



Public Statement from the Diocesan Bishops of the Anglican Church in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory

12 May 2020

The Diocesan Bishops of the Province of NSW meet regularly for prayer and fellowship throughout the year, but have been in greater contact by email and zoom meetings these past few months. The outcome of these meetings was our Public Statement on 18 March 2020 which announced the closure of our church buildings and the suspension of normal church services in early March, in the interests of public health and safety.

We met again this week to discuss the Prime Minister's release of the three Step Roadmap for a COVIDsafe Community. While we acknowledge the lifting of restrictions on public gatherings, allowing up to ten persons at a religious gathering, we believe that Step 1 is not the time to recommence meeting in person for Sunday public worship.

There are various reasons for this decision which will be communicated to each diocese by their Bishop. We are grateful for the patience of our congregations as they endure the continuation of church online, rather than in their familiar church surroundings, but we believe the health and safety of our own community, as well as others, should be paramount.

Yet we welcome the increased flexibility for gatherings in private homes and would therefore recommend that small groups of people take advantage of this liberty, perhaps gathering for prayer and Bible study or meeting together to join in watching online church. However, in such cases social distancing and hand hygiene must be observed, as we should remain vigilant in preventing the spread of COVID-19, acknowledging the health guidelines that our State and Territory Governments have issued.

We continue to pray for the leadership of our Prime Minister, Premier and Chief Minister of the ACT as they lead the nation in these challenging times. We also pray for our health workers as they care for those affected, and for those seeking to develop a vaccine. We continue to urge all Christians to pray that our heavenly Father may be gracious to us in stemming the spread of this disease in our land and throughout the world.

The Rt Rev. Mark Calder (Bishop of Bathurst)

The Most Rev. Dr Glenn Davies (Archbishop of Sydney)

The Rt Rev. Dr Murray Harvey (Bishop of Grafton)

The Rt Rev. Donald Kirk (Bishop of Riverina)

The Rt Rev. Rick Lewers (Bishop of Armidale)

The Rt Rev. Dr Mark Short (Bishop of Canberra & Goulburn)

The Rt Rev. Dr Peter Stuart (Bishop of Newcastle)