

COVIDSafe Plan For Church Premises (Template)



Throughout the current pandemic we have seen some wonderful examples of how God's church has continued to minister in communities under difficult circumstances. As restrictions at a federal government level begin to relax, we need to make sure that we continue to behave in a way that honours God and protects our congregations when public meetings recommence.

The purpose of this plan is to ensure that churches meet the standards set out by authorities, but also more importantly, be considered and responsible as we begin again to use church premises for the mission which they were intended.

This resource is provided as a guide only to provide general recommendations for churches and ministries. Every church is unique and therefore should develop and adopt a COVIDSafe Plan which addresses their individual circumstances.

The Federal Government has outlined a Three-Step plan for religious services. This plan is outlined as follows – **however, it is important that you check your own State or Territory guidelines to make sure of your obligations.**

Step 1.

Weddings may have up to **10 guests** in addition to the couple and the celebrant.

Funerals may have up to **20 mourners indoors** and **30 outdoors.**

Religious gatherings may have up to **10 attendees.**

Every gathering must record contact details.

Step 2.

Weddings may have up to **20 guests** in addition to the couple and the celebrant.

Funerals may have up to **50 mourners.**

Religious gatherings may have up to **20 attendees.**

Every gathering must record contact details.

Step 3.

Allow gatherings of up to **100 people.***

Every gathering must record contact details.

ALL STEPS ARE SUBJECT TO EXPERT HEALTH ADVICE

*States and territories can implement changes based on their COVID-19 conditions

https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/05/3-step-framework-for-a-covidsafe-australia-3-step-framework-for-a-covidsafe-australia_1.pdf

COVIDSafe Plan For Church Premises (Template)



Importantly, the following 4 requirements must also be applied at each stage:

- Maintain 1.5 metres distance and good hygiene
- Stay at home if unwell
- Frequently clean and disinfect communal areas
- COVIDSafe Plan for all workplaces and premises

Following this plan will enable your church to comply with the government requirements and enable you to stay flexible to the changing environment.

Prepare and Prevent

1. When preparing to re-open church buildings, the church leadership team needs to meet and agree to a:

- 1.1. Local church service plan specific to your church
- 1.2. Nominated COVIDSafe Responsible Persons/COVIDSafe Warden
- 1.3. Cleaning plan
- 1.4. Outbreak or Incident Plan including equipment required
- 1.5. Monitor and review your COVIDSafe Plan with frequent leadership meetings

2. Before the church service, ensure:

- 2.1. Pre-service cleaning is complete
- 2.2. Your COVIDSafe Posters are displayed prominently at the entrance and in key locations
- 2.3. Your COVIDSafe Warden is easily identifiable
- 2.4. Your greeting/welcoming volunteers are trained in screening
- 2.5. The attendee register is set up where required
- 2.6. Appropriate hand sanitation is set up in a prominent location (ensure this is an alcohol based sanitiser with at least 60% alcohol base). Have hand sanitisers available throughout the church building
- 2.7. A seating plan is established at 1.5 metres apart. Adequate plans are in place to ensure social distancing such as 1 family per row, or 2 spare seats between each family group

How to make sure there is 4 square metres of space per person

To achieve the 4 square metre 'rule' you would:

- calculate the area of the room
i.e. length of room in metres x width of room in metres = area of room in square metres, and
- divide the area of the room by 4

For example, if you had a room that was 160 square metres in size, you should only allow up to 40 people in the room, to allow each person to have 4 square metres of space.

3. During the service, ensure:

- 3.1. When people arrive, they should wait in a line at least 1.5 metres apart if there is a queue to get in
- 3.2. On entry, all attendees are asked if they have experienced any COVID or flu-like symptoms in the past two weeks. If yes, they should be informed that they will be unable to attend unless cleared by doctors. If OK, then attendee be requested to complete the attendee register (where required)
- 3.3. Limit the use of printed materials. Where possible use projection for worship, prayer and order of service
- 3.4. During the service, announcements should include updates on COVIDSafe practices, including as a minimum:
 - People should practise social distancing at a minimum of 1.5 metres at all times
 - No physical greetings or exchanges such as handshakes or hugs
 - Wash hands and maintain good hygiene practices
 - Sneeze/cough into your elbow
 - Other relevant COVIDSafe practices that apply to the local congregation
- 3.5. Your COVIDSafe Warden is monitoring attendee numbers to ensure maximums are not exceeded
- 3.6. There is a clear post-service plan to monitor and enforce social distancing practices

COVIDSafe Plan For Church Premises (Template)



Some Areas to Consider During Services

When commencing the return to services, it is important to consider the size of your facility and how it will accommodate the permitted number of people. Your auditorium may be adequate to allow the maximum number, but you should ensure that other communal areas (such as foyer or morning tea areas) able to facilitate appropriate social distancing requirements.

Following are some common church activities that you may engage in and some thoughts around how they may be appropriately risk managed.

Tithes and Offerings

- Encourage the collection of tithes and offerings by way of electronic methods
- Promote alternative giving solutions such as Pushpay, Text to Give, PayPal, Direct Deposit
- For cash givers, provide the opportunity to individually deposit their offering in a centrally located offering bucket to avoid offering trays etc being handled by entire congregation

Communion

Participating in corporate communion is an important part of many church services. Whilst there is currently no evidence of transmission of Covid-19 through food, it is still important that good hygiene practises are followed when preparing and handling food:

- Design arrangements for people to receive communion which restrict proximity to each other and the need to touch surfaces
- Consider the use of individual sealed cup/wafer packages available from Christian resource providers. Participants can be issued their sealed communion elements when entering church
- Alternatively, encourage participants to bring their own communion elements with them to the service

Tea and Coffee Provisions

Post service tea and coffee provisions should be carefully managed.

- Service of food and beverages should be carried out by a dedicated host team who have been appropriately trained in safe food handling processes. Communal tea/coffee stations are not recommended
- Patrons should be individually served by the host team
- Use disposable cups, plates and cutlery
- Encourage church members to practice appropriate social distancing protocol whilst queueing for service and whilst fellowshiping. Visual indicators on the floor may assist identifying appropriate distancing procedures
- Ensure your space is adequate for the number of people gathering

Children's Church Programs

Programs involving children should follow the same guidelines in place for religious services.

Permitted number of people gathering in your premises, social distancing guidelines and density regulations set by your State Government should be adhered to.

Other Church Programs

- Youth Group gatherings, home groups, music practice and leadership meetings should adhere to same guidelines set out for church activities (e.g. hand washing, stay home if unwell and maintain 1.5 metres apart where possible)
- For all other church or ministry programs such as community programs or op shops ensure that you follow existing government and health guidelines. Please refer to the SafeWork Australia webpage www.swa.gov.au

COVIDSafe Plan For Church Premises (Template)

4. After the service, ensure:

1. The attendee register is stored in an easy to locate place
2. Post service cleaning is complete
3. The COVIDSafe Plan is monitored, reviewed and updated where necessary

Cleaning Protocols:

- Wear gloves when cleaning and discard after each use
- Thoroughly clean surfaces using detergent and water
- Use a disinfectant only after cleaning with the detergent and water
- Leave disinfectant on the surface for at least 10 minutes before cleaning off or follow product instructions
- If someone infected has been at your venue, follow the national protocols for cleaning

For more information see the Safe Work Australia website:

<https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces/cleaning-prevent-spread-covid-19>

Incident Response and Recovery

If anyone in your church, whether it is staff, volunteer or congregant suspects that someone may have the virus, or has been exposed to it, it is important that they notify the COVIDSafe Warden immediately. They will be responsible for overseeing the Outbreak / Incident Response Plan.

On the following page is the Safe Work Australia information sheet. It is important to understand that where you have staff or volunteers at a location in Australia, it is classified under Health & Safety laws as a workplace.

Therefore, the process for a COVID incident notification is:

1. Notify the COVIDSafe Warden on duty immediately
2. Secure the site as outlined on the Safe Work Australia information sheet process
3. Inform the National or State/Territory COVID-19 hotline and follow the advice of health officials
(refer to swa.gov.au resource at end of this document for telephone numbers)

Contact Tracing

Church members should be encouraged to download the Federal Government COVIDSafe app in the attempt to assist with contact tracing in the event of an infection at your site



https://www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/COVIDSafe-app?fbclid=IwAR3ibbY4NFhLCxa7mhLa78MfkQTNdiz6p9xVeQ005T1mk7W1wevEmMFVCt4#_blank

Maintaining Attendance Records

It is a requirement for organisations and businesses to maintain attendance records of patrons. This will assist Public Health with contact tracing in the event of a positive COVID-19 case in your premises:

- Records can be physical (i.e. secure sign-in book managed by staff) or electronic but as a minimum must include a name and contact information for each patron (e.g. phone number or email)
- Records are not required for patrons who visit the premises for a short period time and have minimal face-to-face interaction. For example, someone making a delivery to the church
- Records must not be used for purposes other than contact tracing (i.e. contact information is not to be used for marketing purposes)

COVIDSafe Plan For Church Premises (Template)



Churches should implement a process consistent with any privacy obligations they have for obtaining and safely keeping these records of patronage for the purposes of assisting with contact tracing if needed.

1. For those organisations who are required to keep records, how long do records need to be kept?

It is recommended that records of attendees be kept for up to 28 days. This allows for two full incubation periods and will assist medical authorities to carry out necessary investigations and identify who may have potentially been exposed.

2. Should records be destroyed after a certain period?

Records should be destroyed after 28 days of the date of the attendance.

Resources

Safework Australia – <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces>

Australian Government Department of Health <https://www.health.gov.au/>

World Health Organisation <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

Resources by State

Victoria <https://www.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-covid-19-restrictions-victoria>

New South Wales <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19>

Queensland <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19>

Northern Territory <https://coronavirus.nt.gov.au/>

Western Australia <https://www.wa.gov.au/government/covid-19-coronavirus>

South Australia <https://www.covid-19.sa.gov.au/>

Tasmania <https://coronavirus.tas.gov.au/>

ACT <https://www.act.gov.au/>

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the assistance of AIRS (Anglican Insurance and Risk Services) in the preparation of this resource.

The content on this resource reflect some of the commercial aspects and potential risks/obligations for both individuals and organisations. The content is given as a guide only and does not represent definitive statements or legal views in any way shape or form.

You are advised to seek your own professional advice on all or any aspects of, or pertaining to, this content and any related matter.

COVIDSafe Plan For Church Premises (Template)

swa.gov.au/coronavirus

updated: 29 April 2020

COVID-19 at the workplace

You are not expected, and should not try, to diagnose people. However, you have a work health and safety duty to minimise the risk of workers and others in the workplace being exposed to COVID-19, so far as reasonably practicable.

If you reasonably suspect someone could have the virus, or has been exposed, this creates a health risk at your workplace, and you will need to follow the steps below.

The person you are concerned about is at the workplace



1. ISOLATE

Prevent the spread. Isolate the person from others and provide a disposable surgical mask, if available, for the person to wear.



2. SEEK ADVICE

Call your state or territory helpline. Follow advice of public health officials.



3. TRANSPORT

Ensure the person has transport to their home or to a medical facility.



4. CLEAN

Clean and disinfect the areas where the person and close contacts have been. Do not use those areas until this process is complete. Use PPE when cleaning.



5. IDENTIFY & INFORM

Consider who the person has had close contact with. If instructed by public health officials, tell close contacts they may have been exposed and follow advice on quarantine requirements.



6. REVIEW

Review risk management controls relating to COVID-19 and review whether work may need to change. Consult workers on WHS issues.

The person you are concerned about was recently at the workplace



1. SEEK ADVICE

Call your state or territory helpline. Follow advice of public health officials.



2. IDENTIFY & INFORM

Identify who at the workplace had close contact with the affected person. If instructed by public health officials, tell close contacts they may have been exposed and follow advice on quarantine requirements.



3. CLEAN

Clean and disinfect the areas where the person and their close contacts have been. Do not use those areas until this process is complete. Use PPE when cleaning.



4. REVIEW

Review risk management controls relating to COVID-19 and review whether work may need to change. Consult workers on WHS issues.

If anything is unclear, see detailed guidance on the Safe Work Australia Website

Remember:

- > There is not an automatic WHS requirement to close down an entire workplace, particularly if the person infected, or suspected to be infected, has only visited parts of the workplace.
- > Workers assisting a potentially infectious person should have appropriate PPE and follow hand hygiene procedures.
- > Consult with workers and allow them to raise concerns.
- > Do you need to notify your [WHS regulator](#)? See our [Incident Notification fact sheet](#).
- > Comply with privacy obligations. See [guidance from the OAIC](#).
- > Follow the advice of health officials at all times.

State and territory health department helplines:

New South Wales

1300 066 055

Queensland

13 432 584

Victoria

1800 675 398

South Australia

1300 232 272

Western Australia

(08) 6373 2222

Tasmania

1800 671 738

Australian Capital Territory

(02) 5124 9213

Northern Territory

(08) 8922 8044



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