



# THE ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF GRAFTON

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Dear Sisters and Brothers,

## COVID19 Recovery and Parish Life

The Prime Minister recently unveiled a three step roadmap for enabling Australia to move towards a COVIDsafe community. The evidence of the 'flattening of the curve' of COVID-19 infections is a cause for cautious celebration as our nation enters Step 1 of the recovery, though no one should be deluded in thinking that the fight against COVID-19 is over. Step 3 of the roadmap is not the return to social life as we knew it in 2019. This will not happen until a vaccine is discovered. The coronavirus is still a very real danger for us all, so that the need for ongoing vigilance is paramount, especially keeping the rules about physical distancing of 1.5m and practising good handwashing hygiene.

While we each have a strong desire to share in Christian community, we do not want to put anyone at unnecessary risk, so our pastoral care should extend to ensuring that everyone is safe and not harmed by the church's ministry. I was saddened to read of the church in Canada that gathered to celebrate a special event and despite following all the regulations, half of the attendees contracted Covid19 and two people died <https://calgary.ctvnews.ca/i-would-do-anything-for-a-do-over-calgary-church-hopes-others-learn-from-their-tragic-covid-19-experience-1.4933461>

A summary of the Federal Government's guidelines can be seen [here](#).

The NSW Premier announced a modified schedule for loosening the restrictions in NSW as it enters Step 1 on **Friday, 15 May**. The measures *relevant to parish life* are as follows:

- Outdoor gatherings of up to 10
- Five visitors to households
- Weddings with up to 10 guests
- Funerals with 20 mourners indoors and 30 outdoors
- Places of worship can have up to 10 people at religious gatherings.

## The Grafton Diocese COVID19 Recovery Plan Relating to Parish Life

The Senior Clergy Team and Registrar continue to consider our COVID-19 response including the implications for parish life of the Government's recovery plan, including suggestions for what we should prepare for in Steps 2 and 3. Please see the attached plan. We will provide more detailed advice regarding Steps 2 and 3 in due course. This letter contains further advice, in addition to the plan, for the loosening of restrictions under Step 1.



### Step 1 — Weddings & Funerals

For weddings, the number of guests able to gather has been raised to a maximum of ten. However, physical distancing and handwashing hygiene measures must still apply, and to comply with Government regulations, it is necessary to collect and (temporarily) store the contact details of all persons present. This will be a new measure for many of us, as we don't normally keep contact details of those coming to church, especially visitors to occasional services. However, should a case of COVID-19 occur, this will be necessary so that the Health Department can undertake any contact tracing that is required.

Similar conditions apply to funerals, though the maximum has now been lifted to 20 persons inside and 30 persons outside (e.g. at the graveside).

### Step 1 — Sunday Services

As per my letter of Tuesday 12 May, the NSW Diocesan Bishops have agreed that **Step 1 is not the time to re-introduce Sunday public worship**. Online services will continue to be our staple diet for some time to come.

In Grafton, the Archdeacons and myself have agreed that **weekday services** should not recommence during Step 1.

If, however, you decide to offer **mid-week services outdoors** for up to ten persons, this is allowable. This would need to be a joint decision of both the rector and wardens. It would need to be a Service of the Word. The same measures which apply for weddings and funerals, namely physical distancing, handwashing hygiene and recording of contact details. The cleaning of any chairs, tables or other objects is also essential (the Safe Work Australia website (link [here](#)) provides some guidelines). You should also inform your Regional Archdeacon of your plans and about how you intend to minimise risks in your particular context.

The church building itself should remain closed to members of the public.

### Step 1 — Homes

Up to five persons (including adults and children) are now allowed to visit homes (this is in addition to those who already reside there). However, physical distancing still applies and good handwashing hygiene should be practised. This will allow more people to make pastoral visits and hopefully, also open up the opportunity for small Bible study groups or a small groups gathering to watch an online service. Everyone involved should conduct their own risk assessment of this ministry.

### Planning Ahead

A template for a risk assessment has previously been sent out by the Registrar. Rectors and Church Wardens are asked to conduct a risk assessment according to this suggested process AND to develop a local plan for Church Premises (see attached document).

**Unless we are properly prepared then we will not be able to recommence public worship even at Step 2 or Step 3 – so please undertake this work now.**

- How will you procure a sufficient supply of hand sanitizer?
- Posting of notices concerning COVIDsafe Community Guidelines
- Develop a plan for how people can register their intention to attend a worship gathering, so as to ensure that you do not end up with more than the maximum number at the event
- Develop a plan for how attendees' contact details will be collected and managed



- Calculate how many people you can accommodate at worship if everyone has to have a 4m<sup>2</sup> safe zone around them
- The other actions outlined in the attached template

### **Covidsafe App**

My wife Leanne and I have both downloaded the COVIDSafe App and I encourage everyone to do likewise. As Christians, we should be models of civil obedience in these measures.

### **The Future**

We should not be expecting to return to '2019 Normality' any time soon. Until a vaccine is discovered, we will be living with various restrictions, including physical distancing and handwashing hygiene. Certainly the financial normality of 2019 will not return for several years, as unemployment rises and confidence in the economy remains at a low ebb. It is quite likely that many of our churches will not be able to return to Sunday public worship even under Step 2, given the amount of preparation necessary, the seating capacity of our buildings and the restrictions on physical distancing. While it is good to be well prepared for the opportunities of physically gathering our people together once again, we must be realistic about the nearness of this eventuality.

The times in which we now live are so unusual that very little surprises me anymore. One thing that does continue to surprise me every day is God's goodness and graciousness to us as we live through this crisis and learn to 'sing the Lord's song in this strange land' (Psalm 137:4).

Yours in Christ



Dr Murray Harvey  
**Bishop of Grafton**



# RETURN TO GATHERING

## A THREE STEP FRAMEWORK FOR COVID19 SAFE PARISH LIFE



### Government Guidelines

Step 1 in place from May 15, 2020

### Grafton Diocesan Guidelines - Updated May 15

Whatever plans we make as churches, we must continue to show concern for the most vulnerable within our fellowship and community and be good citizens in seeking to follow Government regulations. These guidelines assume 1.5m distancing and good hygiene. Any decision to recommence gatherings in person will need the approval of the Bishop. Updates will be issued by the Bishop or the Registrar.

STEP 1	WEDDINGS, FUNERALS & RELIGIOUS SERVICES	CHURCH SERVICES	SMALL GROUPS	YOUTH & CHILDREN	FOOD	CONTACT RECORDING	HYGIENE	CLEANING	OTHER
Connect with friends and family - allowing groups of people to be together in homes and in the community. Businesses reopen, and more people return to work.	Weddings may have up to 10 guests in addition to the couple and the celebrant Funerals may have up to 20 mourners indoors and 30 outdoors Religious gatherings may have up to 10 attendees Every gathering must record contact details	No public worship in church on Sundays or weekdays.  Services should remain online.  Outdoor weekday services of the Word with max. of 10 participants as per the Bishop's letter.	Prayer meetings and small groups in homes - a maximum of five visitors.  On church premises, a maximum of 10 persons and each person's contact details must be recorded. This includes Parish Council, Staff Meetings, Bible Studies etc.	Up to 10 people (including leaders) with social distancing and full hygiene measures.  We recommend postponing these ministries in person unless Government guidelines can be strictly followed.	Food service must be done hygienically, maintaining social distancing and observing other guidelines for any food consumed on church property.	The Government requires a record to be kept for every person to enable contact tracing if someone later tests positive for COVID-19.  We recommend that names and at least one contact detail (such as a phone number) be recorded for all attendees.	Stay home if unwell.  Enable easy access to sanitiser and handwashing.  Use Government posters to promote good hygiene. Download posters.	Clean and disinfect communal areas frequently.  Download cleaning advice from Safe Work Australia.	Halls and facilities may be used or hired by external groups limited to 10 people for non-contact activities with 4m <sup>2</sup> per person. Physical distancing. Sanitizing of space before and after each group. Hirers should be asked to submit a WHS plan to manage risk.
STEP 2	Weddings may have up to 20 guests in addition to the couple and the celebrant Funerals may have up to 50 mourners Religious gatherings may have up to 20 attendees Every gathering must record contact details	Services could remain online.  Measure the seating area of your building to calculate the maximum number of people who can gather. Reflect on the hows and whys of continuing online church into Step 3.	Up to 20 people meeting on church property. The people can meet in different locations but not exceed the total number.				Ensure adequate supplies of hygiene and cleaning products are procured before more people are allowed to gather.	Develop an approach for cleaning between gatherings.	It may be possible to open churches for private prayer, but this would need someone on duty to monitor COVIDsafe Guidelines, including cleaning after each person visits. These may be onerous restrictions that will need to be carefully managed before making a decision to open the church building.
STEP 3	Allow gatherings of up to 100 people Every gathering must record contact details	Public church services may recommence.  A maximum of 100 people including all adults and children provided space allows 4m <sup>2</sup> per person with 1.5m physical distancing.  Consider how to continue online ministry if people are also in the building.	Larger groups, bounded by building and space restrictions of 1.5m distancing and 4m <sup>2</sup> per person.						Questions to consider  What have you STOPPED? (that you don't want to go back to)  What have you CHANGED? (that you want to continue with)  What have you STARTED? (that you want to adopt from now on)

## DEVELOPING A COVIDSAFE PLAN FOR CHURCH PREMISES



15 May 2020

Anglican Diocese of Grafton

Following this plan will enable your church to comply with both the government and diocesan requirements, and will enable you to stay flexible 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 agree:**
  - 1.1 A local **church plan** specific to your church, *which includes the number of people that can be accommodated in each of your buildings while observing the 4m<sup>2</sup> per person rule, a strategy for people to book in / register their intention to attend a service or event and for the recording of contact details*
  - 1.2 Nominated **COVIDSafe Responsible Persons / COVIDSafe Warden**
  - 1.3 A **cleaning plan**
  - 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)
  - 1.5 A regular **review** of the situation to monitor your management strategy
  - 1.6 How to **communicate** your plans with the rest of the leadership team (e.g., youth leaders, LLMs, clergy, musicians, small groups), the congregation, the public
  - 1.7 How you will encourage the members of your community to download and use the COVIDSafe App
  - 1.8 How you will **document** your decision making
2. **Once services are authorized to recommence, before the church service, ensure:**
  - 2.1 Pre-service **cleaning** is complete
  - 2.2 Your **COVIDSafe Posters** are displayed prominently at the entrance and in key locations
  - 2.3 Your **COVIDSafe Warden** is easily identifiable
  - 2.4 Because attendee numbers are limited, people need to **register** their intention to attend by phoning in or using a booking App
  - 2.5 Your greeting/welcoming volunteers are aware of the Safe Work screening tips
  - 2.6 The **attendee register** is set up.
  - 2.7 Appropriate **hand sanitation** is set up in a prominent location

- 2.8 A **seating plan** is established at 1.5 meters apart (4m<sup>2</sup> per person), or adequate plans are in place to ensure social distancing such as 1 family per pew/row, or 2 spare seats between each family group. This will require the rearrangement of seats or that certain pews be cordoned off.

**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 if they have experienced any COVID or flu like symptoms in the past two weeks. If yes, they should be informed that they will be unable to attend unless cleared by doctors. If OK, then invited to complete the attendee register (where required).
- 3.3 Limit the use of hymn books and printed materials. Where possible use projection for worship, prayer and order of service.
- 3.4 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
- 3.5 Your COVID Safe Warden is monitoring attendee numbers to ensure maximums are not exceeded.
- 3.6 There is a clear post-service plan to monitor and enforce social distancing practices including at Morning Tea, in the carpark, conversations etc.

**Communion (once 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 restrict proximity to each other and the need to touch surfaces
- Ensure ministers of the Eucharist practice 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 mouths – then wash/sanitize hands immediately before and after
- Intinction is not recommended

#### **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 The [Monitoring plan](#) is followed

#### 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**

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 normal incident reporting process
4. Work with the Diocese on the appropriate government notification



# 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**



**safe work australia**