



NQUEC COVID SAFE GUIDE

Purpose

This guide is designed to help NQUEC members safely participate in club activities within an environment of COVID related health risk.

Scope of Club Activities

NQUEC plans, prepares, and conducts club activities within the North Queensland region for the enjoyment of its members. Club activities fall into two broad categories, recreational diving trips (both SCUBA and snorkel), and social events.

Diving trips are conducted in open-air environments (outdoor events) at beaches, islands, lakes, and the open ocean. NQUEC caters for already-certified SCUBA divers and does not conduct integral dive training.

Social events do not typically have a diving or water-based component, and are held within an enclosed space (indoor events) or at a public meeting place. These events include the club's monthly general meetings and ad-hoc committee meetings, as well as restaurant dinners, club fund raising events, and social barbeques.

Introduction

The NQUEC COVID Safe Guide was developed in consultation with the Queensland State Government documents; *Aquatic Sports Industry COVID Safe Plan* and *Return to Play Guide for QLD Sport Recreation and Fitness Industries*. The NQUEC guide does not seek to introduce any new COVID safe measures not already covered in these Government documents, instead it aims to contextualise the existing recommendations to a recreational diving setting applicable for NQUEC.

NQUEC COVID safe recommendations have been made with these key considerations in mind:

- The health and safety of club members, participants, visitors, families, guests, service providers, and the broader community is the number one priority for the club management committee.
- Where the club engages the use of service providers such as commercial dive operators, club members must comply with all COVID safe measures under that operator's own COVID safe industry plan.
- All forms of club trips (chartered, self-contained, and ad-hoc) must undergo appropriate risk management by the activity organiser to identify and manage risks associated with the transmission of communicable disease.

Risk Management

The first and most basic control measure for the club to reduce COVID risk to members is a reliance on each and every participant to cease their involvement in any club activity if they have cold, flu, or COVID type signs or symptoms prior to commencement of the trip, have been in close contact with a known active case of COVID-19, have travelled overseas in the previous 14 days, or have been to a declared COVID-19 hotspot in the previous 14 days.

The second control measure is the use of physical distancing where at least 1.5 meters is maintained between participants. Under normal circumstances (i.e. outside of an emergency situation) Club-based diving is a non-contact recreational sport which involves participants operating in pairs or 'dive buddies'. In terms of personal proximity, divers are more likely to be closer during the transit to and from the dive site than they are when they are actually diving. With this in mind, club activity organisers must look at the overall design of a club trip to identify points where physical distancing may become problematic, such as vehicle travel to and from the meeting place, or queuing in a line for a ferry ticket, etc. In these cases, risk could be minimised by wearing masks on public transport, pre-purchasing tickets, or staggering participant arrival times. Whatever strategy is used, the aim is to minimise time spent within large crowds and heavily trafficked areas.

Where close proximity is unavoidable, good personal hygiene will be paramount to reducing COVID risk. This control measure is perhaps best described as a list of practical recommendations:

- Avoid touching, shaking hands, hugging, kissing, or other forms of physical greetings.
- Wash and or sanitise hands regularly.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a barrier such as a facial tissue.
- Properly dispose of facial tissues and wash hands immediately after their use.
- Maintain separate drinking supplies by not sharing water bottles.
- Thoroughly wash and clean outdoor cooking equipment and eating utensils.

This last point on hygiene is especially important if the trip involves communal cooking. Decisions to share cooking responsibilities or to prepare group meals must be made well in advance of the trip, so that measures can be taken to allow participants to properly clean and sanitise cooking equipment between meals, particularly where the trip is being run in a remote area.

In addition to increased personal hygiene, minimising COVID risk during club activities also requires participants to exercise good control over their own personal belongings. For example, a diver's swim wear and towel should not be left near a communal use area, nor be left unsecured such that it gets blown into contact with another participant's dive gear or personal equipment. There are clear limitations here when the trip is run from a dive vessel, however the intent of this control measure is simply for participants to maintain control of their personal belongings as best they can to avoid contact with another participant's dive gear or personal belongings.

Trip Records Management

Participation in an activity will be recorded by the activity organiser using a passenger manifest. These records will be retained by the committee within the club's file management system for at-least one year. As a minimum, passenger manifests must include the following detail:

- Full name of each participant.
- Mobile phone number and email address of each participant.
- The club each participant is a member of (if the trip involves multiple clubs).
- The main pursuit each participant will engage in (i.e. SCUBA, snorkel, or non-diver).
- Designation of the activity organiser, and the date/s of the activity.

During the course of a trip, where participants enter the premises of a service provider such as a shop front, café, or ticket office, participants must also comply with any sign-in requirements (QR code or paper based equivalent) in use at those premises.

Dive Equipment

For the purpose of this guide, the following definitions apply to the classification of dive gear:

SCUBA unit consists of the cylinder, BCD or harness, weight system, valves, regulators, hoses, and gauge consoles. A privately owned SCUBA unit (either complete or part thereof) may be lent to another club diver, but only after it is cleaned and sanitised as per *DAN's Quick Guide to Properly Disinfecting Dive Gear* available at; <https://www.diversalertnetwork.org/news>.

Basic kit includes those other items which are needed for swimming such as wet suit, hood, snorkel, mask, gloves, boot/socks, and fins. Basic kit should be treated as a diver's Personal Protective Equipment due to its contact with the wearer's skin and the need for this equipment to be well matched to the wearer's size and body shape for it to be effective. For these reasons, basic kit should not be lent between divers.

Divers who do not own their SCUBA unit or basic kit are free to obtain this equipment through hire arrangement from a commercial operator, but they should first satisfy themselves that the operator has an effective process in place to clean and sanitise their gear between hire periods.

Prior to the Dive

Note:

The following guidance has been provided specifically for club diving trips because unlike social events which typically involve gatherings of club members within an easily controllable environment such as a restaurant, diving trips require a higher degree of input and oversight from within the club to ensure COVID safe practices are being followed.

Prior to the trip, the activity organiser will distribute this guide to all participants. This action serves to remind members of the club's COVID safe practices, as well as reinforcing the need for members to not attend or participate in the activity if they have cold, flu, or COVID type signs or symptoms prior to commencement of the trip. In this situation, the onus rests with the individual to inform the activity organiser, who will then advise the club management committee.

For chartered trips, participants must comply with the physical distancing requirements of the commercial operator, particularly when diving from a vessel where there are high traffic surfaces and touch points.

For self-contained and ad-hoc trips, participants should gather and set up their gear in an area where physical distancing can be achieved. This can be aided through the use of dive crates or bags as partitions. The activity organiser will oversee gear preparation and must be prepared to offer advice to correct individual actions in line with this guide. The dive leader should position themselves in a

way so they can be heard by everyone while also maintaining physical distancing. Wherever possible and without detriment to pre-dive buddy checks, participants should aim to lift and carry their own dive gear by themselves to minimise the handling by others.

During the Dive

During in-water activities, SCUBA units or elements thereof (particularly the regulator) are not to be shared amongst participants unless an actual emergency situation demands it. For example, buddy pairs are not to practice buddy breathing techniques which involve the sharing of a single regulator between two divers simulating a low-on-air situation.

After the Dive

NQUEC members are encouraged to de-brief each other on their dive, compare points of interest, and refine their plans for subsequent dives, but must remember to maintain physical distancing, especially when disassembling equipment, moving equipment around, drying and changing clothes.

Participants must sanitise their hands prior to handling any common use equipment such as communal camping equipment or cylinder filling gear.

Notification of a COVID Case

In the event that a COVID case is confirmed in a participant after a trip, the individual must first advise the activity organiser. The activity organiser will inform the club management committee, who will then notify all club members and associates via the club's email distribution list (NQUEC Google Group). The club management committee will also work with the activity organiser to determine if further notifications are required for service providers (such as vessel skippers, shop staff, etc.) if they were engaged or otherwise visited during the course of the trip.

This guide will undergo periodical review by the club management committee to ensure it remains relevant as our domestic COVID situation evolves; however, suggestions from general members for alteration of existing material or inclusion of new material can be proposed at any time.