



Australian Elevators Association Limited

A message from Simon Draper, CEO Infrastructure NSW

Good morning all,

This week the NSW Government introduced a new public health order on movement and gatherings. It requires us all to stay at home unless we have a good reason to be out and restricts gatherings in public places to no more than 2 people. The previous restrictions on mass gatherings at premises remain in place, including the requirement to have at least 4 square metres per person. These are clearly very serious restrictions for a very serious public health situation.

The restrictions do not prevent people working or travelling to construction sites. Nor do they stop construction projects. The new public health order contains a list of essential gatherings that are exempt, and construction sites are specifically included in that list. With that comes a responsibility for us all to implement good health practices on sites, and demonstrate that we have done so to employees, to communities neighbouring our jobs, to the public and to Government. With most people bunkered down at home and streets quiet, our sites and employees are one of the few remaining forms of activity in public places.

Several contractors and delivery agencies have provided useful updates on steps they have taken to live up to public expectations, and we are grateful for the efforts to date. We have seen some really innovative practices emerge. Unfortunately, there have been confirmed cases of coronavirus on some sites, but employees were taken care of and those sites were able to recommence works safely within days. There was also an excellent construction health forum on Tuesday with a panel comprising Rose Webb from SafeWork NSW, Alison Mirams from Roberts Pizzarotti and Louise Howard from Sydney Metro. We had well over 100 people on that call. Infrastructure NSW is now convening a smaller working group between Government and industry to coordinate and monitor health practices in our industry, to be chaired by Louise Howard from Sydney Metro.

By necessity, the new restrictions have a compliance aspect. The New South Wales Police are the appropriate agency to enforce any laws or restrictions. This is often a difficult task as they try their best to balance the most appropriate action. Often a simple discussion can achieve what is needed, and other times a legal process needs to be initiated. This is not just about compliance, but about community health and safety. NSW Police have the difficult task of enforcing measures that most of us would have thought unimaginable a few weeks ago. Deputy Commissioner of Police, Gary Worboys, has confirmed to me that Police would much prefer the construction industry to manage its own compliance using reasonably practicable steps to ensure physical distance and hygiene, rather than have police attend or enter work sites. Police will not be seeking to manage health practices on construction sites or other workplaces. However, if they receive complaints about poor practice or observe it directly while on patrol, they will respond, talk with workers and take whatever action they deem suitable. Some of the issues that have been raised with police and in the media arise from construction industry employees congregating outside worksites in public places, including during breaks.

Construction sites are exempt for their normal operational needs, but employees from the construction industry are not immune from the virus, or exempt from the new laws if they are in public places and not engaged in work on a construction site. We all need to make sure that is understood at an industry level, and a site level, and that good practices are enforced.

Fortunately, we are in a strong position to implement compliant health practices. Access to sites is strictly controlled. We know everybody who works on our construction sites, and can communicate with them directly and regularly. We have strong culture and systems for managing health and safety risks. So, there is every reason to believe that our industry can continue to operate in a manner consistent with the public health objectives that Government has in place. From the discussions I've been involved in, everybody is up for the task and determined to make it work. We're very grateful for that. As Deputy Commissioner Worboys said to me, "let's make the construction industry the benchmark for others when it comes to stopping the spread of coronavirus".

Simon

Simon Draper

Chief Executive Office

