



## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR CONGREGATIONS – 18 October 21**

### **Vaccine rollout and Victoria's Roadmap to Deliver the National Plan**

#### **Introduction to the Roadmap**

The settings of the Roadmap are indicative only and subject to change.

All changes to the Chief Health Officer's Directions are based on public health advice (including epidemiological evidence) and legal advice (including as to compatibility with the Charter for Human Rights and Responsibilities) at the relevant time, in light of the specific risks to public health and changes/measures proposed.

Cleaning, signage, record keeping, and other COVIDsafe requirements for work premises continue to apply for all venues and facilities with onsite operations as per Workplace Directions and Workplace (Additional Industry Obligations) Directions. Density quotients (DQ) apply to all venues and spaces that are accessible to the public.

All proposed easings from 80% fully vaccinated (indicatively 5 November) are dependent on the ability for venues and employers to confirm vaccination status of patrons and employees, respectively.

#### **What does the Roadmap say about have church services?**

**NEW** [Victoria's Roadmap summary](#) Metropolitan Melbourne and Regional Victoria

**NEW** [Metropolitan Melbourne](#)

#### **Phase A** (current)

- No in-person gatherings permitted.
- Broadcast permitted (maximum 5 people in attendance).

**NEW Phase B** commencing 11.59pm Thursday 21 October

- Fully vaccinated: Indoor cap of 20 with DQ4 OR outdoor cap of 50 with DQ4 OR,
- Unknown vaccination status: indoor cap of 10 with DQ4 OR outdoor cap of 20 DQ4

#### **Phase C** expected at 05 November

- Fully vaccinated: Indoors DQ4 and 150 cap, outdoors DQ2 500 cap
- Unknown vaccination status: Outdoor Metro Melbourne only DQ4, 20 cap

#### **Regional Victoria**

#### **Phase A** (current)

- Religious gatherings of up to 20 people can be held at a religious facility or place of worship. A density limit of 1 person per 4 square metres applies.

**NEW Phase B** commencing 11.59pm Thursday 21 October

- Fully vaccinated: Indoors DQ4 and 30 cap, OR outdoors DQ2 and 100 cap
- Unknown vaccination: no change from Phase A

**Phase C** expected at 05 November

- fully vaccinated: Indoors DQ4 and 150 cap, outdoors DQ2 and 500 cap
- Unknown vaccination status: 20 cap, DQ4

### **Who needs to be vaccinated under the current health order?**

For the purpose of the Acting Chief Health Officer directions COVID-19 Mandatory Vaccination (Workers) Directions a **religious worker** means a person who works at or in connection with a place of worship.

Our advice is that this applies to our Pastors\*, Lay workers and Volunteers that are associated with our churches. Another helpful way of looking at it might be to consider as a starting point in your congregational context those people, staff and volunteers, who must have a Working With Children Check and Professional Standards training, who will require vaccination status to carry out duties outside of their home. Those people who serve on Sundays in worship or supporting activities at the church but don't require a WWCC are also required to be vaccinated.

\*Within the current CHO Directions (valid to Oct 21<sup>st</sup>) there is an exemption that can be applied to our ordained Pastors. Specifically, a person who:

- *conducts services of public worship and acknowledgments of faith;*
- *performs marriages, funerals and special memorial services according to tradition and ecclesiastical and civil law; or*
- *visits members of the community in their homes, hospitals and other institutions to provide advice and religious comfort for the purpose of end of life faith reasons;*

### **By when does the Chief Health Officers Mandatory Vaccination of Workers apply?**

Employers\*\* must ensure unvaccinated workers subject to this order do not work outside of their ordinary place of residence.

By 15 October – employers must have confirmed that their relevant workers have either had at least 1 dose, have an exemption, or have a booking before the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October to have their first dose.

By 22 October – employers must have confirmed that their relevant workers have had at least 1 dose, or have a medical exemption.

By 26<sup>th</sup> November employers must have confirmed that their relevant workers have had at least 2 doses or have a medical exemption.

\*\*Employers - calling and employing bodies - in congregational settings this is likely to be the church council who also oversee the service of volunteers

## What is an acceptable Medical Exemption from getting vaccinated?

The CHO's Directions describes these as 'Medical Contraindications' and they are very specific.

(7) medical contraindication means one of the following contraindications to the administration of a COVID-19 vaccine:

- (a) anaphylaxis after a previous dose;
- (b) anaphylaxis to any component of the vaccine, including polysorbate or polyethylene glycol;
- (c) in relation to AstraZeneca:
  - (i) history of capillary leak syndrome; or
  - (ii) thrombosis with thrombocytopenia occurring after a previous dose;
- (d) in relation to Comirnaty or Spikevax:
  - (i) myocarditis or pericarditis attributed to a previous dose of either Comirnaty or Spikevax; or
- (e) the occurrence of any other serious adverse event that has:
  - (i) been attributed to a previous dose of a COVID-19 vaccine by an experienced immunisation provider or medical specialist (and not attributed to any another identifiable cause); and
  - (ii) been reported to State adverse event programs and/or the Therapeutic Goods Administration;

## What happens if an employee or volunteer is unable to meet the vaccination requirements?

A consultative approach is the best approach in the initial stages. Employees and volunteers are valuable assets to the congregation. Information from the Fair work ombudsman site on COVID-19 vaccinations: legislation and public health orders is available [HERE](#). Some links on how to talk to people about the vaccine are listed at the end of the FAQ. Please call the district office if you require support in dealing with issues related to this matter.

*Some employees may have questions or concerns about getting vaccinated. You can find information about [COVID-19 vaccines from the Department of Health](#), including answers to common questions about the safety and effectiveness of the vaccines.*

*An employee might refuse a direction to be vaccinated even if they are required to under a specific law, agreement or contract, or after receiving a lawful and reasonable direction. In these situations, an employer should ask the employee to explain their reasons for refusing the vaccination. An employee may have a legitimate reason for not being vaccinated. For example, the employee could have an existing medical condition that means vaccination is not recommended for them. Employees should speak to their doctor if they have concerns about receiving a vaccination because of a medical condition.*

*If you have concerns about the safety of COVID-19 vaccines:*

- read [Department of Health – Are COVID-19 vaccines safe?](#)
- call the [National Coronavirus Hotline](#) to get reliable information from the Australian Government.

*If the employee gives a legitimate reason for not being vaccinated, the employee and their employer should consider whether there are any other options available instead of vaccination. This could include alternative work arrangements, such as asking the employee to perform different duties or to work from home. Find out more at [Alternative work arrangements](#).*

*Where an employee has a reason for not getting vaccinated, an employer may be able to request evidence of the reason for their refusal. Find out more at [If an employee refuses to be vaccinated, can an employer require evidence about why they've refused?](#)*

## **Record keeping for vaccination status.**

Under the current Health Order, If a worker is, or may be, scheduled to work outside the worker's ordinary place of residence on or after the relevant date, the employer of the worker must collect, record and hold vaccination information about the worker.

If the employer collects information that a worker is partially vaccinated, the employer must also collect, record and hold information about whether that worker has a booking to receive, by the second dose deadline, a dose of a COVID-19 vaccine that will cause the worker to become fully vaccinated.

If the employer collects information that a worker is unvaccinated, the employer must also collect, record and hold information about whether that worker has a booking to receive, by the first dose deadline, a dose of a COVID-19 vaccine that will cause the worker to become partially vaccinated.

Employers should advise employees of the following:

- the purpose of collection
- the consequences if the employee refuses to consent to the collection
- if the collection is required or authorised by law
- how you may use the information
- that your privacy policy details how employees can complain about any Privacy Act breaches and how they will be handled by your business
- who you might disclose the information to
- whether the information will be disclosed to overseas recipients.

## **What vaccination information should be recorded by employers?**

*A record should include:*

- -the name of the worker or individual accessing the site
- -their vaccination status
- -their vaccine appointment booking (if relevant)
- -who sighted the evidence
- -the date the evidence was sighted
- -the nature of that evidence (for example, COVID-19 vaccine digital certificate, immunisation history statement, or medical exception letter or certificate)
- We do NOT keep an actual copy of the evidence.  
(Under no circumstances is the staff Individual Health Identifier number to be recorded.)

[Information for industry and workers required to be vaccinated | Coronavirus Victoria](#)

**NEW** [COVID 19 Vaccination Status Register template for authorised worker vaccine requirement](#)

## **Responsible storage/ disclosure of health information including vaccine status**

This topic is under discussion at the National Churchwide Office level. Advice will be provided in due course

## **Is the District mandating / supporting the mandate on vaccination for Religious Workers and members?**

The District strongly encourages vaccination of its Pastors, Lay workers, volunteers and members as an important way to control the spread of COVID-19. Many of our people will be subject anyway to mandatory directions issued by the Chief Health Officer.

The Chief Health Officers Directions of Mandatory Vaccinations are legally enforceable under the current state of emergency. Such directions have been applied to relevant areas to LCAVD such as Religious Workers, Education Workers, Aged Care Workers, Accommodation Workers, and Social and Community Service Workers.

### **How do we manage checking vaccination status at church?**

To enter a fully vaccinated venue, our people will need to show their vaccination evidence. Instructions on how to this evidence can be obtained can be found at:

<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/subjects/getting-help-during-coronavirus-covid-19/covid-19-vaccinations/how-get-proof>

It is the responsibility everyone in the congregation to adhere to these requirements, and specifically the accountability of the local congregation leadership to ensure that adequate systems for checking have been put in place.

The [Vaccinated Economy Trial](#) has commenced in some regional areas this week, which links a person's vaccination certificate with the QR Code system, and should hopefully make this process of checking and entry much easier. One objective of the trial is to obtain an understanding of what training and support may be needed in this space. For Lutheran faith communities the idea of turning anyone away is in opposition to our values. We hope the outcomes of the trials will be informative and helpful.

Frequent and clear communication across all congregational channels to explain how the worship services will take place will be important in reducing unpleasant surprises for those who have not yet understood that we will continue to operate in a restricted environment. The balance of face to face and online activity as Phase B commences will be important, especially as Advent and Christmas approach.

Another way of showing care might be to investigate how the congregation is able to support those whose vaccination is unknown in terms of everyday life. They may need shopping support, check in phone calls or visits for support as they experience continued isolating conditions while others are beginning to experience a degree of freedom, and of course, prayer.

### **How do people with little or no technological capacity prove their vaccination status?**

You can call Services Australia on 1800 653 809 and ask them to send your Immunisation History Statement to you. It can take up to 14 days to arrive in the post.

You can also print your COVID-19 digital certificate available on MyGov at home.

Venues participating in the Vaccinated Economy Trials may ask to see proof that you've checked in and proof of vaccination. When you show them your check-in confirmation

screen, they'll see your vaccination status if you've linked your COVID-19 digital certificate to the Service Victoria app.

The confirmation screen shows a green tick to show that you've checked in, your name and the words 'valid certificate'.

Businesses can't keep or store this information.

Other eligible proofs of vaccination include a COVID-19 digital certificate on your smartphone wallet or a paper-copy of your Immunisation History Statement, or an eligible proof of exemption.

Children over 16 years old must be fully vaccinated to enter venues, except those with medical exemptions.

Children under 16 years old do not need to be vaccinated but must be accompanied by fully vaccinated adults.

(source [How to get your COVID-19 digital certificate | Coronavirus Victoria](#))

***Is there a legal liability if someone contracted COVID while at the Church (and associated building)?***

It is important and lawful that we provide safe places for our Pastors, Lay workers, Volunteers and members, and that we follow all available guidance and take all reasonable steps to provide these safe places. This means following the CHO Directions and the guidance provided through the Roadmap and the DHHS about safe places (i.e., see <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/six-principles-covidsafe-workplaces>).

Supporting this, all congregations should have a COVID-Safe Plan in place and be able to demonstrate that it is effective and active. See guidance at: <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/covidsafe-plan#creating-a-covidsafe-plan>

***Are we obliged to ensure people hiring our premises are abiding by mandates (i.e., dance clubs, counsellors)?***

A phone call to the COVID hotline in late September has resulted in the understanding your organization is responsible for the safety of any gathering at your premises. Your COVID-Safe Plan should be inclusive of these hirers and events.

As at the 14<sup>th</sup> October there is not an answer available on whether the owning body must sight vaccination status or a declaration from the hiring body will be sufficient, or if there are other considerations.

***How long are restrictions likely to remain in place in Victoria?***

In relation to industry the restrictions are being described as 'enduring'. Similarly, we are expecting that vaccination requirements, including evidence of 'boosters' will be with us until well into 2022 at least. Severity and length of restrictions is very dependant on over all community behaviour. Dates in the Roadmap are indicative only.

## **Links to resources relating to the National Roadmap, Vaccines, Mental health support, respectful conversations and LCA materials**

LCA Bishop John Henderson's statement on [return to worship](#) dated May 2020  
LCA Bishop John Henderson's pastoral note on [Covid Vaccines and passports](#) dated 21 September

LCA Commission on Social and Bioethical Questions Guide to Christian Ethical Decision Making: [Social and Bioethical Questions - Lutheran Church of Australia \(lca.org.au\)](#)

[Victoria's Road Map](#) delivering the National Plan  
[Metropolitan Melbourne Roadmap](#)  
[Regional Victoria Roadmap](#)

Acting Chief Health Officer order dated 07 October 2021 COVID 19 Mandatory Vaccination (workers) [Directions](#) ending 21 October  
[Penalties](#)

### **Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI)**

[Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation \(ATAGI\) | Australian Government Department of Health](#)

### **Victorian Government Coronavirus**

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Victoria | Coronavirus Victoria](#)

### **COVIDsafe plan (including template)**

[COVIDsafe Plan | Coronavirus Victoria](#)

### **Department of Health and Human Resources Coronavirus**

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>

### **Coronavirus Hotline**

1800 675 398

### **Fair Work Ombudsmen on COVID Vaccinations in the workplace**

[COVID-19 vaccinations and the workplace - Fair Work Ombudsman](#)

[Converge International](#)

Church workers in congregations using HRS can access the Employee Access Program via the LAMP2 portal. Short term, solutions oriented counselling and coaching

### **Pastoral Supervision**

Speak to District Pastor Brett Kennett or Pastor Gordon Wegener regarding pastoral supervision

### **RUOK? everyday resources**

[Resources to help you ask R U OK? every day](#)

### **How to talk about vaccinations (World Health Organisation)**

[How to talk about vaccines \(who.int\)](#)

**How to speak to kids about vaccinations (Australian Government Department of Health)**  
[How to speak to kids about COVID-19 vaccines | Australian Government Department of Health](#)

**How to talk to your friends and family about COVID-19 vaccines (UNICEF)**  
[How to talk to your friends and family about COVID-19 vaccines | UNICEF](#)

**General Mental Health Resources**

Lifeline 13 1114

Beyond Blue 1 300 224 636

Kids Help Line 1 800 551 800

ReachOut [Welcome to ReachOut.com | ReachOut Australia](#) Resources for Under 25s (and parents)