



Freemasons Future Recovery Team

Re-Opening Lodges

THE MANUAL

V2





Freemasons
Victoria



FFRT

VERSION 2 - JANUARY 2021



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The COVID-19 pandemic has had profound effects around the world.

The Coronavirus is volatile. The state of Victoria has successfully quashed a second wave of the virus, with immense community cooperation and personal sacrifice. Sharp vigilance is needed to keep our population safe and avoid a third wave.

At particular risk are the elderly and immuno-compromised.

Given that the median age of Freemasons Victoria members is 68, our fraternity has a keen interest in taking the most cautious approach.

Freemasons Victoria acted early in response to the COVID-19 emergency.

All Masonic Centres across the State were closed in late March, following a decision of the Board of General Purposes. Our buildings remain closed, although the office is presently operating in accordance with government regulations.

Lodges have met only by video-conferencing on platforms such as Zoom.

At all times, Freemasons Victoria has followed the advice and requirements of State and Federal Governments.

In late May, the Board of General Purposes appointed a Freemasons Victoria Future Recovery Team. It has been headed by now-Deputy Grand Master, RWBro. Anthony Bucca, and included a group of senior Freemasons from

across the state, working in five teams:

- Health
- Risk and Finance
- Ritual and Ceremonial
- Membership
- Lodge Meetings

The job of the FFRT is to make recommendations to the Board on the re-opening of Masonic Centres and Lodges across Victoria. The COVID-19 situation is fast-moving and fluid. In Victoria, we have witnessed restrictions being re-imposed at short notice. Lodge and Masonic Centres are urged to keep a watch on their email in-box on a daily basis for updates from the Grand Secretariat. Check the latest Government information at:

www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au

Proper consideration must also be given to ensuring the health and safety of Freemasons Victoria staff.

Prevention is better than cure. As there is no cure for COVID-19, and a vaccine in Australia is still months away prevention is about human behaviour, and education of preventative measures and steps to stop

the spread of COVID-19. The FFRT has been absolutely committed to the well being of all our members particularly those at greater risk.

The aim of this Manual is to detail the strict requirements of re-opening, as it occurs. The requirements referred to are minimum requirements and there is nothing to preclude individual Lodges and centre managements adding additional reasonable requirements as circumstances warrant. It is important to the health of all members, their families, and the community at large, that we all follow the instructions. We are all keen to resume Lodge work, however our demographic is potentially at a higher risk than other organisations. We must be cautious. Members are on their Masonic Honour to follow the rules, and to act in good faith. Lives may depend on it.

Since discussions about recovery first began, Victoria has suffered some setbacks. The State Premier, Daniel Andrews, has urged Victorians to meticulously follow best procedure.

This Manual is, therefore, a dynamic document, and subject to frequent change.

The Manual is available at:

www.freemasonsvic.org.au

Please check that you are referring to the latest version. The Grand Secretariat will advise the membership of updates as they occur.

No lodge will be required to return against the wishes of its members.

No member will be asked to return against their own wishes.

Should there be a worsening of the pandemic or a third wave is proclaimed, then there is no doubt that all formal Masonic activity throughout the state may be required to cease.

All social activity will be encouraged subject to whatever restrictions are imposed upon restaurants, hotels, cafes and private domestic gatherings.

KEY INFORMATION

At the time of writing (December 2020 - updated January 2021), it is hoped that Lodges might re-open in stages across Victoria. This hope, of course, is subject to change at short notice.

The first three stages are shown in the next column.

The restrictions to re-opening from January 1 include:

- No Degree Work
- No Installations

The Board of General Purposes will take ongoing best advice as to when these restrictions might be lifted. There are only two members delegated by the Board to make official statements,

- RWBro. Anthony Bucca, Deputy Grand Master (Chair, Freemasons Future Recovery Team).
- RWBro. Garry Runge, Grand Secretary.

Even these brethren, will speak with the approval and consent of the Board.

One member in each Lodge, probably the Worshipful Master, should assume the responsibility that all rules are kept.

STAGE 1 14 December 2020

Prepare Masonic Centres for re-opening, subject to guidelines contained in this manual.



STAGE 2 1 January 2021

Masonic Centres and Lodges can re-open for administrative and educational purposes only, subject to strict observance of Government regulations, and our own additional precautions.



STAGE 3 1 March 2021

Lodges resuming ritual and ceremonial, subject to distancing and other regulations. The FV Ritual and Ceremonial Committee is currently considering slight modifications that might be required to enable degree work to take place.



LODGE LIFE WILL BE DIFFERENT

**We have survived previous pandemics,
World Wars, depressions and recessions.**

We must work together to survive this present hardship.

As Lodges re-open across Victoria, the first sharp lesson will be that Lodge life will initially be very different.

Those members with health problems would be well advised to stay at home in the first months of re-opening.

Activities at Lodges will be strictly limited to business and educational items including ballots for candidates.

For example: There will be no visitors until at least 1 March 2021. There will be no installations until further notice. Lodge officers will remain in their current

positions until further notice.

It has been important for Lodges to maintain member involvement in other ways. Telephone and other personal contact has been more important than ever. Video-conferencing meetings have proved extremely popular. 'Souths' or social events have been held at restaurants, hotels, cafes and members' homes.

As well as looking after members with indifferent health, it is vital that Lodges keep candidates informed and engaged. Caring communication in Lodges becomes more important than ever.



EXAMPLE OF LODGE NIGHT

From January 1, 2021 – unless notified otherwise - Lodges **MAY** re-open. It will be the autonomous decision of each Lodge to determine whether or not their regular meetings will resume.

- The Lodge Secretary will send out the Summons.
- On arrival at the Masonic Centre, every member must use hand sanitiser. Sanitiser is to be placed at the front door to the Masonic Centre. Sanitiser is to also be placed at the door to the Lodge Room.
- Medical advice suggests that the best form of health prevention is frequent and thorough washing of hands. No gloves are to be worn.
- On arrival, each member must have their details entered in a register that includes their name and telephone number. Each Lodge should appoint one member to enter these details into the register, with only that member handling a pen. (A sample register is attached. In accordance with the announcement by the Premier on 6 December 2020 the use of a QR code will reduce social distancing requirements from 4m² to 2m². The use of QR Codes is encouraged. The Grand Secretariat issued information to Lodge Secretaries on December 29, 2020. A video is available at <https://youtu.be/O8dL1LpmKkl>)
- Entries into the Attendance Book should likewise be the responsibility of one member only.
- There may be fewer members in attendance. Members with COVID-19 **MUST NOT** attend. Members with COVID symptoms, even mild symptoms, **MUST NOT** attend. Those feeling unwell in any way **MUST NOT** attend.
- Strict social distancing must take place. At the time of writing, Masonic Centres are classified as community venues. With the use of an QR code to register people the 2m² rule should apply.
- The maximum number of people in the Lodge Room must be calculated in accordance with government regulations. Current 2m² (with the use of the QR code) rule applies.
- When a Lodge meeting opens in January, there is to be no ceremonial work apart from Opening, Closing and ballots. There are to be no visitors. The only activities allowable in Lodge Rooms at this time are as referred to above as well as educational items. From March 1 subject to advice from the Ritual and Ceremonial Committee it is hoped that ceremonial activities can take place as normal.
- The annexed cleaning register which provides for cleaning commonly used items is to be completed by the Master, Secretary and DC at the conclusion of the Lodge meeting.
- Holding of the 'South' should only be by caterers, with strict observance of State restrictions. Alternatively Souths can be held in commercial premises.



PREPARATION OF MASONIC CENTRES

Masonic Centres should be thoroughly cleaned and dusted. 'Deep cleans' are not required. Special attention should be given to hygiene and cleaning in buildings that have remain unused for some months.

AIR FLOW

There needs to be adequate air flow in Masonic buildings. If possible, open windows. If air conditioning is being used, make sure that it is not recirculating. Air conditioning units and filters should be properly cleaned.

APPEARANCE BOOK

One member only should be appointed to write in the Attendance Book. This will eliminate the need for more than one person to use the pen, and will avoid multiple people being in contact with the same piece of paper.

BALLOTS

Ballots will be permitted from 1 January 2021 subject to thorough cleansing of ballot material.

CANDIDATES

Lodges should engage with prospective candidates to keep them informed of what is happening.

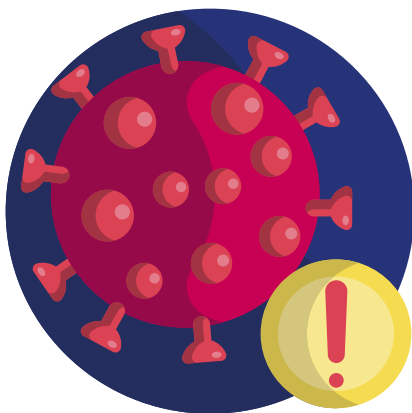
CAR POOLING

Car pooling is discouraged at this stage. At all times, Government rules and guidelines must be followed.

CLEANING

At all times, Government rules and guidelines must be followed. Normal regular thorough cleaning should take place. Alcohol wipes should be used before and after use of items such as wands, batons and gavel.

Individual Lodges will be able to source sanitiser, rubber gloves and alcohol wipes. The Grand Secretariat has a list of suppliers if required.



REHEARSALS

Rehearsal with minimal attendees can take place. Officers are to be encouraged to continue to rehearse and to walk through ceremonies (without acting candidates and to practice ritual and movements wherever possible ALWAYS subject to social distancing).

DISTANCING

If the 2m² rule applies most Lodges should be able to have a full attendance. If manual registration is employed, 4m² will continue to apply and this will naturally restrict numbers able to return.



ENTRANCES, EXITS

Should a Masonic Centre have more than one door to the South, one should be marked as 'Entry Only' and another marked as "Exit Only".

GLOVES

No gloves are to be worn until the rules are relaxed. Disposable rubber gloves should be worn when handling food. Wearing rubber gloves is no substitute for proper hand hygiene.

HAND HYGIENE

The Health Panel identified that Hand Hygiene is one of the most important factors in COVID-19 prevention. Hand Hygiene typically involves washing one's hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or applying an alcohol-based hand rub to the surface of one's hands. To be effective, hand sanitisers must contain at least 60 percent alcohol.

Hand hygiene must be carried out:

- When hands are soiled
- After using the toilet
- When touching potentially contaminated surfaces
- After coughing, sneezing or blowing one's nose.

HAND SANITISER

Inner Guard or Deacons should stand at the door with hand sanitiser and ensure all those entering use the product.

INSTALLATIONS

Subject to further Government regulations it is proposed that installations will be held from 1 April 2021 onwards.

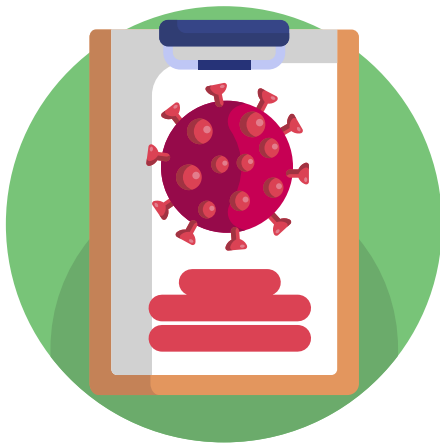
■ IN CASE OF ILLNESS

If an attendee develops COVID symptoms they should be moved to one of the candidate rooms. Gloves, masks, anti bacterial wipes should be provided. A sign should be erected to stop access from others. The WM should call the COVID hotline once an infected person has been isolated. The Property Manager should be informed of the infection. The Property Manager will arrange an appropriate cleaning contractor to arrange deep cleaning should a COVID infection be confirmed. COVID hotline: 1800 675 398.



■ LISTS

In the absence of a QR code a list of attendees, with their contact details, needs to be retained for every meeting. (See attached form)



■ MAINTENANCE

Maintenance of Masonic Centres is permitted and should continue as per normal.

■ SEATING

All attendees are to maintain proper social distancing. It is the responsibility of Centre Management to count the numbers of seats and work out how many people can be sat socially distanced.



■ SHAKING HANDS

Brethren should abstain from shaking hands or engaging in any other form of physical contact.

■ VISITORS

There is to be no visiting to Lodges until advised otherwise. This will not preclude invitees to regional Lodges and smaller Lodges to assist with ceremonial. It is anticipated that visiting can resume 1 March 2021.

■ MASKS

All government regulations must be met. The wearing of masks is up to the individual member if not already required by government regulation.



CLINICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Freemasons Victoria Future Recovery Team has taken expert advice in compiling its recommendations to the Board of General Purposes. This includes a panel of health professionals, including doctors, nurses and clinicians. The extensive work of Bro. Mark Reynolds, a health industry practitioner, is acknowledged.

The Panel notes that the most deaths due to Coronavirus are suffered by men aged 60+.

The median age of members of Freemasons Victoria is 68.

"We must, therefore, proceed very carefully when considering returning to the Lodge – not only for the sake of stopping the spread of this disease in general, but also for the sake of the vulnerable members of our fraternity."

The Panel notes that the most common symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, difficulty in breathing, cough, sore throat and fatigue. Any member with any of these symptoms, however mild, should not attend Lodge.

There is an important distinction between 'cleaning' and 'disinfecting'. Cleaning is a physical process of removing germs, dirt and organic matter from surfaces. It is important to clean a surface prior to disinfecting it. COVID-19 can survive on surfaces anywhere from a few hours up to several days.

This can vary based on multiple conditions (for example, temperature, humidity, type of surface). It is important, therefore, to disinfect any surface that you think may be infected.

The basis of good infection control is to operate under the assumption that everyone is potentially infectious. Plan accordingly. Therefore cleaning should be undertaken with a thorough and methodical approach.

Our Panel says: "There is currently little evidence to suggest that routine deep cleaning is of any significant benefit. However, deep cleaning should be undertaken if a person suspected or known to be infected with COVID-19 has recently been present at the centre."

Frequently touched surfaces such as door handles, appliances, sinks, taps and lodge furnishings should be regularly disinfected. Disinfection of such surfaces should be undertaken either with a 1000-parts-per-million bleach solution with a disinfection agent approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration. Disinfection should be carried out only by persons equipped with appropriate personal protective equipment (that is, gloves for general cleaning, gloves, masks and aprons for disinfecting).



GENERAL POINTS

Freemasons Victoria has a multi-stage process of re-opening:

- December 14, 2020: Masonic Centres opening for cleaning and maintenance.
- January 1, 2021: Lodges may meet for business, educational and administrative purposes only.
- March 1, 2021: Resumption of Ritual and Ceremonial work. General visiting may recommence.
- April 1, 2021: Installations to recommence unless by dispensation.
- There is no requirement for deep cleaning.
- There is no requirement for temperature checks on attendees.
- A register of all attendees and their contact details must be kept in the absence of a QR code.
- There should be designated members to accurately record the Lodge Attendance Book, and to ensure that sanitiser is always available at the entry to the Masonic Centre, and at the entry to the Lodge Room.
- Alcohol wipes must be used before and after the use of commonly-used items such as wands, gavels, batons and ballot material. These cleaning actions are to be recorded in writing, signed by the Master, Secretary and Director of Ceremonies.
- There are to be no visitors until March 1, 2021.
- Souths should comply with government regulations.
- Members with COVID-19 MUST NOT attend. Members with COVID symptoms, even mild symptoms, MUST NOT attend. Those feeling unwell in any way MUST NOT attend.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who pays for cleaning?

Masonic Centres are to clean as they normally would. As always, Masonic Centres are responsible for these charges.

Who pays for cleaning items?

Items such as alcohol wipes, sanitiser, disposable gloves, are the responsibility of each lodge.

Who is responsible for the Cleaning Register?

Each of the Master, Secretary and Director of Ceremonies must complete and sign a Cleaning Register for each meeting.

Must masks be worn?

Unless and until there is a change in regulations, masks must be carried by each member and may be worn at their discretion.

What if there is a fresh COVID outbreak in our region?

Government rules apply. If public gatherings are banned in a particular region by Government, no opening of Masonic Centres in that region will be permitted.

What happens if Lodge attendees exceed the maximum allowed numbers?

The Master and Secretary would need to devise an equitable roster.

Do I have to attend Lodge?

No. Lodge attendance is entirely voluntary. There is no compulsion to attend. There should be no prejudice against any members who choose not to attend due to COVID.

How do we cater events?

Lodges can continue to use their own catering services, dependent upon food handling guidelines being adhered to. It is advisable to have only one or two persons (partners/stewards) using gloves and tongs serve food. This is to avoid many different hands touching a single plate. Common sense should always be used.

FFRT MEMBERS

RWBro. Anthony Bucca DGM	Chair
RWBro. Garry Runge OAM Grand Secretary	Grand Secretariat Support
Ms Alison Smith	Administrative Support
VWBro. Robert Brennand PGIW	Risk & Audit Committee
RWBro. Craig Head GTreas	Finance Committee
Frank Warner	Manager Commercial Services
VWBro. Matt Donato GSupt Works	Works VAT
VWBro. Paul Brennand GSupt MShip	Membership VAT
VWBro. Ian Buckingham GSuptEd	Education VAT
Bro Ash Long PGTyler	Communications VAT
VWBro. Ian Cross GIWkgs	Ritual & Ceremonial
RWBro. Lionel May PJGW	DCO District 114 (Metro)
WBro. Neville Wiggins PM	DCO District 108 (Country)
WBro. Geoff Newby APM PGPurs	DCO District 105 (Country)
WBro. Peter Atkin PGStdB	DCO District 103 (Country)
WBro. Peter Barrand PJGD	DCO District 102 (Country)
RWBro. Wayne Smith PJGW	Grand Scribe Ezra (Mark and Chapter)
WBro. Jim Karabatsos DGIWkgs	Ritual & Ceremonial
Bro. Dr Mohan Kamalanatham MM	Emergency Physician
Bro. Rhys Webb MM	Registered Nurse
Bro. Dr Vana Tran MM	GP
Bro. Brett Drummond MM	Operational Manager with Ambulance Victoria, Emergency Management Unit
WBro. Jason Dawson WM	Department of Health and Human Services, Emergency Management Branch
Bro. Mark Reynolds MM	Primary Healthcare Nurse
VWBro. Felix Pintado GChap	Mercy Health, formerly Royal Freemasons Homes



REGISTER

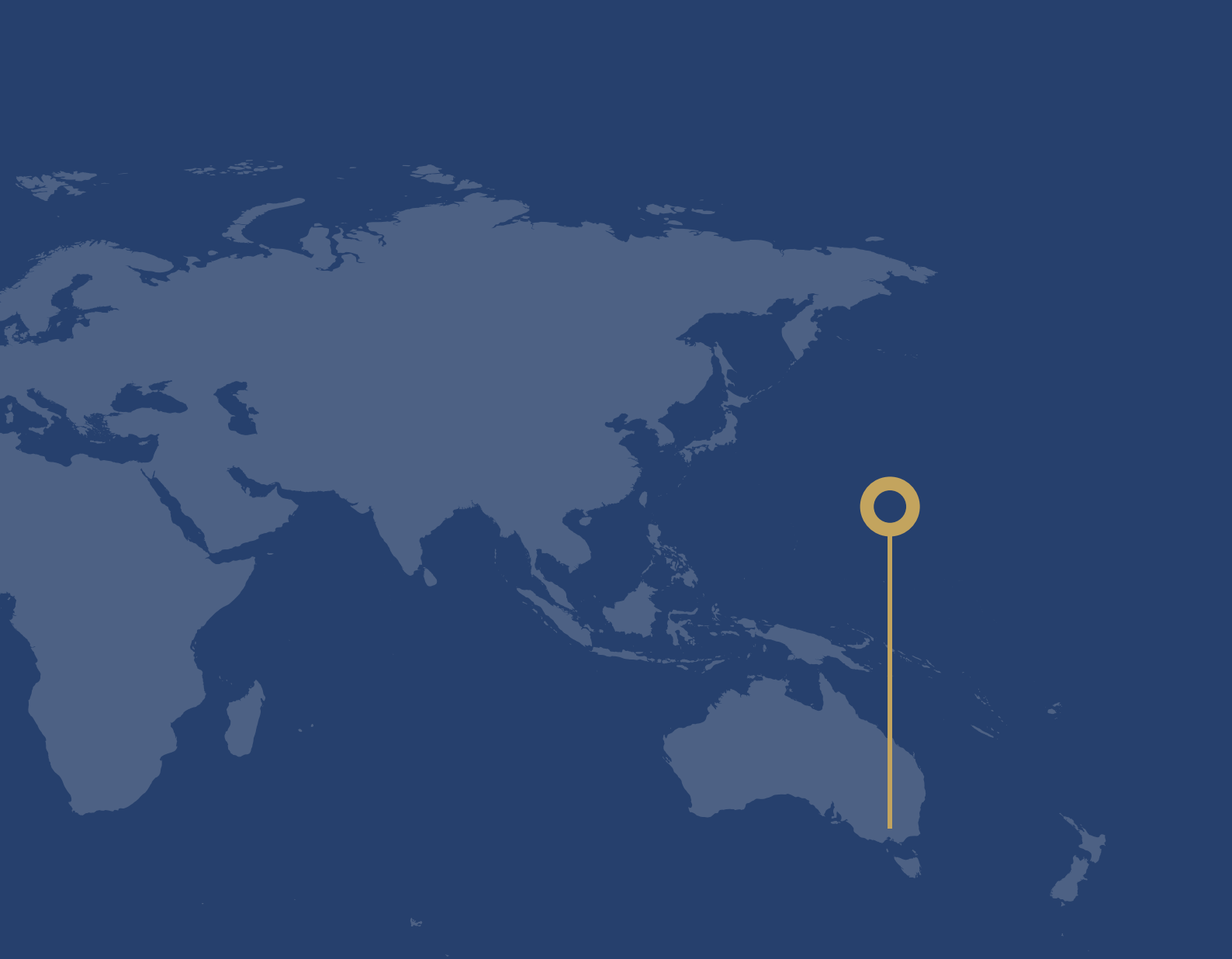
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CLEANING CHECKLIST

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