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Friday, 10 September 2021

Dear Sisters and Brothers

### **COVID-19 Update – Lifting of Stay at Home Orders**

As of early Saturday morning (12.01am) 11 September the Stay at Home Order for parts of Regional NSW will be lifted. This applies to the whole of the geographical area covered by the Diocese of Grafton.

This means that our churches and other facilities can re-open, but with continued restrictions:

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/media-releases/lockdown-lifted-parts-of-regional-nsw>

### **Weddings, funerals and places of worship:**

- Up to 50 guests can attend weddings, with dancing permitted and eating and drinking only while seated.
- Up to 50 guests can attend funerals, with eating and drinking while seated.
- Churches and places of worship to open subject to one person per 4sqm rule, with no singing. If you are offering refreshments during or after worship, please comply with the government instructions (as above for weddings and funerals): eating and drinking only while seated.
- Masks must be worn indoors in public places

While this is welcome news, great care should be taken to adhere to the restrictions to ensure that we provide a safe environment for everyone.

As I requested in the recent Clergy Update, please review and update your COVID Safe Plans and have them ready for inspection by NSW Health if requested.

We are entering a new phase of the management of the pandemic. With the NSW Government's "Freedom Roadmap" ( <https://www.nsw.gov.au/media-releases/roadmap-to-freedom-unveiled-for-fully-vaccinated> ), once we reach the target of 70% of the 16+ NSW population being fully vaccinated, many restrictions will ease (possibly late October). Yet this will likely happen while there is still local transmission at significantly high levels in the NSW community. This makes it even more important that we maintain COVID Safe environments AND get vaccinated. A Fact Sheet about vaccination is attached.

The NSW Bishops have a meeting on Tuesday 14 September and after that I may be able to offer further advice or information. Amongst other things, we will be discussing our approach to the question of vaccination for clergy and church workers. In the meantime, the Department has already advised that from 8 November all SRE Teachers and others going into Public Schools as volunteers will need to show a current vaccination certificate.



On another note, Her Excellency the Governor of NSW, The Hon Margaret Beazley AC QC has recorded a video message to Anglican churches throughout the Province of NSW. The video message is available via the below link.

I hope it will give everyone some encouragement in our current circumstances. You may wish to include it in your online service or distribute via an electronic newsletter to your congregations.

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/jn7fv3k51fxpx6v/Anglican%20Churches%20NSW.mp4?dl=0>

The video can then be downloaded from Dropbox at

<https://www.dropbox.com/t/vjVekSyP0WHJVOT7>

You don't need a Dropbox account to access - simply open the link in your browser and choose 'Download' to download to your computer. The file size is 291 Mb and the download link will expire in one month.

Once again I would like to express my gratitude for all that you are doing as leaders in your communities under the challenges of our current circumstances. Please be assured of my ongoing prayers for your work in the Lord.

Yours in Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Murray". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross-like mark at the beginning.

Dr Murray Harvey  
**Bishop of Grafton**



# Fact sheet

## Delta and COVID-19 Vaccination



This factsheet contains information about COVID-19 and vaccination for patients.

### About the Delta strain

The current NSW outbreak is due to the Delta variant of the COVID-19 virus.

The Delta variant is estimated to spread more than twice as much as the original virus, and can cause more severe illness in those that do get it:

- The risk of being hospitalised for patients infected with the Delta variant is almost double that of those infected with the Alpha variant.
- Compared to other variants, people infected with the Delta strain are much more likely to be admitted to ICU and have a higher risk of death.

The delta variant may have slightly different symptoms from the original strain, and can include headache, sore throat, runny nose, fever and persistent cough.

### Why get vaccinated?

Vaccines have been shown to be effective against COVID-19. Two doses of a vaccine:

- Reduces the chance you will be infected with COVID-19 by 50% - 60%.
- Gives you around 90% protection against hospitalisation and death from COVID-19 if you are infected.
- Significantly reduces the spread of COVID-19 to others, by at least half.

Even if you don't have symptoms or get sick, you can still pass the virus on to others. Getting vaccinated also helps to protect those you live with and the community.

### Are vaccines effective against the Delta strain?

According to experts and evidence, COVID-19 vaccines are effective against severe disease and death from the Delta variant.

People who have received both doses of a vaccine are about three times less likely to be infected than unvaccinated people, and infections are usually mild.

### Can I still get COVID-19 if I am vaccinated?

COVID-19 vaccines are a critical tool to keep people safe and bring the spread of the virus under control. However, no vaccines are 100% effective at preventing illness in vaccinated people.

A small number of people who are fully vaccinated will still be infected with COVID-19. These are called breakthrough cases.

Emerging evidence shows that the Delta variant causes a higher rate of vaccine breakthrough cases (19.7% compared to 5.8% for all other variants).

Vaccinated people who do get infected are equally infectious as non-vaccinated people, so it is important to continue to follow other health measures like wearing a mask once vaccinated.

However, the virus clears more quickly, and the disease is less severe for vaccinated people, so there is still a benefit to getting vaccinated.

## Are COVID-19 vaccines safe?

All of the COVID-19 vaccines that are approved for use in Australia have strong safety profiles. To 8 August 2021, approximately 6.3 million doses of Pfizer and 7.4 million doses of AstraZeneca vaccines have been administered.

As with all medications, there are possible side effects associated with COVID-19 vaccines, but the chance of having an adverse reaction is extremely rare. Compared to the risk of acute and long-lasting illness from contracting COVID-19, the benefits of the vaccines are clear.

### Blood clots

There is a small risk of blood clots associated with the AstraZeneca vaccine. In Australia, out of 7.4 million doses of AstraZeneca vaccine administered to date there have been 104 reports of blood clots linked to the vaccine, and 7 reported deaths.

### Myocarditis and pericarditis

There have been some concerns with the Pfizer vaccine and adverse reactions that cause inflammation of the heart (myocarditis and pericarditis). Out of the 6.3 million doses of Pfizer vaccine administered to date, there have been 149 cases in Australia of suspected myocarditis and/or pericarditis. There have been no reported deaths.

**According to the TGA, which monitors vaccine safety in Australia, the protective benefits of vaccination against COVID-19 far outweigh the potential risks. It is recommended that people 18+ or over get any available COVID-19 vaccine as soon as possible.**

## Will I need to get a 'booster' shot?

There is evidence of long-lasting immune responses in people who have received an AstraZeneca vaccine. Questions remain about the longevity of mRNA vaccines such as Pfizer and Moderna.

Studies are underway to better understand how long vaccines provide protection against COVID-19, as well as how well they protect against new variants. This evidence will help to inform whether a booster shot will be needed to maintain protection against COVID-19.

## More information

In the first instance, you should discuss any questions or concerns about COVID-19 vaccination with your GP.

Further information on COVID-19 and available vaccines can be found at [www.nsw.gov.au](http://www.nsw.gov.au).