

FAQs – FOOD BUSINESS INFORMATION

Updated 27 March 2020

Can my food business continue to trade?

As of 23 March 2020 and 25 March 2020, all declared non-essential business activity was required to cease.

This means cafes, restaurants, bars, pubs and other licenced venues are required to close to the public. However, currently food businesses are allowed to provide takeaway meals & food delivery services as well as operate bottleshops.

The State and Federal governments have indicated that further restrictions on non-essential services and social distancing measures are to be expected.

If I am allowed to keep trading, what are the restrictions on the type of trade permitted?

For the most up-to-date information on restrictions, a full list of directions from the Chief Health Officer (CHO) will be available at <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/state-emergency>

Businesses seeking advice about whether they are affected can also call the Business Victoria coronavirus hotline on 13 22 15.

Trade is restricted to offering takeaway food, home delivery services and bottleshops. No members of the public should gather at your premises. Outdoor dining is not permitted.

If you are offering takeaway and delivery you need to adhere to public distancing rules of four square metres per person (and less than 100 people in an enclosed space). This also includes adhering to the distancing rules of 1.5 metres for employees within the workplace and when customers place an online/phone order and enter the store to pick up.

Customers should be encouraged to pay online or via a cardless transaction. Due to the increased risk of transmission, accepting cash is not encouraged. If you are accepting cash, consider what additional hand hygiene practices are required to best protect your staff and the public.

Are there extra requirements for providing take away/home delivery services?

If your food business is currently registered under the *Food Act 1984*, there are no further registration or administrative requirements needed for you to provide takeaway or home delivery services.

If your food business wishes to increase the food handling activities (e.g preparing or cooking higher risk foods than what your current food registration allows) a change of classification process will be required, and you will need to contact Environmental Health to discuss this further.

What can my restaurants or café do to manage home delivery or takeaway services safely?

The latest information from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) indicates there is no evidence that COVID-19 is transmitted via food. However, as the COVID-19 disease is highly infectious and there is no immunity in the general human population, businesses must adopt practical measures to reduce the risk of spread between staff or to the general public.

Businesses must practice correct food handling processes for preparing food for home delivery. Those processes include:

- Maintaining correct personal hygiene while packing the food and ensuring the food containers are stored in a safe and clean manner.
- Ensuring that food is packed, stored and delivered to the customer under temperature control and in a timely manner.

If providing takeaway or home delivery service isn't standard practice for your business, consider the following;

- Read your Food Safety Program, specifically the relevant sections for storing, packaging food, and transporting food.
- The food must be appropriately packaged. You may need to source additional packaging to ensure the food can be appropriately packaged.
- The food must be stored appropriately prior to collection from the customer. You may need to provide a suitable location to ensure the food is stored appropriately, such as a designated location, bain marie or refrigerator.
- You must be able to meet customer demands for allergy management. Follow the advice in your Food Safety Program regarding food allergens and intolerances.

Ensure that any takeaway or home delivery methods allow for strict social-distancing, i.e. each person, either ensure your staff and customers or members of the public remain at least 1.5m away from each other at all times. Clean any surfaces that are handled, i.e. EFTPOS machines or door handles.

For further guidance on home deliveries see the below link:

<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/food-safety/food-businesses/food-how-to-keep-it-safe/food-business-home-delivery-guide>

For more specific information please visit the Food Standards website:

www.foodstandards.gov.au/code/Pages/default.aspx (Click on the green tab labelled Chapter 3: Food Safety Standards (Australia Only))

Are tables and chairs permitted outside fixed premises for customers to choose whether they wish to consume their takeaway onsite?

No. Tables and chairs do not encourage physical distancing.

Can I accept reusable food containers from customers?

Accepting reusable containers i.e. KeepCups brought in by customers could potentially mean an increased risk to your business, however the latest information from the DHHS states that currently there is no evidence to suggest there is any benefit to switching to disposables.

If you do choose to accept reusable containers, consider how you can ensure that food handler and contact surface hygiene are not impacted or compromised.

I run a food business, are there additional cleaning or hygiene requirements I have to undertake because of COVID-19?

All food businesses must continue to follow food safety and food handling guidelines and all staff must continue to practice good hand hygiene. As normal, clean and sanitise food preparation surfaces. Frequently clean other high touch surfaces such as door handles, light switches, tabletops and benches, these should be cleaned regularly with detergent solution and an anti-viral disinfectant.

Hand hygiene is very effective at limiting transmission of COVID-19, a food handler must already wash their hands:

- Before starting work
- Before handling cooked or ready-to-eat food
- After handling or preparing food
- After handling waste
- After cleaning duties
- After using the toilet
- After blowing nose, sneezing or coughing
- After eating drinking or smoking
- After handling money

Hand-washing must be undertaken with soap and running water for 20 seconds. Cough or sneeze into a disposable tissue or into the crook of your arm (not into your hand) and wash your hands thoroughly after disposing of tissues.

What should I do if a staff member has cold or flu symptoms?

The Department of Health and Human Services Victoria (DHHS) has put together comprehensive information on Coronavirus (COVID-19), including symptoms, please visit <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorian-public-coronavirus-disease-covid-19>

Staff members who are unwell should not come to work or should be sent home immediately. If they suspect they have COVID-19 they should contact the dedicated hotline on 1800 675 398 (24 hours, 7 days) and seek advice.

What should I do if a member of my staff is diagnosed with COVID-19?

Staff members who have a suspected case of COVID-19 should not be at work. If a staff member is diagnosed with a confirmed case of COVID-19 they will be provided with information from the DHHS and their healthcare professional and will need to self-isolate for at least 14 days.

Information for confirmed cases can be found at <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/health-services-and-general-practitioners-coronavirus-disease-covid-19> under 'Factsheets for patients'.

All other staff at your business who have had close contact* with this staff member should contact the dedicated hotline on 1800 675 398 (24 hours, 7 days) and seek advice. All close contacts of confirmed cases will be contacted by the DHHS and told to self-quarantine for 14 days.

What are the isolation requirements and how do they apply to my staff?

The self-quarantine requirements can be found at <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorian-public-coronavirus-disease-covid-19#u-self-quarantineu>

All close contacts of confirmed cases will be contacted by the DHHS and told to home quarantine for 14 days.

Do I need to undertake extra cleaning if a staff member has been diagnosed with COVID-19?

If your business has a staff member that has been diagnosed with COVID-19, please call the dedicated hotline on 1800 675 398 (24 hours, 7 days) and seek advice. You will need to undertake a thorough clean of all surfaces, areas and equipment where the staff member has been.

The DHHS has developed comprehensive cleaning guidelines for COVID-19 which can be found at <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/03/environmental-cleaning-and-disinfection-principles-for-covid-19.pdf>

If my staff member has had a confirmed case of COVID-19, when can they return to work?

Your staff member cannot end isolation and return to work until they meet relevant requirements. The Department of Health and Human Services will determine when a confirmed case no longer requires to be isolated. To find out more, they should call the dedicated hotline on 1800 675 398.

Does Gannawarra Shire Council have a Pandemic Plan, and can I base my business planning on this?

Gannawarra Shire Council has activated its Pandemic Plan. The Council is following its Pandemic Plan and all government advice as it is updated. Businesses should follow the advice provided on the DHHS website <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus> and plan for further restrictions on their business. Gannawarra Shire Council will endeavour to provide advice and support as new restrictions are announced.

What else can I be doing to help prevent the spread?

- Remove unpackaged self-serve food that cannot be washed prior to consumption i.e. naked bread
- Remove self-serve items i.e. cutlery, condiments, straws, cups. Instead, be in control of the distribution of these items
- Clean and disinfect surfaces commonly touched by customers regularly i.e. self-serve registers, shopping trolley/basket handles.
- Be aware of the risks associated with handling money. Either have a dedicated money handler or wash hands/change gloves, between handling money and handling food.
- Prevent customers waiting or sitting within 1.5 metres of each other, particularly if you have a small shop area.

*'Close contact' means having face-to-face contact for more than 15 minutes with someone who has a confirmed case of COVID-19 – or alternatively sharing a closed space with them for more than two hours (i.e. being in the same room or office for two hours or more).