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RETURN TO DANCE

PRINCIPLES AND FRAMEWORK FOR RESTARTING DANCE ACTIVITIES POST COVID-19

May 2020

Acknowledgement

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The Principles and Framework for Restarting Dance Activities Post COVID-19 directly references the *Framework for Rebooting Sport in a COVID-19 Environment* developed by the Australian Institute of Sport. Ausdance QLD acknowledges all the AIS Framework Project Team and contributors to the AIS Framework which can be found in full at: https://ais.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/730376/35845_AIS-Framework-for-rebooting-sport_FA.pdf

Ausdance QLD and BlakDance uphold the continuing sovereignty of all First Nations peoples in Australia.

We pay our respects to our Elders, past and present. We pay respect and homage to all the BlakDance Elders across Australia.

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1 Introduction

All dance in Australia sits within the context of 100,000 years of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dance continuum.

This document references all dance, inclusive of First Nations and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse dance.

Dance is an integral part of Australian culture. Participation in dance and dance-related activities contributes to the creative, physical, psychological and emotional well-being of individuals. Dance encourages social cohesion and connection to build stronger, more resilient communities. Australian dance is recognised for its athleticism, distinctive style and diversity and as a sector, dance contributes to the cultural and creative industries worth over $111.7 billion in 2016-17[1].

The dance sector comprises dance studios, freelance and contracted dancers, community dance practitioners, dance educators within the education system, choreographers and arts administrators, dance wear, equipment and business suppliers. The supply chain for dance activities includes venues, designers, aged care providers, pre and post production, marketing, broadcast services and advertising, and the myriad other professionals and businesses that rely on a supply of dance professionals and those industries that make dance happen. Dance activities include a wide range of backgrounds including First Nations, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) as well as genres (jazz, ballet, contemporary, ballroom, hip hop etc.) and reflect cultural identity; a key contributing factor to self-esteem and good mental health. The COVID-19 pandemic has substantially affected communities all around the world, leading to significant restrictions on all sectors of society, in particular all artforms of the performing arts. In the field of dance, all dance activities ceased completely in the third week of March 2020.

COVID-19 has impacted people in myriad ways with many experiencing degradation of their physical and mental health and significant impact on their financial status[2]. Resumption of cultural and creative activities can significantly contribute to the re-establishment of normality in Australia, in a post COVID-19 environment as well as shoring up the supply chain and rebooting hundreds of small and medium sized businesses. To ensure safety of our communities and ourselves, we are now faced with complex decisions and must carefully consider how we return to dance activities and how we engage others.

Ausdance National, in association with Ausdance Queensland and BlakDance has closely referenced the framework developed by The Australian Institute of Sport to inform this framework developed for the resumption of dance activities due to similarities between dance and sporting activities.

This framework also defines requirements of the three stages defined by the Federal government in relation to re-opening businesses and community activities. Individual States or Territories may respond to the interpretations differently, and official advice must be sought and received prior to resuming any activities.

As such, the Ausdance/BlakDance framework is based on industry learnings and current best evidence as well as guidelines from the Australian Federal Government with the professional advice of government medical authorities and the Management Committee of Ausdance National and Ausdance Queensland. The framework will be regularly updated to reflect the evolving scientific evidence about COVID-19. The framework is a timely tool of minimum baseline of standards, for 'how' reintroduction of dance activity will occur in a cautious and methodical manner, based on the best available evidence to optimise community safety.

The principles outlined in this document apply equally to high performance/professional level, community, competitive and individual dance activities. Decisions regarding the timing of resumption (the 'when') of dance activity must be made in close consultation with Federal, State/Territory and/or Local Public Health Authorities[3].

The priority at all times must be to ensure public health in line with the guidance of the Chief Medical Officer.

1 Department of Communication and the Arts (2018), *Cultural and Creative Activity in Australia 2008-09 to 2016-17 Working Paper.*
2 Australian Institute of Sport (2020), *Framework for Rebooting Sport* https://ais.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/730376/35845_AIS-Framework-for-rebooting-sport_FA.pdf

3 Australian Institute of Sport (2020), *Framework for Rebooting Sport*, 2

2 Principles

1. The safety of First Nations Elders as the source of First storytelling and knowledge in Australia is paramount.
2. Resumption of dance activities will contribute many health, economic, social and cultural benefits to Australian society emerging from the COVID-19 environment.
3. Resumption of dance activities should not compromise the health of individuals or the community.
4. Resumption of dance activities will be based on objective health information to ensure they are conducted safely and do not risk increased COVID-19 local transmission rates.
5. All decisions about resumption of dance activities must take place with careful reference to these Principles following close consultation with Federal, State/Territory and/or Local Public Health Authorities.
6. The Ausdance/BlakDance framework for restarting dance activities provides a guide for the commencement of all dance activities in Australia.
7. All individuals who participate in, and contribute to, dance activities will be considered in resumption plans.
8. Significantly enhanced risk mitigation (including physical distancing) must be applied to all dance activities.
9. If dance organisations or individuals are seeking specific exemptions in order to recommence activity, they are required to engage with, and where necessary seek approvals from, the respective State/Territory and/or Local Public Health Authorities regarding additional measures to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spread.
10. At all times dance organisations, businesses and individuals must respond to the directives of Public Health Authorities. Localised outbreaks may require immediate restriction of activity and those organisations, businesses and individuals must be ready to respond accordingly. The detection of a positive COVID-19 case in an individual, business or organisation will result in a standard public health response, which could include quarantine of all employees, students, contractors and volunteers or a larger community group and close contacts, for the required period.
11. The risks associated with large gatherings are such that, for the foreseeable future, guidance for safe numbers will be taken solely from State/Territory and/ or Local Public Health Authorities.
12. Dance activities should limit those present to the minimum required to support the participants (e.g. one parent or carer per participant if absolutely necessary).
13. The dance environment for working or training should be assessed to ensure precautions are taken to minimise risk to dancers, students, teachers, administrative staff, families and others visiting the environment.
14. The safety and well-being of the Australian community will be the priority in any further and specific decisions about the resumption of all dance activities.

3 Transmission

COVID-19 is highly transmissible between people and immediately spreads to close contacts of infected individuals. The risk for First Nations communities is great and, as such, risk analysis must reflect this.
The disease can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth which are spread when a person with COVID-19 coughs, sneezes or exhales. These droplets land on objects and surfaces around the person. Other people then catch COVID-19 by touching these objects or surfaces (fomites)[1], then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. The virus can survive in the air for up to three hours and on a range of surfaces for up to 72 hours.

1 Australian Government, Department of Health https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/7A8654A8CB144F5FCA2584F8001F91E2/$File/COVID-19-SoNG-v2.10.pdf

4 Prevention

Enhanced hygiene and social distancing measures reduce numbers of cases through several mechanisms. Physical distancing, frequent hand washing and use of an alcohol-based hand Sanitiser decreases the risk of transmission by reducing incidence of contact while enhanced hygiene reduces disease transmission, if contact occurs. Public Education will also contribute to reduction of transmission.

Image Credit: Craig Whitehead

5 Framework

5.1 Preparation

Prior to the resumption of any dance activities, it is important for dance studios, individuals, schools and dance companies to review and safely prepare the environment and processes. A thorough risk assessment must be carried out and preparation will be specific to each individual dance environment. A resumption of dance activity should not occur until appropriate measures are implemented to ensure safety of all community members.

5.1.1 Education

- Education for members of the dance community about COVID-19 risk mitigation strategies is crucial. Many dance practices and social norms within the dance community are incongruent with the concept of physical distancing. Education will reset expectations for new required behaviours prior to recommencing activities. Improved health literacy, including awareness of self-monitoring of respiratory symptoms (even if mild) will be required. Workplace Health and Safety resources are included in Appendix A. Recommended additional resources, from Safework Australia include (but are not limited to):

- How to keep workers safe COVID-19.
- Workplace Checklist COVID-19.
- Physical distancing checklist COVID-19.
- Cleaning checklist COVID-19.
- How to clean and disinfect your workplace COVID-19.
- Health, hygiene & facilities checklist COVID-19.

5.1.2 Environment

The specific considerations for a safe resumption of dance in all forms will be dependent on the venue, studio or teaching environment. Considerations include:

Physical Distancing

- Size of venue and anticipated number of students or dancers.
- Is it possible to reduce person to person contact?
- Implementation of staggered timetable in the case of multiple studios in one venue to minimise potential contact between individuals.
- Is it possible to divide a premise by utilising separate entrances to minimise person to person contact?
- How do you maximise physical distancing in activities/classes/rehearsals/performances?
- It is accepted that different dance styles may have different requirements for physical contact. If physical contact is required, ensure review of hygiene practices.

Cleaning

- What surfaces or equipment will dancers, workers or participants/audiences be sharing (floor, barre, chairs, props, office equipment)?
- What are the shared facilities (reception, stairwells, hallways, bathrooms, changing rooms and kitchens) and how will these areas be managed to ensure physical distancing?
- What is the protocol and frequency of cleaning shared surfaces and facilities/spaces?
- What provision is made for hygienic disposal of rubbish/tissues etc.?
- Are there any facilities to enable regular hand washing?
- How many sanitising hand rub dispensers are required in prominent places around the space/venue/studio?

Image Credit: Craig Whitehead

‘Get in, dance, and get out’

- Strategies to limit time and person-to-person contact on site should be implemented.
- Minimise use of change rooms, bathrooms and communal areas.
- Arrive dressed and ready for class or rehearsal (if possible).
- All activity participants to eat off site.
- All participants maintain at least 1.5m apart when not required for a specific dance activity.
- Any tasks that can be done at home, should be done at home (costume or clothing repair, make-up), online meetings, etc.

Organisation of dance activities

- How do First Nations dancers safely resume practice?
- What spaces can be used for isolation if someone becomes unwell?
- What is the strategy to ensure that physical distancing of at least 1.5m is maintained by all staff, dancers, students/participants, volunteers and audiences when not necessary for a dance activity?
- For partnered dance and other dance forms requiring physical contact, implement strict hygiene procedures when transitioning from one partner group to the next, including hand washing/sanitising, fresh replacements of any protective gear (for example masks/gloves), and, if relevant, a change of shirt or other outer wear.
- What air-circulation infrastructure exists to ensure clean airflow?
- What strategies can be used to communicate/inform dancers, teachers, staff, participants, volunteers and community of preventive actions or any incidents?
- What is the strategy to reduce in-person contact between dancers and other personnel?
- What is the strategy used to reduce risk to vulnerable groups?
- What is the strategy used to ensure all staff, volunteers and dancers understand and comply with the conditions?

5.1.3 Resources

Appendix A, State and Territory WH&S Resources

5.2 Three stage roadmap for general dance activities

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
General	• Dance activities can be conducted outside only with a maximum of ten people. • No contact between any participant or instructor. • No shared equipment or props should be used. • Online classes/ rehearsals or meetings permitted.	• Dance activities can be conducted indoors with a maximum of 20 participants. Some sharing of equipment (e.g. Barre) permitted. • No contact between any participant or instructor. • Stagger timetables to minimise contact between class/ ensemble groups.	• All dance activities can resume in groups of up to 100 people. • Where possible, decrease the size of groups (e.g. smaller ensembles within larger companies). • Consider the WH&S and Covid-safe practices of third-party venues such as performance spaces or community halls.
Hygiene measures	• No shared equipment, drink bottles or towels. Apply personal hygiene measures even when training in individual (home) environments. • Don't attend dance activities if experiencing any symptoms of being unwell.	• "Get in, dance, get out" approach means be prepared, changed if possible, and minimal use of shared facilities. Hand cleaning procedures in place and publicised. Alcohol-based hand sanitiser should be available at all entry/exit points and easily accessible during activities. Shower, clean training clothing upon return home. • Where possible maintain physical distancing of 1.5m. No socialising before or after activities.	• Continue all hygiene and cleaning practices from Stage 2. • Avoid unnecessary social gatherings.
Medical Services	• All medical services should be telehealth unless urgent. • No manual therapy unless essential and treating an ongoing condition.	• Face to face consultations permitted if required. Contact therapies/medical procedures should only occur if necessary. No socialising or congregating in treatment areas.	

5.3 Three stage roadmap for elite/professional dance companies and individuals

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
General	• Dance activities can be conducted outside only with a maximum of ten people. • No contact between any participant or instructor. • No shared equipment or props should be used. • Online classes/ rehearsals or meetings permitted.	• Dance activities can be conducted indoors with a maximum of 20. • Some sharing of equipment (e.g. Barre) permitted. • Contact is not permitted during the activity. Stagger timetables to minimise contact between class/ensemble groups. • No contact between any participant or instructor.	• All dance activities can resume in groups of up to 100 people. • Where possible, decrease the size of groups (e.g. smaller ensembles within larger companies). • Consider the WH&S and Covid-safe practices of third-party venues such as performance spaces or community halls.
Hygiene measures	• No shared equipment, drink bottles or towels. Apply personal hygiene measures even when training in individual (home) environments. • Do not attend dance activities if experiencing any symptoms of being unwell.	• Communal activity permitted following a risk assessment and complying with physical distancing requirements. • "Get in, dance, get out" approach means be prepared, changed if possible, and minimal use of shared facilities. Hand cleaning procedures in place and publicised. Alcohol-based hand sanitiser should be available at all entry/exit points and easily accessible during activities. Shower, clean training clothing upon return home. • Where possible maintain physical distancing of 1.5m. No socialising before or after activities.	• Continue all hygiene and cleaning practices from Stage 2. • Avoid unnecessary social gatherings.
Medical Services	• All medical services should be telehealth unless urgent. • No manual therapy unless essential and treating an ongoing condition.	• Face to face consultations permitted if required. Contact therapies/medical procedures should only occur if necessary. No socialising or congregating in treatment areas.	• Face to face consultations permitted if required. Contact therapies/medical procedures should only occur if necessary. No socialising or congregating in treatment areas.

5.4 Criteria for the resumption of dance activities

Criteria for resumption of all dance activity will be governed by public health policy and Federal, State/Territory Government directives. It is worth noting that different States/Territories and local authorities may permit the resumption of some activities at different times, dependent on local COVID-19 transmission, resources and other variables influencing local policy. All dance business, individuals, companies and organisations must ensure that the activities undertaken are consistent with the applicable guidance from Local Public Health Authorities.

An initial resumption of dance activity is dependent on three main factors:

- A sustained decrease in COVID-19 transmission.
- Federal and State government direct advice and/or exemptions.
- Organisations, companies and individuals making their own risk assessment guided by their Local Public Health Authorities, State/Federal guidelines and advice from Ausdance in their State or Territory.

5.5 Priority for First Nations resumption of dance activities

A First Nations risk assessment matrix must be prioritised (see Appendix B)

5.6 Vulnerable groups

Vulnerable groups with medical conditions may be at increased risk. Those with underlying medical conditions need individual advice in consultation with their regular doctor(s) prior to return to any dance activities. Considerations include increased susceptibility to respiratory infections, unique equipment (e.g. wheelchairs) that requires cleaning and accessibility of medical resources. Individuals with underlying medical conditions including (but not limited to) respiratory or cardiac disease, hypertension, diabetes and/or immunosuppression due to disease or medication may be at increased risk.

Other groups that require special consideration include; individuals over 70 years of age, carers for or a household contact of a vulnerable person, individuals with suboptimal access to medical care (e.g. remote) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities.

Potential interventions for vulnerable members of the dance community include:

- Delaying a return to class/practice or dance activities.
- Practicing at designated 'lower risk' times (i.e. with no one else around).
- Working off-site where possible.
- Maintaining physical distancing measures.
- Conversations with 'high risk' individuals to assess risk.

5.7 Returning after having COVID-19

There may be members of the dance community who have been infected with COVID-19 wanting to return to work or classes. Some individuals may have been infected and not be aware (asymptomatic or not yet tested).

Those who have recovered from COVID-19 must satisfy the Communicable Disease Network of Australia (CDNA) criteria. While there is growing research on the organ systems affected by COVID-19 in the acute phase, there is currently limited research on medium to long-term complications. Long-term decreased exercise capacity is expected, and members in the dance community must demonstrate evidence of their medical practitioner's satisfaction they are fit to return to work/dance activity.

5.8 Ongoing Management

Once dance activities have resumed, it is important that a documented monitoring process is in place to ensure early detection of illness. Individuals responsible for monitoring the dance activity or workplace where dance activities will be occurring should be educated in these processes. For regular dance activities using daily wellness monitoring, adding a respiratory symptoms checklist, with automated follow up of reported symptoms, should be considered. If medical resources are available, regular screening (brief symptom check, resting heart rate and temperature) of professional dancers or teachers should be considered.

5.8.1 Managing a suspected COVID-19 case

In Australia, currently most respiratory tract infections will be tested for COVID-19. If an individual is being tested for COVID-19:

- They must immediately self-isolate and discontinue practice/rehearsal/classes/performances until COVID-19 has been excluded and they have been medically cleared by a doctor to return to their work/ training/performance environment.
- Tracing of close contacts will be a decision for medical authorities.

Definition of close contacts:

- Face-to-face contact in any setting with a confirmed or probable case, for greater than 15 minutes cumulative over the course of a week, in the period extending from 48 hours before onset of symptoms in the confirmed or probable case, OR
- Sharing of a closed space with a confirmed or probable case for a prolonged period (e.g. more than 2 hours) in the period extending from 48 hours before onset of symptoms in the confirmed or probable case.
- Contact is considered to have occurred within the period 48 hours before recognition of symptoms in the individual until 24 hours after all symptoms have resolved.

5.8.2 Managing a confirmed COVID-19 case

COVID-19 is a notifiable disease and Local Public Health Authorities must be informed. Businesses or venues where dance activities are taking place may be closed on the instruction of the Local Public Health Authority or the Chief Medical Officer (CMO). Re-opening of the business or venue should only occur after close consultation with the Local Public Health Authority.

6 Summary

Preparation for resumption of dance activities

1. Prior to resumption, education of all business owners, professional dancers, teachers and other personnel should be a priority.
2. Assessment of the dance environment including provisions for cleaning facilities and equipment is crucial.
3. Practice should focus on 'get in, dance, get out'.
4. Differing (relaxing/increasing) restrictions may be required in response to changing numbers of COVID-19 cases.
5. Illness management protocols for dance participants and other personnel should be pre-planned.

Proposed criteria for resumption of dance activities

1. Special consideration should be made for managing the risk for First Nations dancers/ organisations.
2. Special consideration should be made for vulnerable individuals who may be more at risk of COVID-19 infection.

Return to dance activities

1. Individuals should not return to dance activities in any capacity if in the last 14 days they have been unwell or had contact with a known or suspected case of COVID-19.
2. Any individual with respiratory symptoms (even if mild) should be considered a potential case and must immediately self-isolate, have COVID-19 excluded and be medically cleared by a doctor to return to the training environment.
3. Dance providers, teachers and facilitators should apply a graded return to physical activities to mitigate injury risk, understanding that increased activity after a prolonged period of rest heightens the risk of injury.
4. Special consideration should be made for individuals with medical conditions or over the age of 70 due to increased vulnerability.

Returning to dance after COVID-19 infection

1. There is currently limited research on medium to long-term implications of Covid-19 to individual's health. Dancers returning to high intensity exercise may be at increased risk of health complications.
2. Dancers returning to work/practice after COVID-19 infection require full medical assessment to resumption of high intensity physical activity to minimise risk.
3. All staff with roles involving physical activity should also have a full medical assessment.

7 Conclusion

All dance in Australia sits within the context of 100,000 years of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dance continuum. Dance is a vital part of Australian life. It is an activity enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of children, young people and adults across all cultures, genres and styles. It supports physical and mental well-being and nurtures creativity and community amongst participants, teachers and audiences alike. Dance contributes to the broader economy through a strong supply chain that supports dance activity and practice. Ausdance National, Ausdance Queensland and BlakDance recognise this document outlines the 'how' of returning to dance, and looks to local, State, and Federal authorities for the 'when' of returning to work safely and with the absolute priority of public health and safety.

Sources

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Image Credit: Leon Liu

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