consider smart solutions like sensors, cameras (fixed or drone) or data from mobile network operators to count the number of people using public spaces, spot large gatherings and breaches of COVID Safe rules and predict peak times. These tools can provide visitors and compliance officers (and beach ambassadors) with real-time information.



## Advice for beaches and foreshores

The community's safety is our top priority when they visit our beaches and foreshores. Please remind people to always keep 1.5 metres, or about a towel-length, apart from others. For more guidance on beach messages, please see **Beach messages on page 28** of this guide.

### A message from Waverley Council

"Please use our beaches and public places safely by following the current Public Health Orders and health advice at all times. Our lifeguards and volunteer lifesavers are here to help you stay safe in the water, so always follow their instructions for a great day out in Waverley."

*Matt du Plessis,  
Manager, Lifeguard Services and  
Beach Safety, Waverley Council*



## Useful resources for place managers

- [The NSW Government's primary portal](#) to keep up to date and access resources.
- [The NSW Government's information about public gatherings.](#)
- [The NSW Government's current Public Health Orders.](#)
- [Surf Life Saving NSW's resources for clubs on COVID Safe plans.](#)
- [Water Safety NSW's general tips on safety](#) at lakes, dams, lagoons, channels and creeks.
- [Office of Local Government's water safety practice note](#), including signage considerations.
- [Transport for NSW's resources and employers' support to develop COVID Safe Travel Choices](#), including communication material, checklists and travel guide templates.
- [Transport for NSW resources and guidance for boating and onshore activities.](#)



An idea from the Northern Hemisphere

### **Beach Grids, Galicia and Valencia, Spain**

Roped grids helped physical distance sunbathers at Galicia's Silgar. The pilot scheme divided the beach into five cordoned sections, each containing 780 cuadrículas (grids) measuring nine square metres. Wooden posts and colour-coded roping marked spaces for two adults and up to two children to enjoy. It also allowed larger parties to merge their areas together while a longer section next to the sea enabled exercise and children's play. In Canet d'en Berenguer, Valencia, a digital solution allows locals to book their time at the beach via an App.

An example of where we trialled a similar idea

### **'Keep a towel length between you' campaign**

The NSW Government's *COVID Safe Summer Plan* launched in 2020 included a widespread public campaign to promote safe distancing at our beaches. Beachgoers across NSW were asked to do their bit by keeping a towel length between themselves and other beachgoers, with the length of a beach towel as a good guide for a minimum recommended safe physical distance of 1.5m. The NSW Government will continue to work with councils to spread the simple beach message—keep a towel length between you.

*'Keep a towel length between you' campaign promotion*  
Credit: Waverley Council





## Ideas from our own backyard



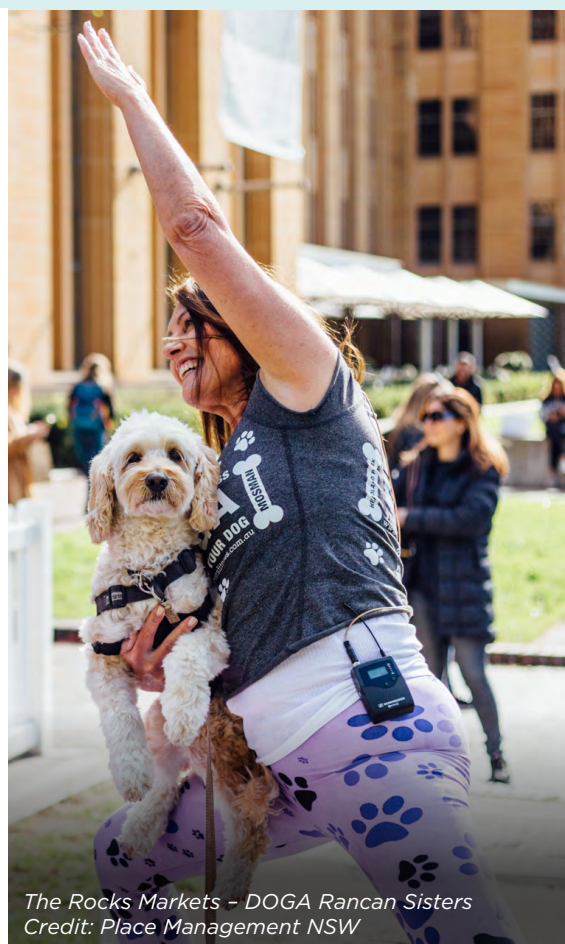
COVID Safe beaches

### Monitoring spaces, Northern Beaches Council

Council's Incident Management Team has continued to lead their planning and implementation 24/7 throughout the pandemic. Council works closely with NSW Police responding to high risk areas and overseeing crowds. Council have implemented 1 hour parking restrictions along the beachfront at the most popular beaches and provided additional Ranger patrols to manage physical distancing at skate parks, parks and playgrounds. Council extended hours of demand at selected parks and reserves by implementing flood lighting until 9pm. Council also implemented an enhanced public place cleansing program, including additional hand sanitisers and personal hygiene signs in public amenities.

### Harbourside fitness classes, The Rocks

Place Management NSW has been operating a regular series of free fitness classes on the Sydney Harbour foreshore at The Rocks to encourage Sydneysiders to embrace the outdoors, support mental health and connect with likeminded individuals in a welcoming environment. Run by trained professionals each week, these classes have included yoga, pilates, capoeira and even doga (yoga with your pet dog, which provided unique social media and PR opportunities). Capacities are managed via an online booking system and are easily altered according to the relevant health restrictions. Social distancing is maintained through the use of painted circles on the ground (3 metres apart) and sanitising stations and QR code check ins also provided. A kids play area is set up to assist parents while classes take place. With an intent to also support local business, The Rocks retailers are invited to provide discounts and offers to participants to encourage visitation and spend either before or after their class. This activity was able to continue in a free online capacity while Sydney was in lockdown in 2021.



The Rocks Markets - DOGA Rancan Sisters  
Credit: Place Management NSW





Waverley Council beach ambassadors  
Credit: Waverley Council

## Beach ambassadors and more, Waverley Council

Waverley Council continues to implement a range of measures that were successful last year in helping keep the community COVID-safe and supported. These measures, listed below, will help inform our future responses to COVID-19 as Public Health Orders change:

- Beach Ambassadors help manage visitor numbers at beaches and beachside parks and provide friendly advice about physical distancing and other safety measures.
- Rangers working extended hours at beachside parks and beaches including Bondi, Bronte and Tamarama Beaches and the Bondi to Bronte Coastal Walk.
- Information signage at parks, beaches and coastal walks about how to help stop the spread of COVID-19.
- Variable messaging signs (VMS) at major attractor sites including Campbell Parade, Tamarama Beach and the Bondi to Bronte Coastal Walk provide COVID Safe advice.
- Business support recovery post-lockdown.
- Timely safety messaging and visitor information across social media channels and regular news updates on Council's website.





# Our Local Streets, Plazas and High Street Businesses

Our high streets contain the restaurants, bars, specialty shops, hardware stores, and other services that create jobs and bring unique character to our cities and towns. When our high streets, plazas and precincts are thriving, they connect people and services and reflect community character.

All businesses need to stay up to date with current requirements, available through [www.nsw.gov.au](http://www.nsw.gov.au), and make use of the available resources.

We encourage councils and local businesses to take advantage of outdoor dining. In most cases, outdoor and footpath dining for cafes and restaurants doesn't require any planning approvals if it meets the relevant standards. Also, in response to COVID-19, the NSW Government has enabled mobile food trucks to operate on any land at any time, with landholder's permission.

We have worked with councils and local businesses in their areas to offer outdoor dining to patrons. The NSW Government has also brought in a temporary change to the exempt rules for alfresco dining, until April 2022, to help our councils and businesses bounce back.

In addition to outdoor dining, outdoor retail is another way to increase access to goods and potential sales by allowing pop-up sale and service areas near storefronts. We are investigating how to make it easier to run outdoor markets.

Since March 2020, street initiatives across NSW have allowed restaurants, bars, cafes and other retailers to have customers spread out into the street, for example, through the NSW Government's Streets as Shared Spaces program, Your High Street and Summer Fund programs.

The recently launched Festival of Place in your streets is supporting local councils to open streets for community events and activities, including those areas most impacted by lockdowns, revitalising public spaces with activations across the state in the summer 2021/2022 and paving the way for longer-term changes to the way we use our streets.

These initiatives have been particularly successful when supported by incentivising the community to enjoy these offerings through campaigns such as vouchers, competitions, treasure hunts and activation activities.

Barangaroo South, Barangaroo  
Credit: Destination NSW



## Recommended actions for public space managers

- 1 Remind business owners that they must [check the vaccination status](#) (or medical exemption) of anyone aged 16 or over entering certain venues, such as hospitality, non-critical retail stores and personal services.
- 2 Encourage people to wear a face mask if maintaining physical distancing is difficult.
- 3 Prior to warmer weather, inform local police area command of crowd management plans, including the erecting of fences and staggered entry into public spaces. Local police will communicate a plan of action as required.
- 4 Consider temporary activation with food trucks and physically distanced eating, pop-up retail or activated areas to spread where people congregate. Consider providing additional open space for dining and pop-up retail on streets through temporary parklets or by setting up dining areas in parks.
- 5 Encourage other COVID-safe activations including lighting, creative installations, play, and other pop-up activities, to encourage the community to visit and dwell.
- 6 Engage with local retailers and venues to collaboratively develop ideas with the community, and then deliver them.
- 7 Actively use social media and websites to keep the community informed of local conditions, closures and crowd redirection, and to encourage the community to check your website to plan their trip in advance as there may be a range of restrictions in place.
- 8 Increase cleaning of key touch points and utilities, including public toilets, or minimise touching where possible, by automating crossing signals.
- 9 Encourage people to walk and cycle to their local places through community campaigns and signage, and to visit alternative local destinations.
- 10 Consider incentive campaigns to encourage the community to support economic recovery, e.g. competitions, vouchers and treasure hunts.
- 11 Consider restricting beach or foreshore parking to encourage turnover and minimise crowding. Consider creating additional public space in adjacent areas with street closures or parklets to support physical distancing and movement to and from the area.
- 12 Consider smart solutions like sensors, cameras (fixed or drone) or data from mobile network operators to count the number of people using public spaces, spot large gatherings and breaches of COVID Safe rules and predict peak times. These tools can provide visitors and compliance officers (and beach ambassadors) with real-time information.

### NSW Small Business Commission

Small businesses are essential to our economy and local communities, comprising almost 98% of all NSW businesses and employing around 41% of the State's private sector workforce. They've faced many challenges during the pandemic and all of us can help these businesses recover.

"While most of us appreciate the importance of small business to sustaining employment and supporting the prosperity of NSW, it is up to all of us to do everything we can to support them. We will continue to advocate on behalf of small businesses to ensure their voices are heard and I encourage you to reach out to us if you have any questions about how we can support small business."

*Chris Lamont,  
NSW Small Business Commissioner*



## Advice on the planning process

Did you know businesses may be able to carry out some activities and/or low impact work without having to lodge a development application? This is known as exempt or complying development under the [State Environmental Planning Policy \(Exempt and Complying Development Codes\) 2008](#) (Codes SEPP). Provided the proposal complies with all the relevant development standards, councils can issue approval for outdoor dining under the *Roads Act and Local Government Act* and in line with their policy. Council land can also be used to hold events and activities.

We are also supporting councils and businesses to bounce back through a temporary change to the exempt rules for alfresco dining on public and private land, and at registered clubs. Councils and businesses will be able to apply to set up alfresco dining as exempt development with landowner's consent. These temporary measures operate until 18 April 2022 and allow internal capacity to be moved outside to meet Public Health Orders.

The types of things that qualify as exempt or complying development include:

- [Outdoor and footpath dining](#)
- [Operating mobile food and drinks outlets such as food trucks and carts](#)
- [Advertising and signage to promote your business or event](#)
- [Tents, marquees and booths up to 300m<sup>2</sup> for community events](#)
- [Stages and platforms up to 50 m<sup>2</sup> for community events](#)
- [Change of use](#) - In certain circumstances, some premises can change from one use to another without going through a full development application process, when the relevant development standards are met.

Keep in mind that temporary activation activities can sometimes face resistance from local businesses or other stakeholders. It is critical to engage with the community and all relevant stakeholders from the outset when designing and planning activations. Consider preparing in advance key messages to use if questions or complaints do arise and be prepared to adapt to the changing needs of the community.

## Insights from Transport for NSW

Transport for NSW contributes to COVID Safe public spaces by helping people move safely to jobs, recreational activities and services across NSW. It is helpful to be aware of how these initiatives can assist local communities to travel safely. Transport for NSW will manage the road network and public transport to ease congestion.

- 1 Public transport
  - Extra services help customers make smart travel choices and practice physical distancing.
  - Additional staff help customers practice physical distancing and stay safe.
  - Physical distancing dots on public transport signify the safest places to sit or stand.
  - Intense and ongoing cleaning across the public transport network.
- 2 Walking and cycling
  - Transport for NSW, in partnership with councils, introduced more than 20 kilometres of pop-up cycleways across Sydney to provide more travel options. Pop-up cycleways have been rolled out in outer metropolitan and regional areas, including Newcastle, Wollongong and Goulburn.
  - Speed limits have been lowered at ten locations across Sydney, outer metropolitan and regional areas. This provides a safer environment for pedestrians and cyclists, with more locations to come.
  - Automated pedestrian crossings have been activated at more than 114 sites in the Sydney CBD and Greater Sydney area.



## Useful resources for place managers

- [The NSW Government's primary portal](#) to keep up to date and access resources
- [The NSW Government's current Public Health Orders](#)
- Support the [Go Local](#) campaign and alternatives
- Buy local and support small businesses. [The NSW Government's Small and Medium Enterprise \(SME\) and Regional Procurement Policy](#)
- [Baltimore's guide for distance design concepts](#) to help restaurants and retailers activate public spaces in a pandemic
- [Local procurement: A guide to doing business with local councils](#)
- [Transport for NSW's resource](#) supporting the rapid rollout of temporary or tactical interventions proposed by councils, communities or government agencies.
- [Safe Work Australia's guidance and tools](#) form the basis of their management of health and safety risks posed by COVID including information on volunteers and COVID.
- You can also call the Codes team on 02 8289 6600 or email at [codes@planning.nsw.gov.au](mailto:codes@planning.nsw.gov.au)
- Visit the NSW Planning Portal for [information on requirements for exempt or complying development](#).
- For outdoor dining, the [NSW Government's Outdoor Dining information](#), and the [supporting guide](#).
- The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment's [guide to the planning system and other approvals such as trading hour extensions and liquor licences](#).

## Useful resources for place managers to support small business

- All businesses must complete a COVID-19 Safety Plan and register as a COVID Safe business via the NSW Government's [COVID-19 Safety Plan guidance](#).
- Businesses can download COVID-19 Safety plans for their industry or check the plans they already have in place meet all NSW Government requirements. Once a plan is in place, businesses must register as COVID Safe and access a digital COVID Safe badge, downloadable posters on safety and hygiene.
- Councils can consider ideas to support [Buy Local](#) Initiatives in their region – a list is on the [Small Business Commission's website](#).
- Encourage businesses that may be struggling to adjust/reopen to consider speaking with a [Business Connect advisor](#) or look through their online resources.
- The Small Business Commission's general advice for councils on [keeping main streets vibrant](#) – these need to be applied for a COVID-safe context.
- The Small Business Commission's [visual merchandising guide](#) to local small businesses can be circulated by council to help small businesses make the most of their shop windows.



An idea from the Northern Hemisphere

### **Painted Plazas, Oregon, USA**

Oregon's Pioneer Courthouse Square uses art to encourage physical distancing for its 11 million annual visitors. The Square's managers invited artists to address the issue; Bill Will's Polka Dot Courthouse Square, an array of colourful vinyl dots, roughly 3.5 metres across and spaced 3 metres apart across a grid, were installed in July. As well as guiding how to distance safely, the dots also encourage public space use by providing a stage for Portland's musicians, dancers, writers and market vendors with safe distance markers for the audience and shoppers.

An example of where we trialled a similar idea

### **Sydney Square Dance, Darling Harbour and The Rocks**

The Sydney Square Dance was designed to get everyone out having fun with one another and promoting an active, healthy lifestyle through dance and movement. The family-friendly COVID Safe festival was celebrated in the great public spaces around Darling Harbour and The Rocks.

Interactive classes were 'physically distanced' using square grids drawn on the floor creating a series of squares with a five-meter perimeter. The squares were allocated to one square per person to safely dance in. It was host to a range of musical and dance styles and young and old participated.

The project was entered by Andrew Hoyne and his team at Hoyne agency in the Department's Public Space Ideas competition and was presented as part of The Festival of Place in early 2021.

*Sydney Square Dance  
Credit: Cassandra Hannagan*





## Ideas from our own backyard



### Increased public space areas, The Rocks and George Street, Sydney

Many outdoor public spaces in The Rocks have been transformed into extended outdoor dining areas, allowing customers to physically distance. The extension of outdoor dining areas enables venues more space to host customers in line with COVID restrictions, while also increasing ambience and facilitating greater activation across the

precinct, including live music and cultural performances. This trial supported CBD businesses experiencing lower pedestrian traffic during the pandemic and was so successful it became a permanent transformation after exhibition and community feedback.



### Phillip Lane Activation, City of Parramatta Council

The Phillip Lane Activation repurposed an under-utilised place through the Streets as Shared Spaces program. The City of Parramatta Council transformed the previously disused alley into a vibrant hub with new street furniture, plants, art and lighting filling the space. The Lane allowed events and outdoor dining to support local business during the dual impacts of COVID-19 and major construction in the area. Council is now using the project to incentivise cooperation amongst local business to create a public space people cherish while also informing future permanent public space activations.



### Pop-up cycleways, Transport for NSW

Transport for NSW, in partnership with councils, introduced more than 20 kilometres of pop-up cycleways across NSW to provide more travel options. Pop-up cycleways have been rolled out in outer metropolitan and regional areas, including Newcastle, Wollongong and Goulburn. Pop-up cycleways allow people to access streets as public space and link popular public spaces. Other places around Sydney will benefit from better bike access via pop-up cycleways, while communities enjoy a great COVID Safe way to travel.



# Our Events and Programs

NSW is an incredible destination and major events play an important role showcasing an area, supporting local economies and engaging the community. Events such as concerts or outdoor screenings animate city spaces, creating opportunities for people to mix and engage in public spaces.

The Public Health Order specifies rules for events depending on vaccination status. Check the NSW Government website for more information: [www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/stay-safe/rules](https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/stay-safe/rules)

Digital platforms provide an additional channel to effectively engage with audiences when restrictions do not allow for full visitation capacity on the ground.



*The Rocks Picnic & Markets  
Credit: Anna Kucera*



## Recommendations for public space managers

To make an event COVID safe, consider the following:

- 1 Remind event organisers that they must check the vaccination status (or medical exemption) of anyone aged 16 or over entering certain venues, including sporting, recreation and entertainment facilities and events.
- 2 Encourage people to wear a face mask if maintaining physical distancing at the event is difficult.
- 3 Plan how people will travel to and arrive at the event and communicate COVID Safe options to avoid congestion. Encourage timed ticketing and pre-booking and improve back-end systems to support this.
- 4 Set ground rules for running events and build in flexibility in event planning and programming. Robust scenario and contingency planning will enable you to prepare for change if required.
- 5 Where possible, use digital tools and QR codes to track numbers and contact details of people in venues, such as through online event registrations. Use of NSW Government QR code is mandatory for gatherings of more than 1000 people (COVID-19 Safe Outdoor Public Gatherings).
- 6 Help outdoor performances by marking private spaces for household groups.
- 7 Consider hybrid events (IRL – in real life + streamed component), such as real-life fireworks with an interactive virtual audience component.
- 8 Consider incorporating ‘low touch’ impactful activations e.g. Chalk Art, decals, snow machines, bubble machines, inflatables, lighting installations.
- 9 Collaborate with local retailers and venues to create more unique and value-adding experiences for visitors and customers. Adapt carparks for evening ‘drive in’ events, including movies and live music.
- 10 Work with your local police area command, local health district and local transport provider to ensure you’re doing everything possible to keep the community safe.
- 11 Digital outreach is a great way to stay engaged with communities during uncertain times. Consider the addition of digital and social media engagement to extend the reach of experiences beyond physical.

## Advice on creative industries

To support independent artists and small to medium arts, screen and cultural organisations impacted by COVID-19, Create NSW has prepared a [NSW Performing Arts COVID Support Package](#). It is useful for place managers to be aware of opportunities for their local community. This includes support for creatives to engage with online platforms, and audience engagement and skill-sharing for arts, screen and cultural organisations and individuals across the state. Create NSW has produced a range of materials to support arts and cultural organisations to adapt to changing Public Health Orders, and to recognise how these may impact their work. They have also produced webinars which support event planning, risk management, health and safety and audience management.

## Useful resources for place managers

- [The NSW Government's primary portal](#) to keep up to date and access resources
- [The NSW Government's current Public Health Orders](#)
- [The NSW Government's measures for filming in public locations](#)
- [Office of Local Government](#)
- [Destination NSW's details for specific industries and COVID-safe business planning](#)
- [Destination NSW's insights for event and tourism operators](#)
- [Create NSW's links to guidance and resources](#)
- [Create Connects webinars](#)
- [Screen NSW webinar series](#)
- [NSW Health's information about seeking exemptions for large gatherings](#)
- [Major Recreation Facilities require a COVID Safety Plan](#)



An idea from the Northern Hemisphere

### **Physical distanced concerts, Newcastle, United Kingdom and Cologne, Germany**

In August, the UK's first large-scale physically distanced concert venue opened in Newcastle. The Virgin Money Unit Arena is an outdoor venue holding up to 2,500 spectators via 500 individual viewing platforms spaced two metres apart, each designed to seat a household. The Arena in the grounds of the Newcastle Racecourse is open until mid-September. Such innovations allow people to enjoy live music and support the live music industry. Elsewhere, concert promoter Live Nation has created drive-in concert facilities at 12 existing venues around the UK and in Cologne, a cinema drive-in has been repurposed to hold concerts.

An example of where we trialled a similar idea

### **Summer in the Domain**

A key feature of the CBD Revitalisation initiative to encourage visitation and support the CBD economy, The Royal Botanic Garden and Domain presented Summer in the Domain, a concert series celebrating the return of Australian music and culture to outdoor spaces. The series was designed to provide a COVID-safe environment whilst retaining the key attributes of a live concert experience. Limited to 2,000 tickets per show, the set up included COVID-safe entry stations to manage queuing in a socially distanced format, QR coded picnic table seating to allow for a more intimate and social experience, mobile buggy bar service points to reduce patron movement during the event and contactless information and purchasing facilities throughout the venue.

The series was not without challenges with continued adaptations to health advice. There was eventually a full rescheduling of the series to March when more than 6,500 people were again able to enjoy live music on Sydney's stage, the Domain. On the final night the public health order was updated to allow dancing in NSW for the first time in 12 months.



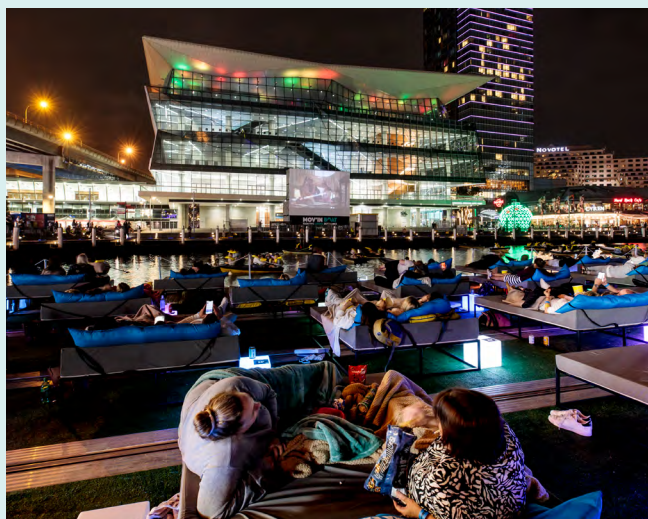
*Summer in the Domain*  
Credit: Cole Bennetts







## Ideas from our own backyard



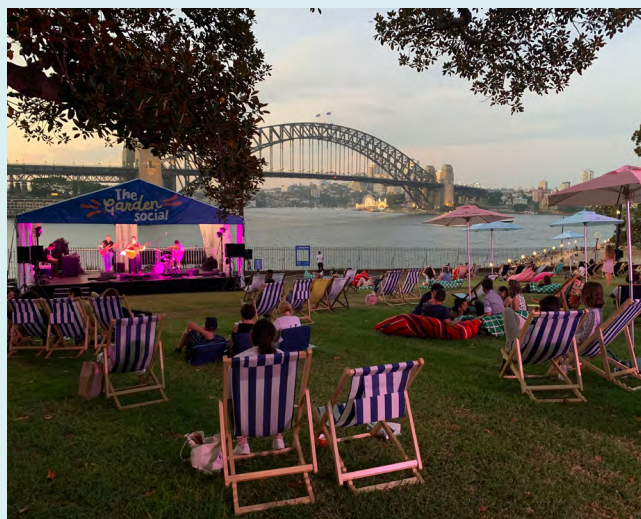
*Mov'in Boat*

*Credit: Place Management NSW*

### Mov'in Boat, Darling Harbour

In response to the COVID-19 impact on visitation to Darling Harbour, Place Management NSW was inspired by the challenge of creating and curating experiences that would encourage Sydneysiders to come and discover, connect, play, stay and spend in the CBD. From this emerged the highly successful Australian-first summer cinema experience, Mov'in Boat. The 4-month experience was positioned as a premium and unique movie watching experience that featured a 15-metre screen and 30 surround speakers, a 1,000 sqm floating platform, 40 row boats, 75 socially distanced lounge beds and two floating bar experiences in the heart of Darling Harbour.

Scenario planning for changing Public Health Orders was critical and included pax per sqm scenarios, compulsory ticketing, QR codes and hand sanitiser at Box Office and food service areas, daily cleaning before and after beds, boats and life jacket use, managed queueing, food delivery to beds, regular and clear customer communication via email (prior to event) and signage (at event). The result saw the delivery of one of the first COVID-safe significant events in Sydney post pandemic lockdown welcoming 20,000 customers over four months with 68 movie nights and driving record PR and organic social media.



*The Garden Social*

*Credit: Royal Botanic Gardens & Domain*

### The Garden Social, Royal Botanic Gardens

The Garden Social was a key feature of the 2021 CBD Revitalisation program presented by the Royal Botanic Garden and Domain. The event ran from 13 January to 7 February 2021. Celebrating live music and food, and set in the lush green surrounds of the Tarpeian Precinct of the Domain. Up to 10,000 people enjoyed the gorgeous vistas of the Sydney Opera House and Harbour Bridge. The event was designed to provide a COVID-safe environment whilst maintaining a relaxed and enjoyable alfresco foodie experience. The Garden Social supported 130 musicians of The Conservatorium of Music and featured 15 food trucks and a number of suppliers to deliver a safe and compliant outdoor event experience. Covid safety measures included QR coded entry points, picnic tables, beach chairs and bean bag seating to allow for an enjoyable and relaxed experience. The Garden Social will return to the Tarpeian precinct from 6 January to 14 February 2022, earmarked as the ultimate Summer Destination not to be missed. More information will be available on the What's On page: [www.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/what-s-on](http://www.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/what-s-on)



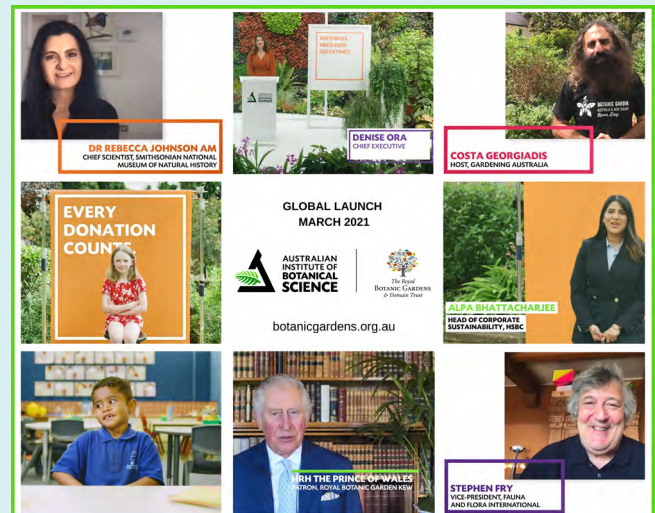


*Un[contained]*  
Credit: Georges River Council

## Revamp of our major events program, Georges River Council

Georges River Council has re-imagined its traditional flagship events, adapting them to the current environment, giving residents the opportunity to enjoy new experiences and support local business, while staying safe and healthy. Council will continue to host a broad mix of scalable events, similar to the events held over 2020 and 2021 that reflected the changing Public Health Orders. These included a Frightful 80s Drive-in Movie Marathon for Halloween, local food markets, mobile music events, Little Lunar festival, a pop-up skate park as part of our It's a Mood youth festival, and a Eurovision Song Contest live broadcast event.

Over three days in June 2021, Kogarah was transformed into a playground for grown-ups. The quirky event, *Un[contained]*, featured Archie Rose Distilling Co, the iconic Gelato Messina, and international food sensation, Knafeh Brothers, alongside immersive performances and the boutique paint and sip experience, Pinot and Picasso. Transitioning from day to night, *Un[contained]* was a stimulation of the senses and invited people from all walks of life, and across all abilities, to take part in a celebration of our city's creativity.



*Online Global Launch of the Australian Institute of Botanical Science*  
Credit: Royal Botanic Gardens & Domain Trust

## Online global launch, Australian Institute of Botanical Science

Due to COVID-19, the launch of the Australian Institute of Botanical Science in March 2021 was adapted to a digital model. The online launch premiered as a livestream on Facebook, YouTube and other digital channels, allowing a global audience to tune in remotely. Being pre-recorded but with a "live" feel, the production provided an opportunity to span multiple filming locations and feature invited international guests.

The Institute's launch was bolstered through a dedicated video series, entitled *What the Flora?* This engaging series, designed for a broad audience, incorporates world-class NSW research with behind-the-scenes access to scientists, showcasing the Institute's work in an enjoyable and engaging manner.

The online launch enabled the Institute to collaborate with high profile individuals and global thought leaders leveraging their support for this important initiative. The global breadth of supporting guests was something that would not have been imagined in a pre-COVID world. These included His Royal Highness, The Prince of Wales, Stephen Fry, Author Kathy Lette, Gardening Australia host Costa Georgiadis; Chief Scientist at Washington DC's Smithsonian Institute Dr Rebecca Johnson.

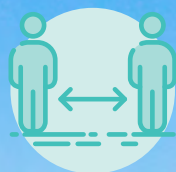


# Beach messages

**Support local communities with COVID safety around water. Depending on the current Public Health orders in your area:**



- 1 Make sure the current rules are known as early as possible and through as many means possible, to build awareness. Most beaches and pools have COVID-19 Safety Plans to avoid spreading the virus; promote your website and social media so people can check in advance on closed areas, opening times, swim and go recommendations and based on daily local conditions.



- 2 Remind people to keep a towel length between them and other beachgoers. Ask people to avoid crowded swim areas and stay at least 1.5 metres away from people they don't live with. Identify locations where crowding may occur and implement measures that minimise gathering when needed.



- 3 Beachgoers should maintain physical distancing. Work closely with the Local Area Command to try to ensure enforcement and also reach out to your local Public Health Unit for support. Outdoor gatherings are subject to the 2 square metre rule with no upper limit. However, until 15 December (or 95% fully vaccinated), the gathering limit for unvaccinated adults is 2 persons.



- 4 Remind people the usual beach rules apply – obey the flags, listen to lifeguards – because they are also keeping you safe.



- 5 Ask visitors to consider their day. Densely-crowded beaches endanger physical distance, so promote alternative less crowded spots (see suggestions from Councils in the New Local). Check Google Maps' 'Popular Times' and real-time data. Avoid peak times; go earlier in the morning or later in the afternoon.

Cronulla Beach





**6** Promote discovering the local. While we love our beaches, remember travelling long distances to visit a beach may contribute to the spread of COVID-19. Masks should be worn when using public transport or in situations where maintaining physical distancing is difficult.



**9** Remind people that if they have recently returned from overseas, or stay at home areas, or had close contact with a person with COVID-19, they must follow the current restrictions and isolation requirements in the Public Health Orders. See NSW Health's COVID-19 website for more details.



**7** Encourage people to bring their own beach gear. In addition to beach essentials, ask people to pack a face mask, extra hand sanitiser, extra drinking water, and avoid sharing items such as food, equipment, toys, and supplies, with people they don't live with.



**10** Promote **downloading the COVIDSafe app** and encourage people to use COVID Safe businesses.



**8** Promote shared responsibility. Everyone has a role to play controlling the spread in public gatherings.





# How to guide for marking out spaces for people



See NSW Health's COVID-19 website for more physical distancing resources, including examples of signage and decals.

[www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/covid-safe/covid-safe-resources-for-registered-businesses#hand-hygiene-and-clean-workplaces](https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/covid-safe/covid-safe-resources-for-registered-businesses#hand-hygiene-and-clean-workplaces)

If required, grass and pavement markings are a great way to highlight:

- Places where people can sit, walk, relax or play at a safe distance
- Queuing arrangements, ensuring people are spacing by 1.5 metres
- Messaging – reminding people of the Public Health Orders and providing key site information (e.g. alternative locations to visit)

## Things to consider

Since 2020, the NSW Government has installed circle ground markings in popular parkland destinations such as The Rocks. If installing circle ground marking, consider

- 1 Location and context – what's in the space and who is the audience?
- 2 Current Public Health Orders
- 3 Specifications
  - Measurements (size of the grass or pavement marking, spacing)
  - Look and feel (colours, shapes, key messages)
  - Materials (fencing or tape, decals, chalk, spray paint)
- 4 Installation requirements (staff, printing, equipment, approvals)
- 5 Cleaning and maintenance

*Above: Example ground decals  
Below: The Rocks, Sydney*



## One way to mark out space for physical distancing

It's important to be clear on the distances people need to keep in public spaces. Ensure you always refer to the current Public Health Orders and resources already on government's central contact point at [www.nsw.gov.au](http://www.nsw.gov.au). Should you be required to apply a square metre or physical distance rule, for example 4 square metres or 1.5 metres physical distance, the square metre rule helps you work out how many people the space can accommodate – while the physical distance rule tells you how far apart people need to be from others within the space. These methods below can be adapted for different numbers of people or distances, as required.

### To achieve the relevant square metre 'rule' for a public space:

- Calculate the total area (e.g. you may want to only delineate areas in a very popular section of a park): length in metres × width in metres = area in square metres
- Divide the total area by the current requirement, e.g., 4 metres.

For example, if you had an area that is 160 square metres in size, you could allow up to 40 people when using the 4 square metre 'rule'.

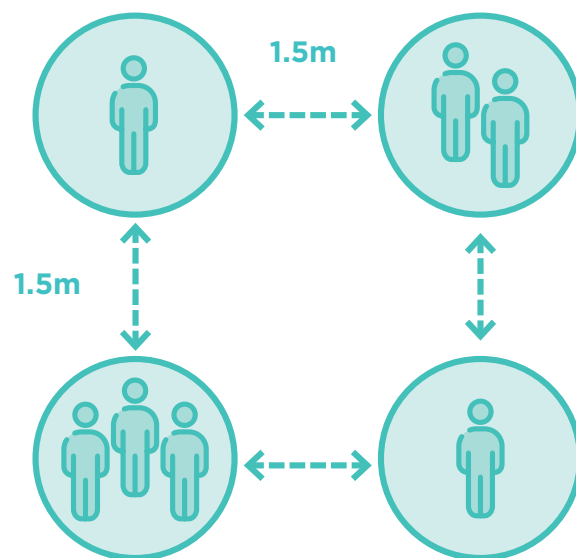
### However, to provide visual guidance for visitors with ground markings, we must combine this with the current physical distance metre rule.

Marking a shape, like a circle or square, on the grass would allow each person, for example, 4 square metres of space.

### To achieve the physical distance metre 'rule' between people:

The grass markings should be separated by the current distance requirements, e.g., 1.5 metres, to help people meet this requirement. You can make the shapes larger or further apart.

You can deliver ground circles by using a similar approach to the below example and as shown in these images, for example:



*Note: Please ensure you refer to current Public Health Orders. For the most current advice, visit [nsw.gov.au/covid-19](http://nsw.gov.au/covid-19)*



**> HELP US STAY COVID SAFE**

Visit [www.nsw.gov.au](http://www.nsw.gov.au) and for 24-hour assistance on Public Health Orders, you can call Service NSW on **13 77 88**.

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