

31 August 2020

Lisa Hasker
CEO Vicsport
By email: lisah@vicsport.com.au

Dear Lisa,

As we continue to support and work with the Victorian Government in the response to COVID-19 I am writing to you to share some scientific evidence obtained last week by Swimming Victoria as well as the control mechanisms we have in place to support the Governments ongoing Public Health response to COVID-19.

The evidence indicates that swimming pools are one of the safest sporting environments for both containing and controlling the spread of COVID-19. In harness with the controls that come by being a membership based, regulated activity the research supports and influences our stance that indoor pools should be first facilities to open in Victoria to provide structured participation in Learn to Swim, and Squad training once those restrictions ease.

The review

We commissioned Joanne Love, BPsychScB(Psy), GradDipPsychAdv, to conduct a literature study on the relationship between swimming pools and COVID-19. We believe this is one of the first such reviews to be conducted in Australia. A copy of her report is attached.

The review focussed on 3 areas:

1. COVID-19's persistence/survival/removal in water;
2. Humidity as a factor in reducing COVID-19 transmission; and
3. Environmental factors.

In summary she suggests that swimming pools are one of the safest sporting environments because:

- COVID-19 has low stability water, with little or no chance to cause infection in pool water as it is incredibly susceptible to Chlorine, Ozone and UVC.
- The maintenance of controlled humidity and temperature play a role in the inactivation of COVID-19; and
- Indoor structured programs provide a safe sporting environment.

COVID-19 and water

COVID-19 is an enveloped virus. Enveloped viruses have never demonstrated waterborne transmission in humans. To date, no transmission of COVID-19 in water environments has been proven.

Studies show that:

- the virus could not be detected in water temperature above 26 degrees Celsius. It is standard practice for public pools to be operated at 26°C or more and learn to swim pools above 30°C; and,
- the treatment of water with Chlorine, Ozone or UV will deactivate the COVID-19 virus in water;
- the WHO, (2020) suggest there is no risk of transmission of COVID-19 in swimming pools that maintain appropriate disinfection routines, and a minimum Chlorine level of 1 mg/l throughout the pool. A lower Chlorine concentration is also considered adequate when used in combination with Ozone or UV disinfection.

The use of both Chlorine and Ozone/UV is almost universal practice in public pools and many privately run facilities.

Humidity

Humidity is known to play a role in the respiratory transmission of airborne viruses. Recent studies have shown that for enveloped viruses (such as COVID-19) the virus was least active at 50% relative humidity. Most indoor pools naturally operate at a humidity level of 50-60%.

Indoor pools can control the level of humidity more easily than outdoor pools which are, largely, weather dependant. Accordingly, at this time, indoor pools would be the safest and most logical preference to reopen first.

Environment

Unstructured swimming lends itself to less physical distancing and the consequent increased risk of spread of the virus. Structured programs such as learn to swim, squad swimming and supervised rehabilitation programs, can maintain close supervision of physical distancing, up to date contact details and the continued preservation of the hygienic environment.

The role of Swimming Victoria & The Australian Swim Coaches and Teachers Association (ASTCA) – safety, compliance and traceability

It goes without saying that, like all sports, we are keen for our members to be able to resume training in the water as soon as possible. However, Swimming Victoria is committed to the safety of all our members and the wider community.

Ms. Love's recommendations deal, largely, with strategies to contain the spread of the virus in the first instance. SV is also committed to controlling that spread if an outbreak occurs at a swimming training venue. To that end we already have procedures in place to ensure compliance with social distancing and other COVID safe requirements:

* we hold verified contact details of all attendees which is normal operating procedure in our environment (safety/under-age participants). Those details are collected and stored in accordance with our Privacy Policy and may lawfully be shared with Victorian health authorities if requested.

* Squad/class/lesson times are documented with attendees known prior to session. Attendance is registered as part of normal operations

* small groups train together. There is no interaction with other groups nor any crossover of swimmers between group. For that reason, we are confident that containment can easily be controlled

In addition, we are investigating the use of various proven technology platforms to collect contact tracing data for anyone participating in swimming activities. In particular, one such platform, Endgame,

<https://www.endgamesoftware.com.au/egs-health-dec> - is already being used, successfully, within competitive swimming in Queensland.

The role of swimming in the community

The physical and mental health benefits of swimming are widely recognised. In addition, a community impact study commissioned recently by Swimming Australia has found that swimming has a total economic and community impact of over \$3.7 billion per annum on Australia. That includes a community health impact of \$135 million per year and a \$4.35 billion lifetime health contribution.

In summary, we are confident that the easing of restrictions on swim squad training and learn to swim classes can be done safely and in a controlled manner. This will assist not only the health and well-being of Victorians but the whole economy as well.

Operating under our approved Return to Sport plan, we believe our clubs should be able to host squad training in Stage 3 restrictions as outlined below:

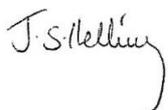
Activity	Stage 3 restrictions	Stage 2 restrictions	Stage 1 restrictions
Squad Training/LTS In-water density – children (u/18) In-water density – adults Out-of-water density Lane/group capacity	none 1 patron per 4m2 1 patron per 4m2 none	none 1 patron per 4m2 1 patron per 4m2 none	none 1 patron per 4m2 1 patron per 4m2 none
Changerooms On deck open showers Toilets	closed 1.5m distancing open	open 1.5m distancing open	open 1.5m distancing open
Face Coverings In-water staff Out-of-water staff / patrons	None Required*	None Required*	None Required*

*except where a face covering exemption is in place i.e. teachers/coaches and where covering prevents the effective management and safety of the participants

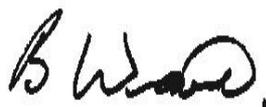
We support facilities opening in Stage 3 only for patrons for whom we already have contact details i.e. no general public access.

For all these reasons we ask that you consider including swimming in the first group of activities that are permitted when restrictions are eased.

Yours faithfully,



Jason Hellwig
Chief Executive Officer
Swimming Victoria



Brendon Ward
CEO
ASCTA