



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR CONGREGATIONS – 08 December

(Information in blue was last checked week commencing 07 December)

### Can we gather in worship?

As of 11.59pm Sunday 06 December a further easing of restrictions was announced

Religious gatherings can be held indoors or outdoors. Venues must apply the two square metre rule to ensure people have enough room to maintain 1.5 metres distance between them. There are no group limits. The two square metre rule applies **only** if electronic record keeping is used. Otherwise, the four square metre rule applies.

A place of worship or venue hosting a wedding, funeral or religious gathering that is applying the two square metre rule must use electronic record keeping if applying the two square metre rule. Otherwise, the four square metre rule applies. The Victorian Government has a free [QR code service available](#).

If not using electronic record keeping, manual record keeping is required. A sign in sheet can be found [HERE](#)

If you decide to use a service other than the Service Victoria app, you should check that the app:

- handles personal information it collects in accordance with the Privacy Act
- stores data in Australia
- deletes the personal information it collects after 28 days as per the Workplace Direction

If the app does not meet the above requirements, you should use a different service, such as the Victorian Government's QR Code Service.

From a phone call to the DHHS COVID hotline: where the QR technology would be difficult for a congregation to support or participate in, a substitute option such as an electronically stored excel spreadsheet might be satisfactory. The data must be accurate, legible, and readily accessible by more than one trusted official and supply the detail needed – date, time, name and phone number – and be retained for 28 days. Privacy issues should be addressed (JOB ID 300041)

People must be at least five metres away from the faith leader, reader, or prayer leader who has their mask off.

From a phone call to the DHHS COVID hotline: Members of the same household may sit together but at a distance of 1.5 metres from the next individual or family group [DHHS Job ID 289389]

A **COVID safe plan** must be in place. (See more on COVIDsafe plans later in this document)

### Do I need to wear a mask to worship?

You must carry a face mask with you at all times when you leave home, unless you have a lawful reason not to. It is strongly recommended you wear a face mask when you can't keep 1.5 metres distance from other people.

### Can we worship across two spaces?

Adapted from a phone call with the DHHS COVID hotline: If a congregation has two separate rooms that do not overlap they can host people across the two rooms so long as the relevant

density quotient condition is met. [DHHS Job ID 286319].

### **Can we participate in Holy Communion?**

According to the Chief Health Officers advice dated 27 October (28 October for Regional Victoria) conducting a Eucharist service is permitted noting no sharing of crockery, utensil, vessels or other equipment is allowed.

*In addition a phone call to DHHS advised that the pastor can move from one room to the other for the purpose of Communion Distribution [DHHS Job ID 289058]*

### **Can I sing at a place of worship?**

*Yes, singing or chanting can occur as part of a religious ceremony, wedding or funeral.*

*Group singing is safest when the following measures are applied:  
singing outside or in a well-ventilated room (with windows open)  
physical distancing of at least 2 metres between each person while singing  
short performances (of less than an hour)  
wearing a mask when singing indoors  
singing softly.*

*These measures are recommended to help slow the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). Fans, free standing or ceiling, are not recommended for use in enclosed indoor spaces for singing. Performers should be 5 meters from the audience where practical.*

### **Can we recommence hospitality at worship?**

*Food or drink can be served as part of a religious gathering or after a religious gathering. It is recommended that single use items are used to serve food or drink. It is recommended that one person serves or distributes food or drinks. For example, one person uses the urn for hot water for tea, (and other consumables)*

**For more information on Religion and Ceremony click [HERE](#).**

### **Can a pastor visit a person in their home for pastoral care and/or home communion?**

The Victorian Government website provides the following information  
'Faith leaders (in our context, pastors) can visit homes to provide religious guidance, to perform rituals or for care and compassionate reasons.'

While record keeping is usually in the context of the workplace building environment, because a pastoral visit is in the context of a workplace, record keeping for 28 days should still be maintained – for instance in a work diary or calendar for contact tracing purposes if needed  
Physical distancing should still be maintained as far as is practicable with a person who is possibly mobility challenged.

### **Can lay workers or a pastoral care team visit a person in their home?**

Up to 30 people may visit a home per day. Children are included in the visitor limit, but babies under the age of 12 months are not included in the visitor limit.

When you are preparing meals or caring for an elderly person you should be aware of the risks of transmitting coronavirus (COVID-19). Older people are especially vulnerable to coronavirus (COVID-19), so it is important you take extra steps to keep them safe. You should wear a face mask, maintain

physical distancing and wash your hands regularly while visiting.

If you are delivering meals, think about leaving a package on their doorstep without making physical contact. If you are doing cleaning chores or other housework, have them sit somewhere comfortable away from you while you work, so you are not in close contact.

Make sure they are feeling well and ask them if they have enough of their regular medications whenever you visit. You should keep at least 1.5 metres distance between yourself and others wherever possible. You should wash your hands often.

While record keeping is usually in the context of the workplace building environment, because a pastoral visit is in the context of a workplace, record keeping for 28 days should still be maintained – for instance in a work diary or calendar for contact tracing purposes if needed.

### **Can we hold a prayer group or small group?**

*Yes, you can attend a prayer group at a place of worship. The following restrictions apply:*

*Religious gatherings can be held indoors or outdoors. Venues must apply the [two square metre rule](#) to ensure people have enough room to maintain 1.5 metres distance between them. There are no group limits. The [two square metre rule](#) applies only if electronic record keeping is used. Otherwise, the [four square metre rule](#) applies.*

*Religious gatherings and prayer groups held at a private residence are subject to the private gathering limit. This means the household itself plus up to 30 visitors per day (excluding any babies under 12 months old).*

### **Can we hold meetings for the business of the congregation?**

*This has not yet been addressed specifically*

*The Stay Safe Directions (Victoria) (No4) provides:*

*During the stay safe period, a person in the State of Victoria must not arrange to meet, or organise or intentionally attend a gathering of, more than 99 other persons (with any infant under one year of age not counting towards this limit) for a common purpose at a public place,*

*The DCC approved guidelines for congregational AGMs and SGMs can be found [HERE](#).*

### **Is travel limited?**

*From 11.59pm 21 November, permits are required for everyone arriving in Victoria who lives in or has travelled through **South Australia**. (Current at time of publishing). Information on the Victorian Border Crossing Permit can be found [HERE](#)*

*As of 11.59pm Sunday 08 November there is no longer any restriction on travel within Victoria. The permitted worker scheme is no longer active.*

### **What about funerals and weddings?**

*Funerals can be held indoors or outdoors. The venue must apply the [two square metre rule](#) to ensure people have enough room to maintain 1.5 metres distance between them. There are no group limits. The square metre rule doesn't include babies under 12 months of age. The [two square metre rule](#) can be used only if electronic record keeping is used. Otherwise, the [four square metre rule](#) applies.*

*Weddings can be held indoors or outdoors. The venue must apply the [two square metre rule](#)*

to ensure people have enough room to maintain 1.5 metres distance between them. There are no group limits. The square metre rule includes the couple, the celebrant, and photographer, but not other workers such as catering staff or babies under 12 months. The [two square metre rule](#) can be used only if electronic record keeping is used. Otherwise, the [four square metre rule](#) applies.

For weddings, funerals and religious gatherings, if a service is conducted in a private home, the private gathering limit applies (30 visitors).

### **What should be included in the Parish/Congregation COVIDsafe plan?**

The COVIDsafe plan details the following:

- Ensure physical distancing and relevant density limits
- Wear a face mask
- Practise good hygiene
- Keep records and act quickly
- Avoid interactions in enclosed spaces
- Create workforce bubbles (will relate to volunteers also)

Click the [link](#) or go to <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/covidsafe-plan>

Information about the 4-metre square rule can be found [HERE](#)  
<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/four-square-metre-rule-covid-19#what-is-the-four-square-metre-rule>

Please also use the District Communication Plan in case of a suspected or confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) in your workplace. Download [HERE](#)

### **Staying Safe general guidelines**

- Stay safe by washing your hands regularly,
- wearing a face mask when you leave home,
- coughing and sneezing into your elbow, and
- Keeping at least 1.5 metres from others.
- Keep your friends and family safe by meeting outdoors. There is a lower risk of spreading coronavirus (COVID-19) between people if you are outdoors.
- Face masks must be worn by all Victorians when they leave home, unless they have a lawful reason not to.
- If you have symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) get tested and stay home. Stay at home if you feel unwell.

For more information on the easing of restrictions for Religion and Ceremony click the link [HERE](#) or go to <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/religion-and-ceremony-victoria-last-step>