



## THE ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF GRAFTON

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Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Today the NSW Government announced the rolling back of restrictions affecting Religious Places of Worship commencing 1 June. This is welcome news and means we can look forward to worshipping together once again. The NSW Bishops had intended to wait until Step 3 when gatherings of 100 are expected, but we have decided to allow public worship to recommence after 1 June for up to 50 people *in churches where an approved COVID-19 Safety Plan is in place*. **A COVID-19 Safety Plan is a mandatory requirement of the NSW Public Health Order so there will be an application process through which you can apply to re-open.**

Under the new arrangements, we will be able to welcome up to 50 people in a church service, provided there is enough room for 4m<sup>2</sup> per person (in other words, smaller buildings will not be allowed as many as 50 persons) and provided social distancing and hygiene is maintained. There are other requirements as well, including a ban on congregational singing, which are outlined in the Public Health Order which we'll post on our website shortly.

Maximum numbers at funerals will be increased to 50 persons, but weddings will only increase to a maximum of 20 persons (apparently the exuberance of wedding celebrations is a risk!).

The decision as to whether you want to *apply* to re-open for public worship is a local one. You may choose to continue to offer online services only. This is a perfectly acceptable approach for the time being, given the amount of work that needs to go into developing and implementing a COVIDSafe strategy and the efforts you will need to put into ensuring that all the requirements are being met before, during and after the service. I am conscious that these changes bring additional work on clergy and laity as we continue to engage in mission and ministry in a virtual way as well resuming face-to-face ministries. Please take care of yourself and speak to one of the Archdeacons or myself if we can be of assistance in any way.

We have an obligation to act responsibly and in accordance with the laws of NSW and to protect God's people. So we want to make sure that attending public worship in our churches is a safe thing to do.

**For those wanting to re-open, the Application Form and associated documents will be ready early next week. However, you should already have started working on your COVIDSafe plan as per my letter and attachments of 15 May. I've since updated this advice in the light of today's announcement and it can be found here: <https://www.graftondiocese.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/A-COVIDSafe-Plan-for-Church-Premises-010620.pdf> I suggest that you do not advertise that you will be opening for services until after your application to re-open has been approved, because if you cannot illustrate that you can minimise the risks, then you will not be able to re-open.**



I want to acknowledge the leadership of Archbishop Glenn Davies in liaising with NSW Health, senior Ministers in the NSW Gov't, and with the Multicultural Commission, on behalf of Anglicans in NSW. I'm also grateful for the collegial working relationship among the NSW Diocesan Bishops during the current crisis.

Please be assured of my ongoing prayers as we journey through these interesting and challenging times. May the Holy Spirit fill us all with wisdom.

Yours in Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Murray". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr Murray Harvey  
**Bishop of Grafton**

