



**Uniting Church**  
SYNOD OF NSW & ACT

GUIDANCE NOTE 19

# COVID-19

## GUIDANCE NOTE

30 October 2020

### The Chief Executive Office Mr Joseph La Posta has issued a letter to religious leaders

Dear Religious Leaders

Multicultural NSW understands the effects restrictions on religious gatherings and places of worship have had on our religious and faith communities.

We thank you for your ongoing and sustained leadership in communicating and complying with health advice to prevent COVID-19 transmission at religious gatherings and places of worship.

I know that Minister Lee, acting NSW Minister for Multiculturalism, has continued to make representations on your behalf to the NSW Health Minister on this matter.

As of Friday 23 October, up to 300 people can now attend religious gatherings at places of worship, subject to a COVID-19 Safety Plan.

Religious gatherings exclude weddings and funerals. However, from 1 December, the number of people who can attend weddings will be lifted to 300 people subject to the four-square metre rule indoors and two square metre rule outdoors.

All places of worship are expected to continue complying with COVID-19 safety plans.

I urge you to continue exercising extreme caution when it comes to gatherings at your places of worship and to continue encouraging worshippers to comply with current health advice, including encouraging wearing a mask at places of worship.

I would like to thank you for your leadership and concerted efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our community.

Yours sincerely

Joseph La Posta  
Chief Executive Officer

## PRESBYTERIES

CANBERRA REGION

FAR NORTH COAST

GEORGES RIVER

ILLAWARRA

KOREAN

MACQUARIE DARLING

MID NORTH COAST

NEW ENGLAND NORTH WEST

PARRAMATTA NEPEAN

RIVERINA

SYDNEY CENTRAL COAST

SYDNEY

THE HUNTER

UAICC



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In response to this letter and recent changes to the Covid-19 restrictions, we clarify the following:

### **Public Gatherings Outside**

Gatherings outside in a public place can now be up to 30 people.

### **Baptisms**

Baptisms can be held but consideration needs to be given to the following:

- 1) Has the congregation regathered? (The congregation has an important role to play in a Baptism and welcoming the baby into the life of the church)
- 2) If it is the baptism of an infant, who will hold the child? The implications of this need to be discussed and agreed upon with the parents
- 3) The child should not be taken around the congregation
- 4) Consider the use of hand sanitiser

### **Dinners and Luncheons**

Food can be prepared and served in a church hall. Service NSW has said the following conditions will apply:

- 1) Covid Safety Plan for Restaurants and Cafes must be completed
- 2) Register site as Restaurant and Cafes on the NSW Govt Covid website <https://www.nsw.gov.au/register-your-business-as-covid-safe>
- 3) Copy of Covid Safety Plan to be held on premises and easily produced should authorities so request
- 4) Food is plated up and everyone is served individually, remaining seated (no buffets or self service).
- 5) Preparation and clean up should be done by a designated core kitchen group adhering to all health and hygiene requirements within the Covid Safety Plan
- 6) 1.5 metre social distancing to be observed
- 7) Maximum numbers to be adhered to based on 4 square metre rule
- 8) Contact details of attendees to be obtained for contact tracing purposes.

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### **Christmas Carols on Church Property**

As it is an outdoor event on private church property, up to 300 people can attend subject to the 4 square metre rule (not the 2 square metre). This does not mean the audience or congregation can sing. The restrictions for singing on page 4 of this Guidance Note still apply. At this stage the only singing at any Christmas Carol service would be by the group of no more than 5 singers at the front.

### **Children, Young Adult and Youth Ministries**

Providing these are an activity of your church (minuted by Church Council), maximum numbers can now be up to the maximum allowed for your premises as for a Place of Worship. The usual requirement for a Covid-safe plan applies.

### **Outside Church Services**

Services held outside on public property such as a public park are limited to 30 people. This includes a carol service hosted by a church but run public property.

### **Submission of New Plans**

The changes to restrictions may involve you updating your plan. If the changes are fairly minor, all simply note the change on your existing plan, date it and have the approving person initial changes. There is no need to submit or forward the updated plan to anyone. For example, if your congregation has regathered for worship and has less than 100 congregants or is limited by the 4 square metre rule, then note on your plan that the increase to 300 has been acknowledged but does not apply to your situation; date and initial and you have met the requirement. If the changes to Government requirements significantly affect your situation, you will need to submit an updated plan.

### **QR Codes**

If you have regathered for Worship and have registered your premises as a Place of Worship (every congregation gathering for face to face worship should have done this as the Premier has rules it a mandatory obligation), you may receive an email advising of the updated Government changes. In that email, it refers to the use of QR Codes and encourages you to use them. This is not a requirement, only a recommendation. Records can continue to be gathered on paper but must be digitised within 24 hours. This can be in Word, PDF or Excel format.

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### Singing

The current requirement is that only a maximum of 5 singers up the front are allowed with no singing by the congregants. These 5 singers must be at least 1.5 metres from each other, all facing the same way and be at least 5 metres from the audience. They also must not be above the audience.

### Inductions and Ordinations

These may be conducted subject to all requirements as per a Place of Worship. Additionally, the following should be adhered to:

- 1) Laying on of Hands – this may be done by the minimal number of people with sanitising of hands before and after laying on of hands. Please avoid laying hands on exposed skin, although 1-2 people may need to place their hands on the head of the person being ordained.
- 2) Extending the right hand of fellowship – usually this is done with handshaking (or hugs) which is not permissible. Consider other alternatives such as bumping elbows.

We realise this Christmas will be very different. Please know we are lobbying the NSW Government to consider further easing of restrictions, especially for Christmas. We will keep you informed.

### For Further Information

NSW Government Covid-19 site: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19>

ACT Government Covid-19 site: <https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/home>

Synod of NSW and ACT Website:

<https://nswact.uca.org.au/COVID19saferoadmap/>

Email: [COVID19@nswact.uca.org.au](mailto:COVID19@nswact.uca.org.au)

Bronwyn Murphy, Associate Secretary

Phone: 0428 411 830 - Email: [bronwynm@nswact.uca.org.au](mailto:bronwynm@nswact.uca.org.au)

Kingsley Murphy, Presbytery Support Manager

Phone: 02 8267 4358 - Email: [KingsleyM@nswact.uca.org.au](mailto:KingsleyM@nswact.uca.org.au)

### This information has been sourced from:

Multicultural NSW / Services NSW.

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