

COVID-19

GUIDANCE NOTE

4 December 2020

Further easing of Covid-19 Restrictions in NSW

The Premier, Gladys Berejiklian, has announced the further easing of restrictions for Churches.

We expect restrictions to be eased from Monday, 7th December 2020. This note is provided ahead of changes to the Public Health Order and is provided for general guidance only at this point. There are several points requiring further clarification, and expect to share these with you when we receive them.

This is a summary of what we understand for now:

2 Square Metre Rule:

The 4 square metre rule has now been reduced to 1 person per 2 square metres which affectively doubles the capacity of buildings. Additionally, you may have up to 25 people before this rule applies. This means if your congregation is less than 25 people, you do not need to worry about the 2 sq mt rule.

Clarification is being sought as to whether both these scenarios still include the 1.5 mt required for social distancing. In the meantime, we advise you to base your numbers on allowing for social distancing. This is the most likely and the most careful response.

Maximum capacity

The maximum capacity numbers are now limited only by the 2 square metre rule. Previous caps of 300 for Places of Worship, Weddings and Funerals have been removed.

Signage for your premises will need to be updated to reflect the new maximum capacities.

Singing

The Government advice states:

- up to 50 performers indoors, no maximum cap outdoors
- advice is for congregation/audience to continue wearing masks if singing.

Our interpretation, pending clarification, is that there is no restriction on singing outside, provided masks are being worn by those 12 years old and older. As for inside, I think it means the congregation can sing (with masks). Again, I am seeking clarification.

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GEORGES RIVER

ILLAWARRA

KOREAN

MACQUARIE DARLING

MID NORTH COAST

NEW ENGLAND NORTH WEST

PARRAMATTA NEPEAN

RIVERINA

SYDNEY CENTRAL COAST

SYDNEY

THE HUNTER

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It would be safe for any congregation with fewer than 50 people to safely (if not comfortably) sing while wearing a mask (12 years old and over).

Gatherings in outdoor public spaces: This includes outdoor religious services or church events such as Carol and Christmas services.

The Government advice states:

- up to 100 people for outdoor gatherings (up from 50)
- up to 5,000 people for outdoor events that are fenced, ticketed and seated (subject to the 2sqm rule)
- up to 3,000 people for other organised outdoor events i.e. community sport and outdoor protests (subject to the 2sqm rule).

Again, we are seeking clarification as to whether social distancing of 1.5m also applies. I suspect it will and would advise that as you work out your numbers

This applies for Youth Groups, Sunday Schools and KUCA Groups also.

Safety Plans

These will continue to be required and we recommend that you update your plan reflecting changes applicable to your premises. The updated plan will need to be approved by your Church Council and will need to be submitted to your Presbytery and to Synod, with a copy retained on site, as is the current requirement.

Attendance records

These are still required in a digital format and now that the maximum capacities have increased, it is highly recommended that QR codes be utilised for Places of Worship in addition to Funerals and Weddings. This will ease the workload considerably and reduce the chance of errors occurring.

Some Congregations have indicated that they have had problems with the one provided by Service NSW. Another alternative is

<https://guesttrack.com.au/home.html>

Handwriting attendance lists then taking a photo is not advised. Many details are illegible, and the photo can easily blur making it impossible to use for tracing. Advice is that any hand-written list should be typed up and stored appropriately.

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Uniting Church
SYNOD OF NSW & ACT

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To be clarified

There are a few changes that we are waiting to be clarified/confirmed. It is expected that the information for these will not be available until Monday.

- 1.5 metre social distancing - it is unclear if this is still a requirement or not
- Singing inside - All congregation/audience or just 50 performers up front
- Wearing of masks - are these still required if not singing (inside and outside)

For further information, please contact:

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It is our hope that this will bring some joy as people gather for Christmas.

Your patience and resilience have been deeply appreciated and the Moderator, General Secretary and staff of the Synod Office join me in wishing you a very happy and holy Christmas.

Rev. Bronwyn Murphy
Associate Secretary

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