

## FAQs for Parishes:

### Faith-based activities under the Industry Plan for Places of Worship

**Q. If a priest, volunteer, or employee has one or more of the following symptoms— a fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, runny nose, fatigue and/or loss of smell or taste, what should they do?** If experiencing any of these symptoms, no matter how mild or severe, they should contact their doctor by phone immediately to get tested for COVID-19.

**Q. What happens once a person gets tested?** The person must self-isolate after being tested, going straight home without making any stops. Do not return to the workplace/Parish while awaiting results

**Q. What happens if their test result is positive?** If the result is positive, they will receive a call from a public health unit which will tell them what to do next. They will need to remain in self-isolation until they recover.

**Q. What happens if their test result is negative?** If the result is negative, the doctor or the clinic that tested them will let them know. *The person should stay home until their symptoms have resolved.* This will prevent the spread of colds and flu in the community and help others avoid the inconvenience of testing and isolation.

In the case that a person has been in contact with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19, or been interstate, overseas or disembarked from a cruise ship in the past 14 days then they must stay in self-quarantine for 14 days even if the COVID-19 test result is negative.

**Q. What gatherings are allowed under the Industry Plan?** Places of Worship refers to those places where people gather to conduct religious ceremonies or other faith-based activities. This includes Masses, Baptisms, Confirmations, First Communion, youth ministry gatherings, Alpha gatherings, music rehearsals and other faith-based events or programs.

**Q: Does the maximum number of people at a gathering include the Priest?** Yes, the Priest, musicians, the camera operator (if livestreaming) and anyone else in attendance are included in the maximum occupancy number.

**Q: How many people can attend a Mass or faith-based activity?** A maximum of 1 person per 4 square metres is permitted unless a venue is less than 200 metres, then the one person per 2 square metres applies up to a maximum of 50 people. People from the same household are not required to distance from each other.

**Q. Is there still a maximum of 100 attendees for Mass or activities?** No, only funerals and weddings have a maximum number of 100 attendees. All other worship or faith-based activities are based on the number determined by the calculations above. Therefore, some larger spaces, such as the Cathedral, will be able to accommodate more than 100 attendees.

**Q. Can the Parish Priest celebrate weekday Masses with the maximum number of people?** All Masses, weekday or weekend may now be celebrated with a maximum number of people in attendance.

**Q. Do we need to provide hand washing facilities?** Handwashing facilities should be provided with clear running water, liquid soap, and paper towels. If handwashing facilities are not available, provide appropriate hand sanitiser.

Hand sanitiser should be available at the entry and within the church for attendees and staff to apply it themselves.

**Q. Can we still pass the plate from person to person for the collection?** At this time collection plates cannot be passed from person to person. Donations must be left in a dedicated contact-free area such as a leave-in collection where parishioners may drop their gift in the offertory basket upon leaving the church.

**Q. How should priests distribute Holy Communion in line with social distancing guidelines?** The priest should instruct people to distance themselves as they process to altar. Avoid direct physical contact where possible and limit contact to hands. The priest should cleanse his hands with hand sanitiser before and after distributing communion.

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.

**Q. Is singing permitted?** Yes, singing is permitted with the same distancing guidelines applying to all attendees.

**Q. Can hymn books be used?** At this time hymn books should not be available for parishioners to use. However, a possible solution is to provide individual hymn books to parishioners and ask that they take them home each week which limits contact from multiple people.

**Q: What are the rules for funerals and weddings?** Funerals and weddings can occur with a maximum of 100 people depending on the size of the venue (no more than one person per 2 square metres up to 50 people if the space is 200 metres or less; no more than one person per four square metres for spaces larger than 200 square metres). Social distancing of 1.5 metres should be followed where possible. The 100 person limit includes the persons conducting the service. Contact details must be taken. Queensland Health protocols for funerals can be found [here](#).

**Q: Can the same funeral have mourners inside and out to increase that number?** No, you cannot combine the numbers, the occupancy is per gathering so you cannot split the attendees inside and outside for the same funeral.

**Q: Are parishioners over 70 welcome to attend Mass, confession or private prayer?** Public health authorities continue to advise people over 70 to remain at home during this time. The parish's duty of care is to make the church environment as safe as possible. It is up to the individual as to whether they choose to follow public health advice and attend worship services or not. They are advised to stay home if they are sick.

**Q: What is the role of the 'marshal'?** In the case of private prayer at Church, the marshal will:

1. Welcome visitors and remind them of social distancing and hygiene procedures.
2. Ensure visitors stay 1.5 metres away from other visitors when waiting outside, inside and on leaving the church (using pre-placed markers where this is possible).
3. Collect visitors' contact details (full name, email address, (residential address if email not available) phone number, date and time of visit). These records must be stored securely and retained for at least 56 days.

In the case of Mass, the marshal should have the list of pre-booked parishioners and check off their name as they arrive.

**Q. Can a person over 70 serve as a volunteer marshal or money counter?**

At this time, considering the exposure to other parishioners, it is highly recommended that only volunteers under the age of 70, who are in good health, are asked to serve in the role of marshal or money counter.

For those parishes which are unable to recruit volunteers who meet these criteria then additional control conditions can be arranged to provide an individual over 70 years of age to serve as marshal. In this case, **all** of the following conditions would need to be met:

- the individual has no chronic medical conditions or a compromised immune system
- the individual agrees to wear a mask, provided by the parish, at all times while completing marshal duties
- the individual maintains a distance of 1.5 metres from others at all times
- a Perspex screen is provided by the parish and placed in front of the volunteer
- the [Checklist for Vulnerable and High Risk Workers](#) should be completed and signed

**Q. When can we re-open for morning tea?** At this stage, you can facilitate refreshments (food, tea and coffee) as long as you comply with the Food Services Industry Plan found [here](#) and ensure there is no self-service or buffet style food and that participants are seated

**Q. Do money counters need gloves and masks when counting?** Money counters are required to wear gloves and remain 1.5 metres apart from each other. Masks are not required.

**Q. When can we start renting out the parish hall again?** You can now resume hiring out your parish hall to external groups. However, these groups must comply with an Industry Plan for their operations and provide a copy of that plan to the parish. The WHS team will review this plan with the parish before the group can re-commence their use of the hall.

**Q. When can we re-open the Parish Op Shop or similar?** Parish Op Shops and other non-worship related activities similar activities fall under a different Industry Plan appropriate for that activity. Industry Plans can be found [here](#).

**Q. Do the *COVID-19 Church Cleaning Guidelines* need to be signed by contractors or volunteers?** Any person completing cleaning in the parish, whether they are contractors, parish staff or volunteers need to sign the *COVID-19 Church Cleaning Guidelines*.

**Q. What is the requirement for youth groups and children's liturgies?** The same density requirements apply depending on the venue size. Children from the same household are not required to physically distance.

**Q. Are there penalties if we don't comply?** Yes. Noncompliance can result in an on-the-spot fine of \$1,334 for individuals and \$6,670 for the Parish under the Public Health Act 2005.

**Q: Who should I contact if I have questions?** The Work Health and Safety team is responsible for helping you to assess the way the phases and protocols can be implemented in your parish and implementing the COVID-19 Safe Plan in your parish. This includes providing advice on the number of people who can be accommodated in your Church in line with the square metre rule and social distancing requirements. For advice and assistance contact [whs@bne.catholic.net.au](mailto:whs@bne.catholic.net.au).