



COVID-19 Operational Framework For New Zealand Dance Business and Community Dance Facilities operating at Alert Level 2

Updated 19 October 2021

Reflecting New Zealand Government Guidelines for COVID-19 Alert Level 2

**Produced for New Zealand dance sector use by DANZ (Dance Aotearoa New Zealand)
with reference to Framework for Exercise Facilities by Exercise Association of New Zealand
This document has been updated in consultation with WorkSafe New Zealand.**

This document is designed to provide a framework for managing risks associated with COVID-19 within dance business and community dance facilities in New Zealand. It contains recommendations that align with New Zealand Government guidelines and requirements for COVID-19 Alert Level 2 management that are evidence based and that follow a risk-minimisation model. It incorporates recommended protocols for reducing community transmission risk and additional controls that need to be considered to enable dance facilities to remain open at Alert Level 2 . This is a working document that will continue to evolve to ensure recommendations meet the latest research related to COVID-19 protocols and safe interventions.

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This framework document is provided as a service to both members of DANZ and to the wider dance sector of New Zealand. Members of DANZ are welcome to contact us for support on the application and implementation of recommendations contained in the document and any associated queries on interpretation.

1. Executive Summary

Benefits of physical movement and exercise: While not specifically outlined in this document, it should be noted here that regular physical exercise is one of the most beneficial activities an individual can undertake to improve their health. The list of the benefits of exercise, and physical as well as creative movement are wide and varied - everything from being protective against stroke, heart disease and many other chronic diseases and conditions, all the way through to role in weight management, diabetes control and mental health. Presently there is a strong focus on the latter i.e. the mental health benefits of physical activity including the contribution to 'mental robustness', which is protective against both depression and anxiety – two looming issues in a COVID-19 environment. Physical exercise is so widely accepted as beneficial, that it is one of the few activities encouraged during Alert Level 4 lockdown in New Zealand.

This framework: This document provides evidence-based solutions and recommendations for the unique environments of dance and exercise facilities, operating within a COVID-19 environment. The recommendations are evidence-based. Protocols are underpinned by the latest scientific and academic literature. Primary recommendations were designed by Kris Vette, Clinical Programme Designer. Kris has substantial experience in this field having been involved in managing H1N1 in New Zealand, and Swine Flu for the NHS in the UK.

This document identifies the unique and/or increased risks related to COVID-19 within a dance and exercise setting and provides stringent and specific protocols to manage these. Our recommended protocols and practices comply with the Government's general principles and guidelines for operating at "Delta" Alert Level 2, while also considering the unique environments and challenges of dance business and community dance settings. Specifically, this framework contains recommendations that exceed many government Alert Level 2 guidelines, as those guidelines are generic, and this framework is specifically for use within dance and exercise settings.

2. Background on COVID-19 in New Zealand

Please see the official New Zealand Government COVID-19 Website covid19.govt.nz for full information on COVID-19 and its management in New Zealand.

3. Objectives

The objectives of this framework are:

1. To provide a framework that promotes a safe environment for operating dance facilities in New Zealand at COVID-19 Alert Level 2 that meets New Zealand government standards, but also considers international dance industry good practice.
2. Provide guidance to those operating dance studios and community dance facilities in New Zealand.
3. To provide 'Trust and Confidence' to both the Government and the New Zealand public, that the dance sector takes COVID-19 safety seriously, and is taking all reasonable steps towards risk containment.
4. To provide Alert Level 2 safety protocols for dance activity providers, and options for a more restricted operating environment if needed.

4. Model

The framework underpinning the approach outlined in this document uses a quantifiable methodology guided by the following metrics:

Exposure Risk = contact intensity x number of contacts

Risk -> intervention/control -> minimise residual risk

The model is designed to firstly identify the potential COVID-19 risks and then establish appropriate controls to minimise the residual risk by either reducing the contact intensity, or the number of contacts with others, or both. All of the interventions outlined in this document are measured against this risk profile.

Notes:

- the risk profile above is the exposure risk, not the individual risk. Some individuals, such as older persons or those with existing health risks (heart disease, diabetes, asthma), have more adverse outcomes should they contract COVID-19, and hence a greater individual risk. This is best managed by the individual, with information and guidance provided by the dance facility to ensure they are well informed prior to making any decisions.
- at an individual level, regular exercise + sufficient sleep are two of the most accessible tools to reducing an individual's risk.

5. Assumptions

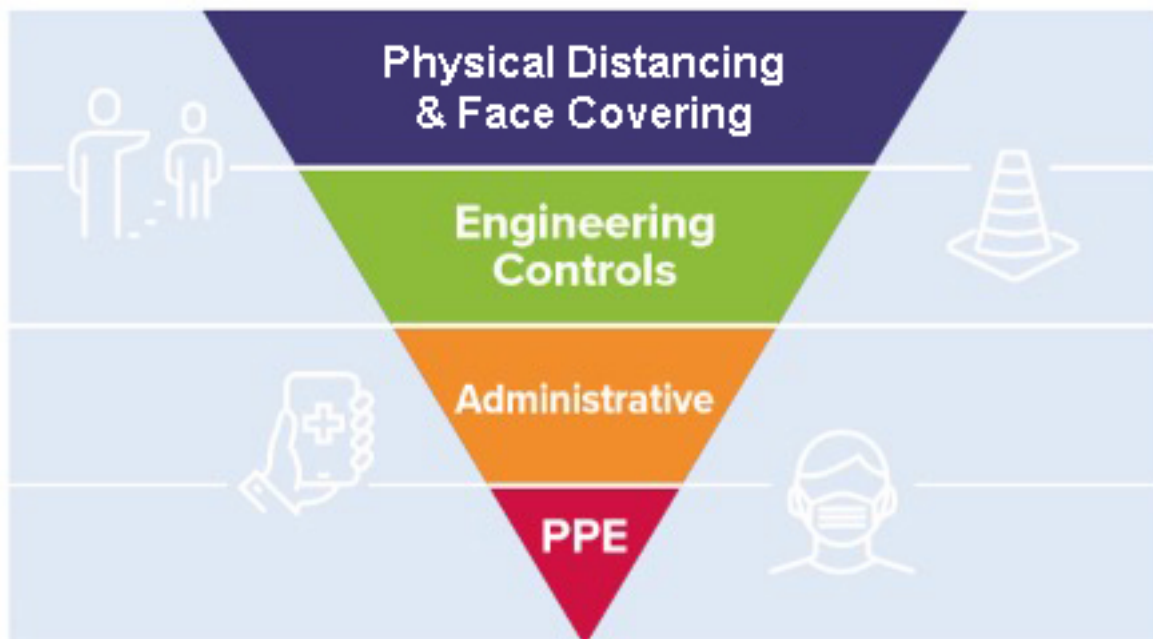
In developing the procedures/practices, the following assumptions are applied:

- all visitors to a dance studio/facility are treated as if they may have COVID-19.
- some restrictions (Level 2 or otherwise) may be in place for the medium/long term in New Zealand, and these restrictions will have an impact on the way dance facilities and businesses operate.
- the mandatory rules and other recommendations outlined in this document are based on best information as at the date of this document. It may change over time, potentially rapidly.

6. Modified Hierarchy of Controls

Using the modified hierarchy of controls, COVID-19 mitigation measures can include:

- **Physical Distancing and Face Coverings** — wherever possible reducing physical contact between persons and using face coverings as mandated and where additional protection may be required.
- **Engineering controls** — creating physical barriers between people.
- **Administrative controls** — redistributing responsibilities to reduce contact between individuals, using technology to facilitate communication.
- **PPE & Cleaning** — providing PPE, and having robust cleaning protocols that are well communicated.



Controls at the higher levels are generally easier to implement, more tangible and effective. Lower level controls require greater ongoing management by facility staff and more vigilance to ensure compliance with adopted policies.

7. Risk Mitigation

All businesses operating at Alert Level 2 need to follow all New Zealand Government guidelines, while also considering the unique risks associated with their business activities. Specifically, in a dance environment consideration needs to be given to the following:

- many dance activities involve individuals exercising together from across multiple bubbles/households;
- increased respiration and perspiration rates typical of most dance activities, with associated increased risk of spreading virus particles;
- frequency of movement into respiration zones of other dancers and concentrated exposure to aerosol particles produced;
- proximity to others (both teachers and other dancers) for prolonged duration – in some cases up to two hours for class-based activities and longer for rehearsals;
- shared equipment (e.g. barres and props).

The mitigation strategies outlined in this framework take into account these additional risks.

Every business operating at Alert Level 2 should have a written COVID-19 site plan that specifically identifies the various COVID-19 risks, and how each will be managed.

While the recommendations in this document are not mandatory, it is advisable for any business that decides not to follow any of them to have additional documentation outlining why a recommendation was not followed, and how the specific risks are controlled. The COVID-19 plan, together with any additional documentation showing variances from recommendations in this document, should be able to be provided to WorkSafe New Zealand on request.

It is highly recommended that all staff at a dance facility be actively engaged in the development of controls adopted for implementation. Additionally, staff responsibilities must be clearly communicated to them, and training provided as needed. Further details can be found on the WorkSafe New Zealand website: <https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/> as well as the Business section of the official COVID-19 website: <https://covid19.govt.nz/business-and-money/businesses/doing-business-at-alert-level-2/> and the <https://www.business.govt.nz/> website.

Note: This framework specifically addresses controls for COVID-19 related risks within the dance and exercise environment. Where this framework goes above/beyond the general guidelines issued by the New Zealand Government, this is due to the unique and/or additional risks associated with a dance/exercise setting, some of which have been outlined above. All recommendations are evidence based.

The following risk mitigation strategies are applicable.

A. Physical Distancing and Face Coverings

Government guidelines allow indoor facilities such as dance studios and gyms to operate at Alert Level 2 provided extra safety measures are in place, including to address the increased transmissibility characteristics of the Delta variant of the COVID-19 virus.

Within a dance environment, heightened safety measures are also advisable to counter increased risk resulting from:

- prolonged proximity to others engaged in activity that generates high respiration and perspiration output;
- constant movement directly into the respiration zones of other dancers and intensified exposure to aerosol particles produced.

Staff of all public-facing businesses are legally required to wear face coverings and to keep at least one metre apart from other staff. It is also a requirement that customers and clients on the premises stay two metres apart from each other.

Accordingly:

- **One metre distancing must be maintained between all individual staff/employees of a facility.**
- **Two metre distancing is recommended between individual staff and dance participants.**
- **Two metre distancing between individual participants should be maintained as a minimum and greater than two metres if space allows.**
- **Face coverings/masks must be worn by all staff (teachers, choreographers, assistants, musical accompanists, technicians, receptionists and all other employees).**
- **Face coverings/masks are strongly recommended to be worn by all dance participants.**

➤ **Group activities including Group Dance Classes and Rehearsals.**

For group-based dance activities the recommended distancing is 2 metres or more. Again, this is to counteract risks associated with constant direct movement into the respiration spaces of other dancers, intensified exposure to aerosol particles produced, prolonged contact times and high respiration and perspiration levels overall.

Additionally, the following should be considered:

- **Choreography** should be adjusted in group activities to ensure individuals do not move outside of their minimum 2 metre radius from their starting location
- **Studio layouts:** Mark space on the floor for either where to stand or where the boundary of movement should be (e.g. a square/rectangle etc).

➤ **Floor Layout**

- **Breathing direction** should be considered. Where individuals are facing towards each other 2 metre distancing should be adopted as a minimum. If facing away from each other (i.e. backs to each other) for the entire duration of the activity, 2 metre distancing should apply.

➤ **Transition Areas**

Consider areas that individuals either congregate at, and/or walk through.

- **Managing Bottlenecks** - have appropriate gaps (minimum 15 minutes) of time between group activities in the same space to avoid queuing and crossover in common areas (ensure all from first group have left the room before next group enters and avoid having next group waiting outside at the same time people from departing group are exiting).
- **Entrance spaces** – consider guiding direction of traffic flow through barriers and/or marks on floor.
- **Any doors that require regular entry/exit** that do not allow for correct physical distancing have clear rules attached to reduce interaction.
- **When participants are queuing** outside ensure 2 metre physical distancing.

➤ **Consider auto opening doors or installing kick plates** on doors to enable hand-free egress where possible.

➤ **Consider separate entrances and exits** if possible (to the facility and/or individual dance studios/spaces).

➤ **Other Physical Distancing Scenarios**

- **Physical distancing of 2 metres in all directions is recommended.** When actively dancing this expands to cover all directions the dancer can move (sideways, forwards and backward), so becomes 2m x 2m of dance floor space unique to each dancer / dance student, being 4 square metres per person.

This means a total of 5 dancers in a 20 square metre square room; 10 dancers in a room of 40 square metres; 15 dancers in a room of 60 square metres, etc... provided the other facilities in the building (entrances, toilets, changing areas, etc.) allow for the required social distancing for that number of people.

- **Partner dancing** - Physical distancing guidelines noted within this document apply to all forms of dance, at all levels, covering both amateur and professional areas of the dance sector, including partnered styles. At Alert Level 2 direct interpersonal contact is not allowed. However, a couple from a single bubble/household may dance together, and 2 people not from the same household may dance 2 metres apart from each other for short periods of time with face coverings. Classes may continue for partnered dance styles, but should focus on choreography and personal technique, rather than the physical connection between the couple.

B. Engineering Controls

- **Remove or disable communal water dispensers/coolers** so they cannot be used/accessed
- **Contactless payment systems** should be used wherever possible. Cash transactions should be discouraged but if unavoidable, risk-limiting options should be adopted such as wearing of gloves, provision of cash receptacles/envelopes, provision of alcohol wipes for cleaning notes before being passed over.
- **Consider the use of physical barriers** in areas where imposing spacing of mandatory physical distance is difficult (e.g. Perspex screen at reception).
- **Air conditioning, fans and airflow** - Maintaining good abundant airflow within dance settings is important. Specifically:
 - Encourage fresh airflow, either via open windows/doors and/or air-conditioning units that bring in fresh air from outside with appropriate filters for viruses;
 - Avoid the use of fans that blow across individuals and on to others. This increases the risk of virus spread;
 - Avoid using devices that re-circulate air, do not filter for viruses and that blow recirculated air directly at individuals.
- **Changing rooms:**
 - Consider marking which lockers to use to spread out users.
 - In smaller facilities, numbers may have to be limited to ensure physical distancing can be maintained (i.e. maximum number of people at a time, either directly managed or via signage).
 - Additional cleaning rules to be clearly communicated (i.e. what cleaning is expected of studio users outside staffed hours).

C. Administrative

➤ **Entry Criteria (Facilities and Activities)**

- No entry to any persons who:
 - currently exhibit a fever, or any other common COVID-19 symptoms.
 - are currently in quarantine or isolation by the NZ government.
 - have knowingly been recently (in the last 14 days) exposed to a person with COVID-19.
 - has visited any location(s) of interest identified by the Ministry of Health as listed on their website.

The above policy must be confirmed electronically to all existing customers and displayed and made visible to all visitors to the premises.

- Managed entry for all persons with any of the following:
 - Underlying health conditions (e.g. asthma, heart disease, diabetes or obesity)
 - Over the age of 70 (or whatever age NZ Government sets)
 - Any person meeting any of the above criteria should only be permitted into the facilities after being notified of their greater individual risk. Such notification can be done electronically as part of a group message to all clients/members and/or via signage.
- **Contact tracing protocols** must be used for all individuals entering the facility so information is held on who is on the premises at any given time.
 - Must include all teachers, other staff, dancers and any visitors (dancing or not).
 - QR scanning and Bluetooth connectivity is recommended. If alternative contact information collection systems are put in place these must be compliant with privacy protection requirements e.g. a ballot system with individual slips or cards for filling in; or an employee could manually enter visitor details to ensure control is maintained over records and contact information is not left visible. An open sheet or register left in a publicly accessible position where personal information is visible to others breaches privacy requirements.
 - Data collected must include date and time of visit, name, phone and email address. Where an existing enrolment database stores this data and a swipe card type system is used, then that would be sufficient. Resources and information to support the safe and secure collection of information for contact tracing can be found at:
<https://www.business.govt.nz/covid-19/contact-tracing/>
 - Casual visitors should either not be permitted into the facility or a protocol established for their data to be entered into the contact tracking system. Additionally, any casual visitors will require greater training as to their expected behaviours. Any paper-based data must be entered into a digitised form within 24 hours (so it can be quickly shared with government agencies if required).
 - Data collected specifically for contact tracing will not be used for any other purposes and will be automatically destroyed after 28 days (guidance from the Privacy Commissioner). Data collated as a part of normal enrolment may be kept for whatever time it is normally stored for.
- **Consider booking systems** for any activities likely to be over capacity.
- **Consider offering more classes** (pre-recorded or live) to lower the number of individuals in classes.
- **Consider extending hours** to spread the load.

➤ **Communication to teachers, staff and dancers.**

- Signage should make expectations of members clear upon entry, as well as in specific areas as to their expected behaviour, including:
 - Staying away if symptomatic or have been around persons known to have COVID-19.
 - Social and physical distancing.
 - Hand washing or sanitising hand gel/spray use.
 - Cleaning of any shared equipment.
 - Hand hygiene (sneezing into elbows), sanitising hands on arrival/departure.

Downloadable posters/signage can be found here: <https://covid19.govt.nz/posters/>

- Staff should all be trained in the following:
 - Basic COVID-19 understanding.
 - How the disease is spread and how that relates to the facility.
 - Key mitigations the facility is undertaking.
 - How to manage their own safety.
- Entry process - Hand wash on entry for all teachers, staff and dancers/dance students with (soap and water or sanitising hand gel/spray). This should ideally take place before the member enters the facility, or as early as possible on their transit through the building (e.g. at Reception).
- Teachers and choreographers operating from more than one studio or organisation should consider limiting the number of facilities they operate from during Level 2.
- Ensure groups are managed so that any 'gathering' of people (where the same people are in proximity to one another for a prolonged duration) such as group classes are under 50 individuals at all times.

NB: Areas where individuals are moving in and out on a regular basis are not considered a 'gathering' and should follow physical distancing rules. Where attendance could exceed capacity, a system to manage/limit entry is recommended.

- Avoid the use of shared stationery items such as pens/paper unless absolutely necessary (this includes data collection for the purposes of contact tracing). Where any such shared items are used, cleaning protocols need to be established, communicated and followed.
- Consider extra protocols for activities involving children, especially where both adults and children may interact.
- Staff rooms/areas:
 - Ensure all staff areas have clear protocols for common touch points (shared items) and signage communicates this.
 - Where possible, minimise contact to some areas/items to a limited number of staff.
 - In staff rooms ensure high touch items (e.g. jugs, dishwasher handles) have cleaning materials nearby and instructions clearly outlined.
 - Mandatory hand washing protocols established and communicated.

D. PPE & Cleaning

➤ **Face Coverings/Masks**

- At Alert Level 2 face coverings/masks are legally required to be worn by all employees on the premises including receptionists, teachers, choreographers, assistants, musical accompanists and technicians.
- Face coverings/masks are recommended to be worn by all dance participants wherever possible to improve group protection in high respiration/perspiration environment taking account of increased transmissibility of Delta and other emerging COVID-19 variants.

- **Gloves.** It is not generally recommended to wear gloves as it is easier to wash hands or use sanitising hand gel/spray/wipes without gloves. Notably:
 - Fingerless gloves impede handwashing and the use of hand sanitisers, but also allow virus spread via fingers (i.e. the 'worst of both worlds') so are not recommended.
 - Full hand fabric gloves are permitted, and in some cases may be better than no glove, however, have the disadvantage of less cleaning of hands.
 - Light weight latex type gloves are not recommended as they can easily be damaged but may be practical for brief one-time use e.g. for cash handling.

- **Deep cleans** should be undertaken at least daily and include cleaning/airing of:
 - All spaces in daily use including studios, changing rooms, staff rooms, reception/waiting areas, transition zones etc. to encourage fresh airflow and expulsion of stale air and airborne particles.
 - The full surface of any and all props, mats and other equipment that is shared between users. This includes items that are cleaned by the member before/after each use and must include as much of the surface of the item as is practically possible.
 - Changing rooms, showers, benches, basins, toilets and taps (including doors, mirrors & any hard floor surfaces) and walls to 1.8m high.
 - Stairs (including handrails, and any hard floor surfaces) and walls to 1.8m high.
 - Dance floor must be mopped regularly as sweat and other airborne particles land on the dance floor and some classes may include sitting on the floor with bare legs, while other classes include considerable floor work and/or stretching on the floor.
 - Wooden floors should be mopped with an appropriate disinfectant cleaner;
 - Parquet dance floors should be mopped with a mixture of either methylated spirits or white vinegar and water (chemical disinfectants will damage the floor).
 - Fabric flooring (e.g. carpet) must be vacuumed daily with sanitising spray applied.
 - Entranceways should have all hard floors, reception counters, access turnstiles and walls up to 1.8m height cleaned daily.
 - Staff undertaking deep cleans should be provided with adequate PPE (durable gloves and masks).

All deep cleans should:

 - Use chemicals or other approved methods on all hard surfaces to ensure that there is zero viral load left on surfaces at the end of the deep clean. Contact time should be known for each chemical/method, so it stays on long enough to be effective.
 - Use only chemicals/methods that kill COVID-19, however considerations should be given to chemicals/methods that are also environmentally friendly.

- **Spot cleaning:** All common touch points are to be cleaned as outlined below:
 - Frequent cleaning should be undertaken between every 30 minutes - 2 hours, depending on traffic and usage, the higher use = greater frequency of cleaning.
 - Common touch points include all door handles, basins & taps, any shared equipment not cleaned on each use.
 - As with deep cleaning, chemicals/cleaning compounds used must be those that kill COVID-19, but must also be safe for direct skin contact by dancers/dance students within 15 seconds after use.

- **Record of cleaning** - All deep cleans and spot cleans should be recorded (time & date and by whom).
- **Shared equipment.** All shared equipment should be managed to minimise any potential for risk of contamination, including:
 - Removing it completely (e.g. scarves, ribbons and other props).
 - Item directly sanitised between each use (e.g. barres and essential props).
 - Pre & post hand clean (soap and water or sanitising hand gel) for user PLUS item regularly sanitised by staff (e.g. barres).
- **Facilities should also be aware of specific Ministry of Health protocols** for cleaning should an identified case of COVID19 have been associated with the facility. These are available on the MOH web site.

General note on cleaning - The goal is not an aseptic environment; it is to minimise any risk vector. Deep cleans are designed to eliminate any residual virus.

8. Tables for common scenarios

Below is a summary of common roles and activities, along with recommended distancing, PPE and cleaning protocols.

ROLE / ACTIVITY	DISTANCING RECOMMENDATIONS	PPE	CLEANING CONSIDERATIONS
Dance classes Group dance activity in rented spaces	2 metres between staff (teachers, choreographers, assistants, accompanists etc.) and class participants 2 metres square minimum between class participants Unique space per person equals 2m x 2m = 4m²/person 2 metres while queuing	Face coverings required for teachers, choreographers, assistants, music accompanists, technicians and any other staff Recommended for all class participants	Sanitise all shared items before use by a different person Sanitise the barre between classes and floor if used for floor work
Private lessons	As above	As above	No shared items, but sanitise any items after use Sanitise the barre between clients/classes
Reception staff	1 metre distance from other staff and 2 metres from class attendees unless there is physical barrier e.g. screen Mandatory digital records for contact tracing.	Face coverings required for all staff of public-facing businesses	Watch for shared items with customers (pens, papers etc.) Contactless payments recommended
Dancers and dance students	2 metres square minimum spacing	Face coverings recommended	Communicate cleaning protocols for shared items
Teaching staff and choreographers	1 metre distance from other staff and 2 metres from class attendees	Face coverings required for all staff of public-facing businesses	Regular spot cleaning, regular deep cleaning or policing of cleaning done Communicate cleaning protocols for shared items
Partnered Dance	2 metres minimum and contactless unless dancing with someone inside your household/bubble	Face coverings recommended unless partner is from same household/bubble.	Communicate cleaning protocols for shared items

Note: All capacity constraints based on usable area available to customers and excludes all other space.

9. Additional Protocols

AREA	CURRENT GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS AT LEVEL 2	DANCE SECTOR PROTOCOLS FOR LEVEL 2 RECOMMENDATIONS
Administrative controls	<p>No entry to people with symptoms or requiring quarantine or isolation</p> <p>Higher risk individuals encouraged to take extra precautions</p> <p>Mandatory contact tracing secure data collection</p>	<p>2 metre distancing</p> <p>No contact</p> <p>Those at higher risk must have individual risk highlighted prior to entry.</p> <p>Communication rules - all users must have had direct notification of rules before entering the facility AND signage reminding of rules in prominent locations. Users must be clear on what is expected of them.</p> <p>Mandatory digital records for contact tracing (for quick access if needed).</p>

10. References

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*** WorkSafe New Zealand has been consulted in the preparation of this document. DANZ will continue to engage with other industry bodies and government agencies to ensure the document remains compliant with the latest information and guidance relevant to the New Zealand dance industry.**