

DEVELOPING A COVIDSAFE PLAN FOR CHURCH PREMISES



*Version 2: 1 June 2020
Anglican Diocese of Grafton*

Under the NSW Public Health Order, Places of Worship are required to develop a COVID-19 Safety Plan. Following the steps below will enable you to comply with both the government and diocesan requirements, and respond to the changing environment.

PREPARE AND PREVENT

1. When preparing to re-open church buildings, the local leadership (Rector and Churchwardens or PC Executive) needs to meet and:

- 1.1 Develop a local **church plan** specific to your church, *which involves you calculating the number of people that can be accommodated in the building up to a max. of 50 while observing the 4m² per person rule. Signage at all entrances then needs to display this max. safe capacity*
- 1.2 Nominate a **COVIDSafe Warden** (we suggest you designate an existing Churchwarden to this role unless you have another suitable person)
- 1.3 Develop a **cleaning plan** (see below for links and advice)
- 1.4 Develop a plan for what you are going to do should someone in your leadership team or congregation is **diagnosed** with COVID19 (see below). This is a mandatory requirement of the NSW Public Health Order.
- 1.5 Regularly **review** the situation to monitor your management strategy
- 1.6 **Communicate** your plans to the rest of the leadership team (e.g., youth leaders, LLMs, clergy, musicians, small groups), the congregation, the public
- 1.7 Encourage members of your community who are in **high risk categories** (e.g., over 70 yrs) to consider staying at home and participate in the online services
- 1.8 Encourage the members of your community to download and use the **COVIDSafe App**
- 1.9 **Document** your decision making

2. Your plan will also need to include arrangements for:

- 2.1 Pre-service **cleaning**
- 2.2 **COVIDSafe Posters** to be displayed prominently at the entrance and in key locations PLUS signage at all entrances stating the max. safe capacity of the building
- 2.3 Your **COVIDSafe Warden** to be present and easily identifiable
- 2.4 The **doors** in your buildings (such as entrance doors into the church, into the toilets etc) to be secured open when the building is in use, so that people do not have to touch the door handles. The touching of door handles presents a major risk of transmitting the virus
- 2.5 A process by which people can **register** their intention to attend by phoning in, texting, emailing or by using a booking App

- 2.6 Your greeting/welcoming volunteers to be aware of the Safe Work [screening](#) tips
- 2.7 The [attendee register](#) to be set up and then securely stored for a minimum of 28 days
- 2.8 Appropriate [hand sanitation](#) at every entrance
- 2.9 A [seating plan](#) to be developed – seating at 1.5 meters apart (4m² per person) with a [maximum of 50 persons](#). Adequate plans should be set in place to ensure social distancing such as 1 family per pew/row, or 2 spare seats between each family group (members of the same family are not required by Public Order to socially distance). This will require the rearrangement of seats or that certain pews be cordoned off.

Special Note: Food and Drink: The Public Health Order requires that you ensure, where reasonably practical, that any serving of food and drink on site complies with the Checklist for COVID-19 Safety in NSW Restaurants and Cafes.

Once you have developed your plan, complete and submit the Re-Opening Application Form to the Bishop's Registry.

When permission to re-open the church to public worship is received from the Bishop, please ensure the following:

3. [During the service, ensure:](#)

- 3.1 When people arrive, they should wait in a line at least 1.5 metres apart if there is a queue.
- 3.2 On entry, all attendees are asked to observe the COVIDSafe Entry Tips (see poster). If OK, then invite to complete the attendee register.
- 3.3 Where possible use projection for the order of service. Do not use Hymn Books (no singing anyway) or Prayer books. If issuing hard copies, use single-use handouts.
- 3.4 Congregational singing is not allowed. Soloists need to distance themselves by at least 3m from others (more than 3m if possible)
- 3.5 Do not pass around the Collection Plate
- 3.6 During the service, announcements should include updates on COVIDSafe practices, including as a minimum:
 - People should practice social distancing at a minimum of 1.5 meters at all times
 - No physical greetings or exchanges such as handshakes or hugs, including sharing of the Peace. Learning to Sign “peace be with you” is highly recommended.
 - Wash hands and maintain good hygiene practices
 - Sneezing into your elbow
 - Other relevant COVID Safe practices that apply to the local congregation
- 3.7 Your COVID Safe Warden is monitoring attendee numbers to ensure maximums are not exceeded.
- 3.8 There is a clear post-service plan to monitor and enforce social distancing practices including at Morning Tea, in the carpark, conversations etc.

[Communion \(where authorized by the Bishop to recommence\)](#)

General Synod has provided the following guidelines with respect of Communion:

- Design arrangements for people to receive communion which restricts proximity to each other and the need to touch surfaces
- Ensure ministers of the Eucharist wash their hands/ use sanitizer before and after distributing communion
- Offer Communion in one kind only to all communicants i.e. the consecrated bread/wafer/host.

- Wafers should not be placed in the mouth.

4. After the service, ensure:

- 4.1 The [attendee register](#) is stored in an easy to locate place
- 4.2 [Post service cleaning](#) is complete
- 4.3 That you [monitor](#) the effectiveness of your plan/strategy

Cleaning Protocols:

- Wear gloves when cleaning and discard after each use
- Thoroughly clean surfaces using detergent and water.
- Only use a disinfectant after cleaning with the detergent and water
- Leave disinfectant on the surface for at least 10 minutes before cleaning off
- If someone infected has been at your venue, follow the national protocols of cleaning

For more information see the Safe Work Australia website:

<https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces/cleaning-prevent-spread-covid-19>

INCIDENT RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

(Also read the [Notes and Advice on the COVID-19 Incident Notification Form](#))

If anyone in your church, whether it is staff, volunteer or congregant suspects that someone may have the virus, or has been exposed to it, it is important that they notify the **COVIDSafe Warden** immediately. In conjunction with other leaders, they will be responsible for overseeing the ministry unit's response.

[The management of this scenario will be much easier if everyone has been encouraged to download and use the COVIDSafe APP](#)

On the following page is the Safe Work Australia information sheet. It is important to understand that where you have staff or volunteers at a location in Australia, it is classified under Health & Safety laws as a workplace.

Therefore, the process for a COVID incident notification is:

1. Notify the COVIDSafe Warden on duty immediately
2. Secure the site as outlined on the Safe Work Australia information sheet process
3. Notify the Diocese immediately and complete the Incident Notification Form
4. Notify Safe Work NSW on 131050

COVID-19 at the workplace

You are not expected, and should not try, to diagnose people. However, you have a work health and safety duty to minimise the risk of workers and others in the workplace being exposed to COVID-19, so far as reasonably practicable.

If you reasonably suspect someone could have the virus, or has been exposed, this creates a health risk at your workplace, and you will need to follow the steps below.

The person you are concerned about is at the workplace



1. ISOLATE

Prevent the spread. Isolate the person from others and provide a disposable surgical mask, if available, for the person to wear.



2. SEEK ADVICE

Call your state or territory helpline. Follow advice of public health officials.



3. TRANSPORT

Ensure the person has transport to their home or to a medical facility.



4. CLEAN

Clean and disinfect the areas where the person and close contacts have been. Do not use those areas until this process is complete. Use PPE when cleaning.



5. IDENTIFY & INFORM

Consider who the person has had close contact with. If instructed by public health officials, tell close contacts they may have been exposed and follow advice on quarantine requirements.



6. REVIEW

Review risk management controls relating to COVID-19 and review whether work may need to change. Consult workers on WHS issues.

The person you are concerned about was recently at the workplace



1. SEEK ADVICE

Call your state or territory helpline. Follow advice of public health officials.



2. IDENTIFY & INFORM

Identify who at the workplace had close contact with the affected person. If instructed by public health officials, tell close contacts they may have been exposed and follow advice on quarantine requirements.



3. CLEAN

Clean and disinfect the areas where the person and their close contacts have been. Do not use those areas until this process is complete. Use PPE when cleaning.



4. REVIEW

Review risk management controls relating to COVID-19 and review whether work may need to change. Consult workers on WHS issues.

If anything is unclear, see detailed guidance on the Safe Work Australia Website

Remember:

- > There is not an automatic WHS requirement to close down an entire workplace, particularly if the person infected, or suspected to be infected, has only visited parts of the workplace.
- > Workers assisting a potentially infectious person should have appropriate PPE and follow hand hygiene procedures.
- > Consult with workers and allow them to raise concerns.
- > Do you need to notify your [WHS regulator](#)? See our [Incident Notification fact sheet](#).
- > Comply with privacy obligations. See [guidance from the OAIC](#).
- > Follow the advice of health officials at all times.

State and territory health department helplines:

New South Wales
1300 066 055

Queensland
13 432 584

Victoria
1800 675 398

South Australia
1300 232 272

Western Australia
(08) 6373 2222

Tasmania
1800 671 738

Australian Capital Territory
(02) 5124 9213

Northern Territory
(08) 8922 8044



Coronavirus
COVID-19



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