

# Toy Libraries



AUSTRALIA

## Advice for toy libraries on responses to the coronavirus epidemic and business continuity planning

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## Introduction and purpose

From time to time infectious diseases develop into epidemics (or pandemics) and create increased risks for the community. These occasions require specific policies targeted at the particular disease in question and general efforts at preparedness and business continuity planning.

This document will help toy libraries identify changes to policies and processes that may be required to respond to the current coronavirus (COVID-19) situation and future epidemics.

While coronavirus is of concern, it is important to remember that most people displaying symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat or tiredness are likely suffering with a cold or other respiratory illness – not coronavirus.

Although much of the focus in the media may be on the health impacts of an epidemic, we encourage toy library committees and staff to consider the organisational preparedness and the impact of epidemic responses on the reputation and long term sustainability of the toy library.

This document was created with the following objectives in mind:

- Toy Libraries Australia and its member toy libraries wish as far as possible to protect their members, staff, volunteers, and the general public from infection or contagion by epidemics including the coronavirus.
- Member toy libraries, with advice from Toy Libraries Australia, will facilitate, through its policies and procedures, strategies designed to reduce risks to its clients, its staff, its volunteers, and the general public.
- Committees of member toy libraries have a responsibility to consider the long-term sustainability of the toy library organisation and appropriately manage new risks created by the epidemic.
- Toy Libraries Australia and member toy libraries will comply with all directions from authorised public health officers and recognised medical authorities in relation to the epidemic or pandemic.
- Policies enacted by toy libraries should be in line with those of comparable organisations in their local community.

## Transmission reduction measures

Toy Libraries Australia and toy libraries should not be providing any information on health responses, isolation guidance or transmission mechanisms of the virus other than those provided by authorised public health officers. In communication to members, toy libraries should quote directly from the Australian Government Department of Health website (for the coronavirus [www.health.gov.au/health-topics/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov](http://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov)) or the equivalent authority in their state or territory. Information you are receiving from your local public school is often a good template to follow as this information will have been provided by your state/territory department of health.

## Transmission of the coronavirus

There is evidence that the coronavirus spreads from person-to-person. Current advice is that the virus is most likely spread through<sup>1</sup>:

- close contact with an infectious person
- contact with droplets from an infected person's cough or sneeze
- touching objects or surfaces (like doorknobs or tables) that have cough or sneeze droplets from an infected person, and then touching your mouth or face

These are the same ways that the flu is spread.

## General precautions to reduce transmission

Toy library members, volunteers and staff can take the following precautions during an epidemic<sup>2</sup>

- Regularly and thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water (for at least 20 seconds) or clean them with an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Maintain at least a 2 metre distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth, or shaking hands with others.
- Make sure you follow good hygiene, and encourage others to do the same. This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze, and disposing of used tissues immediately.
- Don't visit the toy library if you feel unwell.
- Keep up to date on the latest hotspots (cities or local areas where the coronavirus is spreading widely). If possible, avoid travelling to these places - especially if you are more at risk.
- Seek medical advice promptly and follow the directions of your local health authority.

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Government Department of Health; Coronavirus (COVID-19); viewed at <https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov> on 12 March 2020

<sup>2</sup> Institute of Community Directors and Moores; Epidemic/pandemic policy, viewed at <https://communitydirectors.com.au/epidemic-pandemic-download> on 12 March 2020

The risk of transmission of the coronavirus in a toy library setting can be minimised through a good standard of general hygiene. This includes<sup>3</sup>:

- Promoting cough etiquette and respiratory hygiene. (Download a cover your cough poster at <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/policiesandguidelines/cover-your-cough-sneeze-poster>)
- Routine cleaning of frequently touched hard surfaces with detergent/disinfectant solution/wipe.
- Providing adequate soap and hand washing facilities and/or alcohol-based hand rub for staff and members to use.
- Training staff, volunteers and members on handwashing and use of alcohol-based hand rub. This should include through the display of posters in the toy library and via email and social media communication.

Hand washing poster:

<https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/reports/clinical%20guidelines/ch55g-how-wash-hands-poster.pdf>

Hand rub poster:

<https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/reports/clinical%20guidelines/ch55f-alcohol-hand-rub-poster.pdf>

Follow the Toy Libraries Australia social media accounts for shareable images:

[www.facebook.com/ToyLibrariesAustralia/](http://www.facebook.com/ToyLibrariesAustralia/)

[www.instagram.com/toylibrariesaustralia](https://www.instagram.com/toylibrariesaustralia)

### General cleaning of the toy library and toys<sup>3</sup>

No specific cleaning protocols are currently recommended in relation to the coronavirus in social settings including at the toy library, so previous advice regarding general cleaning still stands. It is good practice to routinely clean surfaces as follows:

- Clean frequently touched surfaces with a household detergent solution.
- Clean general surfaces and fittings when visibly soiled and immediately after any spillage.

Messaging to members on cleaning toys should include:

- It is always members' responsibility to clean borrowed toys before returning them to the toy library.
- Please do not come into the toy library to return toys if you or a member of your household is exhibiting flu/cold-like symptoms. The toy library will extend the borrowing period for the toys on loan.
- After a sickness in your household, please thoroughly clean and disinfect all toys before they are returned to the toy library. Let the toy library know of the illness in your household so that toys can be further isolated.

Toy Libraries Australia's instructions for cleaning toys can be found at [www.toylibraries.org.au/cleaning-toys](http://www.toylibraries.org.au/cleaning-toys)

<sup>3</sup> Australian Government Department of Health; Environmental cleaning and disinfection principles for COVID-19; viewed at <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/03/environmental-cleaning-and-disinfection-principles-for-covid-19.pdf> on 12 March 2020

Cleaning of the toys from households with the coronavirus or exhibiting flu-like symptoms<sup>4</sup>

The length of time that SARS-COV-2 (the cause of COVID-19) survives on inanimate surfaces will vary depending on factors such as the amount of contaminated body fluid – such as respiratory droplets – present and environmental temperature and humidity. In general, coronaviruses are unlikely to survive for long once droplets produced by coughing or sneezing dry out.

**If a toy library receives notification that a household has a confirmed case of the coronavirus or exhibits other flu-like symptoms, the toys returned should be recleaned and disinfected in the toy library following the process in the box on the next page.**

After this in-library clean the toys can be returned to the shelf for borrowing on the next day the toy library is open. If you have the space you could decide to put the toys aside for a week as an extra safety precaution.

A disinfection solution can be made from household bleach. Household bleach comes in a variety of strengths. The concentration of active ingredient, hypochlorous acid\*, can be found on the product label.

#### **Recipe to achieve a 1000ppm (0.1%) bleach disinfectant solution**

Original strength of bleach		Disinfectant recipe		Volume in standard 10L bucket
%	Parts per million	Parts of bleach	Parts of water	
1	10,000	1	9	1000 mL
2	20,000	1	19	500 mL
3	30,000	1	29	333 mL
4	40,000	1	39	250 mL
5	50,000	1	49	200 mL

\*Hypochlorous acid (HOCl) is a weak acid formed when chlorine (Cl) dissolves in water and dissociated to hypochlorite (ClO<sup>-</sup>) which is the oxidising disinfectant in bleach.

<sup>4</sup> Australian Government Department of Health; Environmental cleaning and disinfection principles for COVID-19; viewed at <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/03/environmental-cleaning-and-disinfection-principles-for-covid-19.pdf> on 12 March 2020

## **Process for in-library cleaning and disinfecting of toys from households that have exhibited flu-like symptoms or with a confirmed case of the coronavirus<sup>5</sup>**

The risk when cleaning toys is not the same as the risk when face to face with a sick person who may be coughing or sneezing.

- Staff and volunteers cleaning toys from households with the coronavirus or flu-like symptoms should be informed to avoid touching their face, especially their mouth, nose, and eyes when cleaning.
- Those cleaning should wear impermeable disposable gloves and a surgical mask plus eye protection or a face shield while cleaning.  
*The surgical mask and eye protection act as barriers to people inadvertently touching their face with contaminated hands and fingers, whether gloved or not.*
- Those cleaning should use alcohol-based hand rub before putting on and after removing gloves.
- Alcohol-based hand rub should also be used before and after removing the surgical mask and eye protection.
- If there is visible contamination with respiratory secretions or other body fluid, the cleaners should wear a full length disposable gown in addition to the surgical mask, eye protection and gloves. As this will not be practical for toy libraries, these toys should be put aside and cleaned when the visible contamination has dried.

### **Cleaning procedure**

1. *Clean the toys following TLA's toy cleaning instructions*  
For toys, cleaning is an essential step prior to disinfection. Organic matter can inactivate many disinfectants. Cleaning reduces the soil load, allowing the disinfectant to work. Removal of germs such as the virus that causes COVID-19 requires thorough cleaning followed by disinfection.
2. *Make a fresh batch of bleach solution and follow manufacturer's instructions*  
The disinfectant used should be one for which the manufacturer claims antiviral activity, meaning it can kill the virus. This includes chlorine-based bleach disinfectants following the dilution instructions on previous page.
3. *Wipe the area with bleach solution using disposable paper towels or a disposable cloth.*
4. *Dispose of gloves and mask in a leak proof plastic bag.*
5. *Wash hands well using soap and water and dry with disposable paper or single-use cloth.*  
If water is unavailable, clean hands with alcohol-based hand rub.

<sup>5</sup> Adapted from Australian Government Department of Health; Environmental cleaning and disinfection principles for COVID-19; viewed at <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/03/environmental-cleaning-and-disinfection-principles-for-covid-19.pdf> on 12 March 2020

The procedure outlined on the previous page will require the toy library to stock disposable gloves, surgical masks, eye protection, bleach and alcohol hand rub. It is likely that during the epidemic, some or all of these supplies will be unavailable to the toy library

If these supplies are unavailable, then toys should either:

- Be kept by the member at home for a week after any member of the household last exhibited flu-like symptoms, or
- Be quarantined from other toys in the toy library for a week before cleaning and disinfecting using normal processes.

## Epidemic impact on toy library operations

### Changes to policies on late fees and toy renewals

Toy Libraries Australia's coronavirus Facebook post has been advising members that toys from families that cannot visit the toy library due to coronavirus will be renewed on request.

Each toy library should consider whether they would like to further relax policies on toy renewal and late fees based on the situation in their community. For those with online systems, these policy changes can be easily enacted through changing your settings in Mibase or SETLS.

### Infection of staff or volunteers

If a staff member or volunteer is concerned that they may be contagious they should:

- Seek medical advice promptly and follow the directions of the local health authority.
- Not visit the toy library until given the all clear by an appropriate medical professional.
- Notify the appropriate person (toy library manager or President) as soon as possible. It may be necessary for them to self-isolate by staying at home until they recover.

Every toy library will need a plan in case staff or key volunteers are unable to open the library. This could either be closing the toy library or having other volunteers on standby to run the toy library. This plan should be agreed by the committee now, including how the closure of the toy library can be quickly communicated to members.

If a staff member or a regular volunteer is likely to have been contagious while at the toy library, the toy library should close while further advice is sought from state health authorities.

### Closure of the toy library to reduce spread of the virus

The toy library should follow the advice of government health authorities and the lead of public schools and the majority of early years centres in making a decision to close because of the coronavirus epidemic.

The toy library should close if:

- The government advises schools and early years centres to close, or
- Local public schools and the majority of local early years centres are closing.

This approach will ensure that the toy library is in line with government advice and community expectations and isn't either over-reacting or under-reacting to the situation.

If you need to close your toy library, consider extending membership terms for the length of the closure.



### Impact on events

On Friday 13 March the Australian government advised that all non-essential gatherings of more than 500 people should be cancelled from Monday 16 March. This advice does not apply to schools, universities or public transport

Toy libraries should not proceed with, or attend, events likely to have more than 500 attendees.

### Key person risks

Key person risk occurs when an organisation becomes heavily reliant on a key individual(s). Toy libraries should already have processes in place to minimise key person risks. This includes making sure several people have the experience to open and run the toy library if required and that key systems, processes, passwords are well documented.

If you don't have this in place, use this as an opportunity to review your risk management plan. A template is available on the TLA member hub.

## Financial impact of an epidemic on toy libraries

As we all know, many toy libraries are run on a shoe-string budget. Even if the core toy library operations are not directly impacted by an epidemic, the finances of the toy library could be affected. For example:

- Less new membership revenue as the community self-isolates and reduces discretionary spending due economic uncertainty
- Reduction in fundraising revenue from cancelled events
- Delays in membership renewal
- Payment of sick leave to staff, while needing to pay others to fill shifts.

If your toy library is forced to close, you are still likely to have outgoing expenses such as payroll, rent or utilities, but no incoming membership fees.

What would your toy library do if you had no membership fees for three months?

What would you do if your main fundraising event for the year was cancelled?

**All toy libraries committees should be reviewing their budgets now and putting in place 'worst case scenario' plans if revenue reduces.** This is particularly important for toy libraries who employ staff. A typical first step in such a plan could include the reduction of opening hours, however the impact on staff of such a decision should be carefully considered (see next section).

### Government stimulus package<sup>6</sup>

On 12 March 2020 the federal government announced the 'boosting cash flow for employers' program. The program provides \$25,000 back to small and medium-sized businesses, with a minimum payment of \$2,000 for eligible businesses. The payment will provide cash flow support to businesses with a turnover of less than \$50 million that employ staff. The payment will be tax free.

- The payment will be delivered by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) as a credit in the activity statement system from 28 April 2020 upon businesses lodging eligible upcoming activity statements.
- Eligible businesses that withhold tax to the ATO on their employees' salary and wages will receive a payment equal to 50 per cent of the amount withheld, up to a maximum payment of \$25,000.
- Eligible businesses that pay salary and wages will receive a minimum payment of \$2,000, even if they are not required to withhold tax.

Based on this information, it appears that toy libraries that employ staff should qualify for these payments.

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<sup>6</sup> Australian Government; Boosting cash flow for employers; viewed at <https://business.gov.au/risk-management/emergency-management/coronavirus-information-and-support-for-business/boosting-cash-flow-for-employers> on 12 March 2020

## Workplace laws and the coronavirus<sup>7</sup>

Toy libraries that employ staff need to work together with their employees to find appropriate solutions that suit the needs of their individual toy library and staff. Open communication will result in the best outcomes for everyone.

### Status of your employees

All toy libraries should have a contract with their employees and be clear on their conditions of employment. If this is not the case this needs to be resolved immediately. Toy Libraries Australia has example contracts on the member hub and advice on awards and levels. Fair Work should be contacted for advice if there are any questions from either toy libraries or employees regarding their terms of employment. The Fair Work hotline could get very busy if there are large number of people unable to attend work, so resolve any employment questions you have now.

### What happens if an employee or their family member is sick?

Full and part-time employees who can't come to work because they are sick can take paid sick leave. If an employee needs to look after a family member or member of the employee's household who is sick with coronavirus, or suffering an unexpected emergency, they are entitled to take paid carer's leave.

Casual employees are entitled to 2 days of unpaid carer's leave per occasion. Full and part-time employees can take unpaid carer's leave if they have no paid sick or carer's leave left.

An employee must give their employer evidence of the illness or unexpected emergency if their employer asks for it.

### What if an employee is stuck overseas or required to be quarantined?

Employees should contact their employer immediately if they are unable to attend work because they can't return from overseas or are required to enter quarantine because of the coronavirus.

The Fair Work Act does not have specific rules for these kinds of situations, so employees and employers need to come to their own arrangement. This may include:

- taking sick leave if the employee is sick
- taking carer's leave if family member is sick
- taking annual leave
- taking any other leave available to them (such as long service leave or any other leave available under an award, enterprise agreement or contract of employment)
- arranging any other paid or unpaid leave by agreement between the employee and the employer.

### What if an employee wants to stay home as a precaution?

If an employee wants to stay at home as a precaution against being exposed to coronavirus, they will need to make a request to take some form of paid or unpaid leave, such as annual leave or long service leave. These requests are subject to the normal leave application process in the workplace.

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<sup>7</sup> Fair Work Ombudsman; Coronavirus and Australian workplace laws <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/about-us/news-and-media-releases/website-news/coronavirus-and-australian-workplace-laws>

Employees making these requests should be encouraged to discuss their level of risk of contracting coronavirus with their doctor, or the appropriate State or Territory workplace health and safety body.

### What if an employer wants their staff to stay home?

Under work health and safety laws, employers are required to ensure the health and safety of their workers and others at the workplace (as far as is reasonably practical). Workers also have responsibilities under those laws.

If an employee is at risk of infection from coronavirus (for example, because the employee has recently travelled through mainland China, or has been in close contact with someone who has the virus), you should request the employee seek medical clearance from a doctor or not work during the risk period. Where an employer directs a full-time or part-time employee not to work, the employee would ordinarily be entitled to be paid while subject to the direction. You should consider your obligations under any applicable enterprise agreement, award, employees' contracts of employment, and workplace policies.

Under the Fair Work Act, an employee can only be stood down without pay if they can't do useful work because of equipment break down, industrial action or a stoppage of work for which the employer can't be held responsible. The most common scenarios are severe and inclement weather or natural disasters. Enterprise agreements and employment contracts can have different or extra rules about when an employer can stand down an employee without pay. Employers need to balance their legal obligations, including those relating to anti-discrimination.

### Reducing hours of casual staff

A casual employee does not have a firm commitment in advance from an employer about how long they will be employed for, or the hours they will work. A casual employee also does not commit to all work an employer might offer. In return they receive a higher hourly pay rate called a casual loading.

Although the toy library can reduce hours of casual staff for any reason, it is worth considering what is in the best interests of the toy library in the long term. Your casual employees probably have important experience that may be difficult to replace.

### Reducing hours of part-time staff<sup>8</sup>

Most toy librarians work on a part-time basis with their regular hours agreed through their contract of employment, under the conditions of the Social and Community Services Award. The agreement has to be in writing and include:

- the hours worked each week
- the days of the week the employee will work
- the start and finish times each day.

The employer and employee should keep a copy of the agreement. The hours in the agreement don't have to be the same hours each week. For example, this means they could agree to work 12 hours in one week and 16 hours each alternating week.

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<sup>8</sup> Fair Work Ombudsman; Part-time employees; viewed at <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/employee-entitlements/types-of-employees/casual-part-time-and-full-time/part-time-employees#2073-2085>

**The pattern of work can only be changed if the employer and employee agree in writing.**

They can agree to change it for a set amount of time or on an ongoing basis. The employer and employee should keep a copy of the change.

Note: The roster for the days and times of work (not the amount of hours) may be changed in other ways than by agreement. For the rules about when a roster can be changed, go to <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/employee-entitlements/hours-of-work-breaks-and-rosters/rosters#2215-2227>

Use the part-time hours of work agreement and variation template to record changes to part-time hours of work <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/766/Part-time-hours-of-work-agreement-variation.doc.aspx>.

### Redundancy<sup>9</sup>

If the toy library needs to reduce the hours of employees to ensure its ongoing financial sustainability, but no agreement on variations to agreements can be reached with employees, then the toy library would need to consider redundancies. This should only be considered as a last resort.

Redundancy happens when an employer either:

- doesn't need an employee's job to be done by anyone, or
- becomes insolvent or bankrupt.

Redundancy can happen when the business:

- introduces new technology (e.g. the job can be done by a machine)
- slows down due to lower sales or production
- closes down
- relocates interstate or overseas
- restructures or reorganises because a merger or takeover happens.

Each award has specific consultation processes that need to be followed for a redundancy to be lawful. Contact Fair Work as soon as possible if you think your toy library is in a situation where this may be required.

### Forced closure of the toy library based on government decisions

The Fair Work Act does not have specific rules for these kinds of situations. Toy Libraries Australia will provide updated advice if this situation occurs.

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<sup>9</sup> Fair Work Ombudsman; Part-time employees; viewed at <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/ending-employment/redundancy> on 12 March 2020

## Maintaining the reputation of the toy library

How your toy library responds to an epidemic will impact the long-term reputation of your toy library. You need to take a balanced approach:

- if you over-react and introduce extreme measures early, you may give the message that toy libraries are risky and that toy library toys aren't clean
- if you respond too slowly, you might give the impression that you don't take the health of your community seriously.

This is a balancing act that all toy libraries need to consider. It should be based on the advice of the appropriate health authorities, the federal government and your state/territory government, with appropriate consideration given to the community sentiment and the actions of others in your community (particularly early years centres and schools).

## Keeping members engaged

Toy Libraries Australia has empirical evidence that closures of toy libraries for even a few weeks result in reduced engagement of members and negatively impact on total membership levels for several months. To counteract this, consider how you can continue to engage your members over the time of the epidemic.

- Encourage members to come in and borrow toys, particularly if it looks likely that children are going to be home from childcare, kindergarten and school for prolonged periods. Consider whether you could lift your borrowing limits over this period.
- If your toy library does need to close, ramp up your social media and email communication. Provide play suggestions for children. Share Toy Libraries Australia Facebook posts shareable content. Keep members informed on when the toy library is likely to reopen.
- Have a plan to renew members whose membership expires during your closure period.
- Plan a campaign to attract new members when you reopen.

## Building your reputation in times of crisis

In times of crisis, organisations with clear communication and a thoughtful approach to the needs of their member may flourish.

What could you do make your members love you? Could your toy library

- Provide a 'click and collect' service during a period of closure?
- Deliver toys to families in isolation?

Think creatively, spread the word in the your community and tell the rest of the toy library community.

## Wording for a communication to members

(Adjust based on decisions made for your local toy library)

As you will be aware COVID-19 has now been declared a pandemic. We recognise the need to play our part in slowing down the spread of the virus and protecting our community's health.

So we request that if you're experiencing any cold/flu-type symptoms please DO NOT attend the toy library.

Also, if you have travelled overseas to affected areas or have been in close contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus, please allow 14 days before visiting the toy library.

Email us to arrange an extension on toys if you are self-isolating.

Should we need to close the toy library as directed by the government or due to <staff and> volunteers being unwell we can assure you that late fines will not be accrued over this time <and if the closure is significant, then all memberships will be extended>. Toys will not need to be returned until the toy library reopens.

While you continue to borrow – which we encourage you to do – here are some steps recommended by health authorities to reduce your risk of coronavirus

- Regularly and thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water (for at least 20 seconds) or clean them with an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Maintain at least 1 metre distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth, or shaking hands with others.
- Cover your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze, and disposing of used tissues immediately.
- Stay at home if you feel sick.

Phone your GP first if you need medical attention. They will advise you what to do.

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For advice from others, join our Facebook discussion group: [www.facebook.com/groups/TLAdiscussion/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/TLAdiscussion/)

For advice from TLA, email Sarah McCarty at [info@toylibraries.org.au](mailto:info@toylibraries.org.au)