

COVID-19 SAFETY PLAN AND PROTOCOL

SHOPPING CENTRE FOOD COURTS

This Safety Plan and Protocol:

- complements the *Retail Recovery Protocol* released on 1 May 2020 by the National Retail Association, Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association, Pharmacy Guild of Australia, Australian Retailers Association and Shopping Centre Council of Australia.
- is a simple, practical and public-health led guide for shopping centre food courts that are re-opening or are preparing to re-open as COVID-19 restrictions ease,
- provides 10 key actions that should be taken, however does not substitute legislative responsibilities. Further guidance should be taken from National Cabinet decisions, public health authorities and workplace health and safety authorities such as Safe Work Australia, and
- notes that key actions will be different at each shopping centre food court, noting that each shopping centre, food court, and adjacent food businesses are different, including issues such as location (e.g. where a food court is in the middle of a circulation area or at the edge of a shopping centre), operating hours, size, layout and configuration (e.g. dividers, multi-level), open-air / enclosed spaces, customer access points, co-location with other uses such as cinemas and entertainment precincts.

Definition of a shopping centre food court

- food courts are areas within the common area of shopping centres, or areas beneath / adjacent to commercial buildings, and provide facilities for people to consume take-away food and beverage purchased from adjacent food businesses.
- there are more than 400 food courts within Australian shopping centres, and the national average shopping centre food court has around 11 food outlets and 330 seats.
- food businesses adjacent to food courts are generally SME operators such as independent businesses or franchisees.
- the seating layout and configuration can vary, such as having separated precinct areas, fixed separators and dividers (e.g. planter boxes), fixed or loose seating including individual or bench seating, and fixed or loose tables.
- food and drink consumed in a food court is takeaway (i.e. purchased and packaged by an adjacent food business) including with single-use, disposable cutlery or containers, and of a fast-food nature whereby the average seating time is around 10-15 minutes.
- food courts generally have a smooth pattern of daily demand, but can experience peaks depending on their location, such as early morning trade (e.g. at a public transport or CBD location), lunchtime trade, after-school (e.g. school students) and evenings (e.g. adjacent to cinemas).
- due to their operating profile, shopping centre food courts have high-standards of cleaning and hygiene including high-rotation clearing and cleaning of tables and regular waste disposal. Floors are also cleaned in relation to food and beverage spills.

The key principles which have guided this Protocol are:

- public health and safety guidelines to protect people against infection and help prevent the spread of COVID-19,
- compliance with ongoing Government and public health authority rules, directions and restrictions, and
- working with and assisting Government and public health authorities when required.

Key public health rules that shopping centre food court operators need to follow are:

- Be aware of any risks to the community for any aspect of the purchase, takeaway and consumption of food.
- Ensuring high-standards of cleaning and hygiene,
- Facilitating and encouraging social distancing to ensure a 1.5m distance can be maintained,
- Ensuring adherence to public gathering limits including maximum customer limits and to ensure there is no more than 1 person per 4m² (in WA, 1 person per 2m²).

All Australians are reminded:

- To treat shopping centre and retail workers with respect as they continue to serve and ensure the community can access essential and other goods and services in a clean and safe environment, and
- Abusive and violent behaviour towards shopping centre and retail workers is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

Key Actions that shopping centre food court operators should take are:

Key actions will be different at each shopping centre food court, noting that each shopping centre, food court, and adjacent food businesses are different, including issues such as location (where a food court is in the middle of a circulation area or at the edge of a shopping centre), operating hours, size, layout and configuration (e.g. dividers, multi-level), open-air / enclosed spaces, customer access points, co-location with other uses such as cinemas and entertainment precincts.

Cleaning and hygiene

1. Making alcohol-based hand sanitiser available at key locations such as entrance and circulation areas.
2. Maintaining high-rotation clearing and cleaning and disinfecting of tables, seating, and benches when each customer (or group) leaves, and other regularly used objects and hard surfaces (e.g. tray-return areas, waste bins).
3. Maintaining regular cleaning of floor surfaces to ensure public safety (e.g. in response to food and beverage spills) and waste disposal.
4. Cleaning staff should wear appropriate PPE when undertaking cleaning, and cleaning equipment (e.g. trolleys) should be regularly cleaned and maintained.

Physical distancing

5. Ensuring food court layout, configuration and seating, whether fixed or loose, does not exceed the maximum 'per person' limit of the relevant jurisdiction, and steps are taken to enable physical distancing (e.g. removal of seating, marked-out-seating, spacing out of tables and benches).
6. Providing signage or ground markings (e.g. stickers or tape) to ensure that people can practise physical distancing while queuing, ordering, or waiting for food and beverage purchases.
7. Provide signage or markings on tables or benches to encourage people to leave the area once they have finished consuming their food or beverage.
8. Liaise with local schools to ask if they can remind students to practise physical distancing when visiting a food court, not to loiter and adhere to relevant signage and any requests from shopping centre (e.g. security guard, cleaner) or retail staff.

Community engagement

9. Monitoring and encouraging customer adherence to relevant public health guidelines by security guards and other personnel, which may also include Police visits to shopping centres.
10. Ensuring access to food courts and adjacent food businesses for vulnerable people, people with mobility issues and other people (e.g. people with prams or strollers with young children) who may require assistance or special arrangements.