

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR CONGREGATIONS – 03 November 2021

Vaccine rollout and Victoria's Roadmap to Deliver the National Plan (new material in blue)

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.

Current easings are dependent on the ability for venues and employers to confirm vaccination status of patrons and employees, respectively.

The information in this document is intended as a guide and is correct at the time of distribution. Please enquire directly with the COVID hotline 1800 675 398 or go to the Vic Gov website for more up to date information www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au

What does the Roadmap say about church services?

General Information for Religion and Ceremony linked [HERE](#)

Religion and Ceremony Sector Guidance linked [HERE](#)

Information on the Roadmap linked [HERE](#)

Phase C effective at 6.00pm Friday 29 October 201 (80% fully vaccinated 16YO+)

Assign a **COVID check in Marshall** in your revised **COVIDsafe plan**.

COVID Check-in Marshalls are not required to complete any role-specific training, though employers ([Premises Operators](#)) should provide guidance where practical to ensure COVID Check-in Marshalls understand their role and what they are required to do

As church we are required to provide a safe place for our volunteers, members and visitors and a safe workplace for our staff and pastors. Your COVIDsafe plan should include measures appropriate to your situation/Premises.

- Regional Victoria and Metropolitan Melbourne under the same rules
- Interstate travel allowed (some states may have restrictions)
- Face coverings remain mandatory for indoor settings (except with medical exemption or [when preaching and liturgising](#)). The 1.5 meter physical distancing rule applies in religious settings
- Private Gatherings indoors up to 10 people per day (includes dependents)
Outdoors up to 30 people per day

- Can attend workplace if fully vaccinated*. Masks must be worn indoors (except with medical exemption)
- Fully vaccinated: Indoors 500 cap DQ4 (1 per 4 sq metres, outdoors 500 cap DQ2 (1 per 2 sq meters
- Unknown vaccination status: 30 cap, DQ4 indoors and outdoors
- Those required for service not included in cap

Same rules apply for weddings and funerals

*Faith leaders are not currently required to show vaccination status at their main place of work

Extract from the Opening Premises Directions issued [29 October 2021](#) re Places of worship

Use of indoor space or outdoor space

- The operator of a place of worship may only permit patrons to use for a primary purpose, at any one time, either:
 - one or more indoor spaces; or
 - one or more outdoor spaces.

Note: operators are not permitted to operate for a primary purpose outdoor spaces at the same time as indoor spaces and vice versa. Patrons that are using the indoor space for a primary purpose may use the outdoor space provided that the indoor patron limit is complied with for the whole venue at all times.

- No shared equipment
- The operator of a place of worship must not permit food, drink, crockery, utensils, vessels or other equipment to be shared between patrons.

NEW Phase D anticipated 24 November (90% fully vaccinated 12YO+)

- [Vaccination requirements remain in place](#)
- [Density limits removed](#)
- [Masks remain a requirement in high risk or low vaccinated indoors settings**](#)
- [No limits to gathering homes](#)

[**it is unknown if worship services constitute a high risk setting at this stage](#)

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 our 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 18th November) there is an exclusion that can be applied to our ordained Pastors to attend their main workplace, 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;
- regardless of exemption to be able to work outside of home, there are separate health orders in place for Hospitals, Aged Care, and Schools that require proof of full vaccination status for a worker or volunteer to enter.

This information may change so please monitor the Victorian Government website www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au as changes take place without notice (ID 680059)

By when does the Chief Health Officer Order re 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 22 October – employers must have confirmed that their relevant workers have had at least 1 dose, or have a medical exemption. By 26th 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 [and operation of the Premises](#).

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](#)

[Victorian Government Vaccination Status Register Template](#)

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

The District encourages vaccination of its Pastors, Lay workers, volunteers and members as an important way to keep people healthy and reduce 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.

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 D 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.

[A link to signs and templates regarding vaccination status and caps is linked **HERE**](#)

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

- 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.
- When you show your check-in confirmation screen at a venue, your vaccination status displays 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, (This will change at Phase D 24 November 2021 to children 12 YO +)

(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.

Please call the COVID hotline 1800 675 398 for advice specific to your circumstances

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 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 Sept 2021.
LCA Commission on Social and Bioethical Questions Guide to Christian Ethical Decision Making: [Social and Bioethical Questions - Lutheran Church of Australia \(lca.org.au\)](#)

Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation [ATAGI](#)

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>

[Directions issued by Victoria's Chief Health Officer](#)

[The Premier of Victoria – Media Centre](#)

Coronavirus Hotline 1800 675 398

Fair Work Ombudsmen on COVIC Vaccinations in the workplace
[COVID-19 vaccinations and the workplace - Fair Work Ombudsman](#)

Work Safe Victoria [Worksafe COVID-19](#)

[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](#)

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 COVI-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)