

# COVID-19 Safe Plan for Parish Communities

## Important information for returning to normal operations

The safety, health, and wellbeing of our clergy, parishioners and employees continues to be of vital importance as we begin planning for the re-opening of our churches and returning to normal operation of our parish offices. This COVID-19 Safe Plan and the supporting documents will ensure that the parishes and chaplaincies of Archdiocese of Brisbane provide and maintain a safe environment for all.

The following COVID-19 Safe Plan for the Archdiocese purposely reflects a conservative approach acknowledging that there is no 'one plan fits all' given the diversity of our communities.

The COVID-19 Safe Plan for Parish Communities will guide parishes on how various ministries, including sacramental care, will be conducted in this first stage of the easing of social restrictions. We wish to be fully compliant with State and Federal government requirements so that we ensure the protection of elderly and vulnerable people, and work together for the common good of our communities.

### Consistent key messages

- The Archdiocese continues to monitor the public health response to COVID-19 closely and has plans in place to support the safety, health, and wellbeing of clergy, parishioners and employees
- We will continue to follow the advice of public health authorities and comply with legislative requirements
- All work and worship areas must meet the minimum social distancing requirements.
- All members of our community are encouraged to protect themselves and others from infection by practicing good hand and respiratory hygiene
- Clergy, parishioners and parish employees should stay home if they are sick. Parish employees and volunteers will be asked to go home if they are showing cold or flu-like symptoms
- Contact details must be recorded for all attendees at parish gatherings to assist with tracing and rapid response to positive cases of COVID-19

### General Requirements

As the restrictions ease, the requirements of physical distancing, sanitation and hygiene will still apply through the three stages described below. These include:

- No one is to enter a church, parish building or Archdiocesan workplace if feeling sick
- **Every gathering, including Mass and other liturgies, must record contact details of attendees (name, phone, address and time of visit)**
- A gathering is considered an occasion in which people come together, including but not limited to Masses, liturgies, and administrative or social meetings with staff or parishioners. The occupancy of a gathering is specific to the event, not the room or



location and therefore cannot be split over multiple sites to increase occupancy (for example, it would not be allowed to have 10 people in the church and another 10 people in the narthex for the same Mass)

- Social distancing is to be maintained of one person per 4 square metres indoors, 1.5 metres between people.
- The Government's easing of restrictions allows for greater occupancy levels with each phase. These occupancy numbers are allowed only **if the building can comply with the 4 square metres rule and 1.5 metres between people in meeting those numbers**
- Hand sanitizer or hand-washing facilities to be made available in churches, parish offices and gathering spaces

For Mass:

- All Catholics remain dispensed from their Sunday obligation until further notice
- Communion is distributed by the presider alone, who should disinfect his hands before and after distributing
- In the Ordinary Form of the Latin Rite, the Body of Christ should be administered only in the hand and the chalice should be received by the celebrant alone
- The Sign of Peace should be limited to saying "Peace be with you" with a nod or bow; no hand-shaking or hand-holding should occur here or at the Our Father
- Hymn books should not be used
- Collection plates should not be passed from person to person
- Holy water fonts remain empty

## **Prior to Re-Opening**

- Each Parish will need to be assessed to ensure it meets identified COVID-19 Safe requirements. This assessment has been developed into a checklist for use, *SS14 HSCH06 COVID-19 Checklist for Parish Reopening*
- The checklist must be completed by the relevant Parish Priest or delegate and a representative from the WHS or P&B team
- A copy of the checklist is to be provided to WHS, at [whs@bne.catholic.net.au](mailto:whs@bne.catholic.net.au), before any gatherings are resumed

## **Stage 1: updated – 23 May, 2020**

*Each parish to put in place the requirements of the COVID-19 Safe Plan and complete the checklist provided. Churches reopen for private prayer and small Masses up to 10 people.*

**Our Churches:**

- Provided the Checklist for Church Reopen has been completed and submitted, the regular schedule of Masses may resume with a maximum attendance of 10 people at each Mass (including the celebrant), keeping in mind the general requirements, the social distancing of 1.5 metres between people and the four square metre rule as listed above.

- Masses will continue to be live-streamed from the Cathedral on Sundays and weekdays and may continue to be live-streamed from parishes.
- Churches may open for private prayer, for up to 10 people at a time.
  - Visitors must sanitise their hands upon entry and exit.
  - Occupancy of the space will need to be monitored at all times by a designated marshal, who is not over 70 years of age or meets the criteria of a 'high risk' worker.
  - As regulated by the government, the designated marshal will record the name, address, phone number and time of visit for each visitor as a protection to assist with contact tracing if necessary. These details should be securely stored by the parish for 28 days and then destroyed.
  - Cleaning protocols, provided by Work Health and Safety, should be strictly adhered to. It is the responsibility of each parish to provide cleaning supplies.
  - It is understood that not all parishes will have the capacity to maintain ongoing monitoring or hygiene protocols for private prayer at this time.
- Funerals may have a maximum of 20 people in attendance indoors or 30 people outdoors in addition to three people to conduct the funeral.
- Weddings may have a maximum of 10 people, in addition to the couple and celebrant.
- Baptisms may have a maximum of 10 people in attendance.

**Sacramental and Pastoral Care:**

- The Sacrament of Reconciliation may be offered by appointment with the priest, or during specific hours as determined by each parish.
  - In the case that a parish makes confessions available during specific hours, this should coincide with a time that the church is open for private prayer. Attendees would follow the requirements for private prayer – hand sanitization, contact details recorded, physical distancing observed. The penitent only records their presence for private prayer, they do not need to specify if they are there for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This is to protect the privacy of the penitent. The sacrament must take place in a space where the priest and the penitent are at least 1.5 metres apart from each other with contact limited to under 15 minutes.
- Communion to the Sick should be taken by priests alone and in general be restricted to Viaticum to the dying, with the current restrictions and precautions to be observed.
- Visitation of hospitals should be limited to the designated hospital chaplain.
- Preparation for and celebration of First Reconciliation, Confirmation and First Communion should remain on hold.

**The Parish Office:**

- The parish office may re-open if it has been closed.
- Meetings are restricted to four clergy or employees of the parish.
- Meetings involving volunteers or external parties should continue to be held by video/audio.

**Parish Schools**

- Priests should liaise with their School Principal regarding classroom visitation.
- School Masses and liturgies must adhere to the general requirements listed above.



**Stage 2: 12 June, 2020****Subject to advice from State and Federal government**

*Occupancy for Masses and other services is a maximum of 20 people.*

**Our Churches:**

- The maximum attendance may increase to 20 people at each Mass (including the celebrant), and with the general requirements, the social distancing requirements of 1.5 metres between people, and the four square metre rule as listed above.
- Parishes will need processes in place (eg an online booking system) to ensure that the numbers at each Mass do not exceed 20, and that the opportunity to attend Mass is given to as many different parishioners as possible during this stage.
- Funerals may be conducted with a maximum attendance of 50 people.
- Baptisms and weddings may be conducted with a maximum attendance of 20 people.
- Churches, which are in a position to do so, are allowed to open for private prayer for up to 20 people at one time during specific hours as determined by each parish, with the requirements as per Stage 1 above.

**Sacramental and Pastoral Care:**

- The Sacrament of Reconciliation may be offered by appointment with the priest or during specific hours as determined by each parish. In the case that a parish makes the sacrament available to the public during specific hours, the sacrament must take place in a space where the priest and the penitent are at least 1.5 metres apart. The contact should be limited to under 15 minutes. If others are waiting outside they must practice social distancing.
- Communion to the Sick may be taken by priests and designated Extraordinary Ministers adhering to physical distancing requirements, hand hygiene etc.
- Visitation of hospitals may include parish volunteers, subject to hospital guidelines.
- Preparation for and celebration of First Penance, Confirmation and First Communion should remain on hold.
- Group activities such as prayer or play groups may recommence with up to 20 attendees adhering to the general requirements above.

**The Parish Office:**

- All parish offices operating as normal.
- Meetings are restricted to 10 clergy or employees of the parish, this may include employees from different parishes or archdiocesan offices. Social distancing requirements should be followed.
- Meetings involving volunteers or external parties should to be limited to four parties or to be continue to be held by video/audio.

**Parish Schools:**

- Priests should liaise with their Parish School Principal regarding classroom visitation.



- School Masses and liturgies must adhere to the above protocols.

### **Stage 3 – 10 July**

#### **Subject to advice from State and Federal government**

*Occupancy for Masses and other services increases to a maximum of 100 people.*

#### **Our Churches:**

- The limit on the number of attendees at a celebration of Mass increases to a maximum of 100 people. The general requirements, social distancing of 1.5 metres and the 4 square metre rule will apply as addressed above. Some churches may not have the space to accommodate 100 people when seating people in alternate pews and keeping 1.5m apart, and will have to restrict the number of attendees accordingly.
- Baptisms, weddings and funerals may be conducted with a maximum attendance of up to 100 people with the general requirements listed above.
- Churches may remain open for private prayer with social distancing and hygiene restrictions. We will advise on other requirements closer to this time.
- Advice regarding morning teas after mass or similar gatherings will be provided closer to the time.

#### **Sacramental and Pastoral Care:**

- The Sacrament of Reconciliation may be offered during specific hours as determined by each parish with the general requirements as above. In the case that a parish makes the sacrament available to the public during specific hours, the sacrament must take place in a space where the priest and the penitent are at least 1.5 metres apart from each other. The contact should be limited to under 15 minutes. If others are waiting outside they must practice social distancing.
- Communion to the Sick may be taken by priests and designated Extraordinary Ministers adhering to physical distancing requirements, hand hygiene etc.
- Visitation of hospitals may include parish volunteers, subject to hospital guidelines.
- Preparation for and celebration of First Reconciliation, Confirmation and First Communion may resume, adhering to the limits of 100 attendees at any gathering with the general requirements listed above.
- Group activities such as prayer or play groups with up to 100 attendees with the general requirements listed above.

#### **The Parish Office:**

- All parish offices will operate as normal while adhering to general requirements, the social distancing requirements of 1.5 metres between people, and the four square metre rule as listed above.
- No restrictions remain on meetings other than the maximum of 100 attendees with the general requirements listed above.

**Parish Schools:**

- Priests should liaise with their Parish School Principal regarding classroom visitation.
- School Masses and liturgies must adhere to the general requirements listed above.

**High-Risk Workers**

- All high-risk workers must be identified and assessed in accordance with the *SS19 PCPR23 COVID-19 Management of Vulnerable Workers Procedure*.
- The checklist must be completed for each individual worker by their Parish Priest and a copy provided to People and Culture

**Meetings and Training**

- Face to face meetings and gatherings are to be limited as per the staged restrictions.
- Meeting participants must adhere to social distancing requirements.
- All meeting room must have clearly displayed maximum occupancies.

**COVID-19 Positive Case Management**

- In the event a member of the community is diagnosed as positive for COVID-19 the processes outlined in *SS14 HSPR13 COVID-19 Positive Case Procedure* should be followed
- This process includes an easy checklist to follow. This checklist, based upon the risk of further transmission, outlines the requirements that must be undertaken.
- This completed checklist must be provided to WHS.

**Cleaning Requirements**

- *COVID-19 Church Cleaning Guidelines* have been developed to ensure we keep our parish environments as safe as possible.
- The identification of high touch surfaces may be different between environments in the parish, and we encourage consultation with parish employees and volunteers to help facilitate their identification.
- The *COVID-19 Church Cleaning Guidelines* must be provided to all cleaners and a signed copy provided to P&C.

**Links to Required Checklists**

- [COVID-19 Checklist for Church Reopening](#)
- [COVID-19 Checklist for Vulnerable and High-Risk Workers](#)
- [COVID-19 Positive Case Checklist](#)
- [COVID-19 Church Cleaning Guideline](#)