

Dear REP volunteers

I hope this finds you well and well-occupied during these very unusual times. Covid-19 has had a profound impact on people across the globe and its impact has been felt in all aspects of our lives. REP, as you know, has been closed to performances but has maintained work on basic business continuation and on repairs to the theatre and annex during the shutdown. I write to let you know our short-term plans.

On 30 May 2020 Stage 2 of the Canberra Covid-19 Recovery Plan was enacted, allowing groups of up to 20 people to gather if social distancing measures are maintained. Given that, REP has begun preparations for our next production, *Brighton Beach Memoirs*. Work has resumed on sets, costumes, rehearsals, and other technical matters.

Stage 2.2 of the Recovery Plan is to be enacted as of 20 June allowing up to 50 people to gather. Theatres will be able to resume performances at this stage, but with a maximum of 50 people being allowed in the space, this would not be viable for REP to resume as everyone in the auditorium and on stage, including cast, crew, ushers and audience members must be counted toward the maximum of 50 people.

Stage 3 of the Recovery Plan is scheduled to be enacted from mid-July and will allow up to 100 people in a venue. At that point, REP Council believes we will be able to resume presenting productions, albeit with a quite different way of operating. Under Stage 3 restrictions, social distancing measures must be maintained and REP would limit seating in the auditorium as well as putting in place new measures for cleaning, entering and exiting the theatre, provision of bar service and provision of masks and hand sanitizer.

When Stage 3 restrictions are lifted, we understand that there will be no more restrictions and we may resume productions as usual. There is no estimated time for this to happen in the Recovery Plan as the ACT Government will make its decisions based on public health advice and any relevant changes to infection numbers/rates.

Many of you may know that *Brighton Beach Memoirs* had already been cast and was well into rehearsals when the Covid-19 lockdown was declared. We ceased rehearsals at that time and waited for the Government declaration that it was permissible to resume. Now that we can rehearse again, we have begun. We will also soon resume building of the set and costumes as well as other technical aspects of the show (lighting, sound, props, etc.). We are hoping that we will be able to open *Brighton Beach Memoirs* in August or September. Several matters are being investigated and followed up to ensure that Council can make a well-informed decision on the date for re-opening.

We greatly appreciate and value the contributions made by our volunteers and, in fact, we could not operate at all without you. It is one of the things that makes the Canberra Repertory Society so wonderful – the sense of community that we have developed from a large group of volunteers working together to create the magic of theatre and a strong sense of belonging.

Given that we have been going through what is likely to be the most significant public health crisis in the lives of most of our members and volunteers, members of Council understand that there may be some concerns or reservations about returning to REP. Council would like to make it clear that volunteers are under no obligation to return to REP if they have any reservations.

We feel it is our duty of care to be very clear that, while we greatly appreciate the efforts of our volunteers, we want none of you to feel obliged to return out of a sense of duty or obligation if you are not fully confident in doing so. Some of our volunteers are vulnerable people for one or more of a range of reasons. If, as a volunteer, you do not wish to return to REP right now, we understand. We will warmly welcome you back whenever you are confident in returning.

To assist people in making decisions about whether to return, I present on the next page advice for vulnerable people from the ACT Health website. Again, thank you to all our wonderful volunteers. I hope you all are staying well, creative, and happy and I hope to see you very soon.

Best regards,

Michael Sparks OAM

President, Canberra Repertory Society

Current advice from the ACT Health website:

Basic advice for all people:

- Maintain good hand hygiene;
- Keep 1.5 metres away;
- Stay home if you are unwell; and
- Get tested if you have any symptoms of Covid-19.

Further advice:

Some people are at more risk of serious illness from COVID-19 than others, and extra precautions can be taken to help you stay safe. People most at risk of complications from COVID-19 are:

People aged 70 years and over;

People aged 65 years and over with chronic medical conditions;

People with compromised immune systems; and

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over the age of 50 with one or more chronic medical conditions.

Protecting yourself

- Stay at home as much as possible to reduce the risk of infection. (**This is not a formal direction under the *Public Health Act 1997*, but it is a precaution the ACT Government encourages.**)
- This does not mean you cannot leave your home or have help at home. But for your own safety, you should only go out when you really need to and only have essential carers or service providers visit.
- Consider having groceries or medications delivered to the home or ask a friend or relative to pick up supplies.
- COVID-19 spreads from person to person, usually during close contact. Therefore, practicing good hygiene and physical distancing are the best ways to stop the spread of the virus. Ask any carers or visitors coming to your home to wash their hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser when they enter your home.
- Where support is needed to go out you should, where possible, only use one support person only.
- Limit physical interactions with others for the safety of your own health and others. Remember that limiting physical interactions does not mean you need to limit social interactions. Technology can really help in this – phone calls, emails, social media are different ways of connecting with friends and family. For further information on maintaining good mental health please visit the Mental Health and Wellbeing during COVID-19 webpage.
- If you are working, work from home as much as possible. Your employer should support you to do this. If you can't work from home, discuss with your doctor the risk of continuing to go to work. Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- If you need medical help for routine medical issues, please contact your GP first.
- For all emergency medical issues (chest pains, difficulty breathing, severe fever), please contact 000.

For more information on the ACT Government's response to Covid-19 you can visit:

<https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/>