



Covid-Safe Guidelines – Getting Back To Work CASTING @ 29th May, 2020

As the industry moves towards re-opening, we in Casting need to be particularly mindful of our position in the process. As one of the first aspects in getting a production moving – an outbreak or a new cluster of Covid-19 from a casting process would not only be devastating for those who get sick but the ripple effects for the production involved and indeed the entire industry, would be immeasurable.

It is important to note, like any business, mandatory Covid-19 restrictions and protocols set by government and industry are enforceable and failure to comply may result in fines or other enforcement measures.

Here is a link to the **Australian Screen Production Industry Covid-Safe Guidelines** released yesterday, 28th May, this is a **LIVE** document so will be updated as guidelines and protocols are relaxed (or increased as the situation develops).

Link:

<https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/production-during-covid-19>

Every Casting office should download this document, and when in doubt, re-check for updates.

Important sections in relation to Casting are:

G. Mandatory Control Measures

These are non-negotiable and include Physical Distancing, Hygiene, Working Arrangements, Health Monitoring and (PPE) Personal Protection Equipment.

Currently this includes:

- Ensure physical distancing of at least 1.5 metres between persons (where this is not possible, other control measures such as PPE must be considered)
- Ensure there is not more than 1 person per 4 square metres of floor space, where possible (subject to any relevant public health / emergency management orders and directions)

This will obviously be tricky for in-room live casting sessions, and may determine if a session can actually take place dependent on casting space dimensions etc

H. Specific Control Measures

The specific control measures set out in this section are optional – but will be dependent on each individual production’s risk management plan and insurance obligations.

For example, the current guideline for casting in this section is:

- Perform casting remotely and via self-tapes

PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU DOWNLOAD AND READ THIS DOCUMENT (via the link above). AS A HEAD OF DEPARTMENT, YOU WILL LIKELY BE ASKED TO PROVIDE PRODUCTION WITH YOUR INDIVIDUAL COVID-19 MANAGEMENT PLANS – this will be to ensure your department meets any and all insurance criteria for a production to proceed. Your individual plans can be adjusted and adapted to meet those of the production.

IN SUMMARY – CASTING MOVING FORWARD

After looking at the above industry guidelines and discussions through ASIG (Australian Screen Industry Guilds) and the MEAA we have put together below as important considerations – noting that any advice given here is not a substitute for independent legal advice and it is recommended that members of the screen production industry obtain appropriate advice relevant to their particular circumstances.

1. As a first priority when commencing work on a production, a CD should be put in contact with their Covid-19 Officer/Supervisor or the person taking responsibility for that role within the production.

2. Although in-room auditions are currently looked at as a rare occurrence, if a production decides that a live casting session is required – all on-set protocols must be followed, these will/may include:

Social Distancing legal requirements

Temperature checks on arrival

Hand sanitizer at office entrance, in waiting area, in studio

Appropriate scheduling to ensure social distancing

Covid-19 Actor declarations to be signed – this should be provided by the Production or Agency to ensure legal/Insurance requirements are met – all documents sent to Actors Representation prior to asking an actor to sign

Strictly limiting those in studio (Agency, Producers etc viewing remotely or after a session via online)

Currently NO physical contact between actor's permitted

Only the actor in front of camera not wearing a mask, all other personnel to be provided with PPE as required (Gloves/Masks etc)

In the event in-room auditions are deemed as required - any PPE should be provided by Production or Agency, or should be indexed into a Casting Directors fee at the time of negotiating Casting Services.

Budgets and schedules need to also take into account extra time required to fulfil Covid Safe requirements.

If Required - Production or Agency CovidSafe Officers/Supervisors allocate time for training of Casting personnel in use of PPE equipment.

Disinfecting, wiping down of all equipment, door handles, and surfaces (including removing external mic covers so the mic can easily be regularly cleaned) between each audition. This should also be put into action for waiting rooms and offices.

Anyone in a high risk age group or who have prior medical conditions that place them in a high risk category NOT be required to audition in-room but given the opportunity to self tape.

Any actor, who on the day of an in-room audition that wakes up not feeling well or is showing any symptoms of Covid-19 is to first, seek medical help and advice, and then contact their agent to cancel the audition. A self tape can then be provided once an actor has taken care of their personal health and safety.

Once an Actor is Cast (or required notice at the time of Casting)

In relation to Casting an Actor in a role that may involve intimacy (of any description, ie a love scene, a fight/stunt scene or require a closer proximity than current social distancing requirements allow for) **the MEAA have highlighted to the CGA the following:**

1. Engaging Intimacy Co-ordinators early in pre-production to work with Director, AD and Safety Officer to plot out what scenes are intimate / close – and may need to be reconsidered to work within social distancing; or if they can't - then what control measures need to be put in place (Safety Supervisor / COVID risk assessor will do that – not an Intimacy Co-ordinator);
2. Casting: ensure that cast can make informed consent as to those scenes – so like with nudity / semi nude scenes – **actors are made aware at the casting stage of any requirement to work in close proximity or intimately** – and what control measures will be put in place (COVID testing; production bubble; quarantine) – and for those requirements to be in cast contracts in writing (like nudity) so that actors are not pressured into doing those scenes on set;

3. Control measures may include: Regular COVID testing for those involved in intimate scenes / close scenes; production bubble and/or quarantine period (counted as time worked); all such scenes and stunt scenes to be scheduled at end of shoot / particular period within shoot dates.

In Summary

Acknowledging that each production will have it's own guidelines, consultation between CD's, each individual production, the MEAA, Actors Representation and Actors will be vital to ensure the success of re-opening our industry.

Casting Director's shouldn't feel alone or that they don't have anyone to turn to for advice, this is a lot to navigate through. Please don't hesitate to reach out though the CGA Admin email below and we will endeavor to point you in the right direction or find the right group or organization to ensure you receive up to date and accurate information:

admin@castingguild.com.au

Thank you for your patience, dedication and determination to get through this difficult period of time!

CGA