



Communique

18 March 2020

Coronavirus and our Churches' Response

Earlier this morning, Prime Minister Morrison announced further measures in response to the COVID 19 pandemic. Under these new measures, the Government has imposed a ban of indoor non-essential gatherings of more than 100 people.

All religious gatherings are required to comply with these new measures announced today. The pre-existing ban restriction of mass outdoor gatherings to 500 people also remains in place.

The situation is changing daily, with new measures being introduced by the Government to try and slow the spread of COVID 19, and COCWA and our Churches are working to support these measures.

How should your Church respond?

There are a number of ways in which your Church should respond including:

Implement and/or escalate your COVID 19 Response Plan

A number of our Churches have already established and implemented a COVID 19 Response Plan. If you have yet to develop a response plan, your Church needs to put this in place immediately. Key things to consider include:

- Appoint a person or team who will be responsible for coordinating and implementing your Church's response plan;
- Review your Church's activities to determine the services that will be limited or temporarily discontinued during the COVID 19 outbreak;
- Communication strategies to inform your Church members about the actions that the Church is taking;
- Ensure that your Church is able to maintain a flexible and responsive approach to the evolving situation.

With today's announcement, your Church will need to determine if services will be held for the upcoming weekend and subsequent Sunday's. Specifically consider:

- The ban of indoor non-essential gatherings of more than 100 people;
- The number of people who attend your regular services;
- Your Church member's risk profile and age demographics; and

- Alternative ways to continue to support your Members (eg: move to online services, utilise small groups and/or pastoral groups);

Communicate the plan with your Church members

Use this process to reassure your Church of the steps that the leadership team are taking and reassure members that you are staying informed and thinking ahead. You will need to have strong and continual communication with your Church members, using multiple channels where available.

Remind Church members of the importance of personal hygiene in preventing the spread of disease including:

- Ensure you self-quarantine for 14 days after returning to Australia from international travel or any cruises – this means not attending any of the Church’s activities during this time;
- Clean hands regularly with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rubs;
- Cover the nose and mouth with a tissue or bent elbow when coughing or sneezing;
- Avoid touching your face, nose and mouth. And avoid shaking hands;
- Stay home if you are unwell and avoid contact with anyone who is unwell – try to stay 1.5m away from anyone coughing or sneezing;
- Practicing social isolation where appropriate or directed

Closely monitor the Government and Department of Health’s directives and recommendations and implement these requirements.

As the situation is changing on a daily basis, your Church’s COVID 19 response team will need to ensure that they are reviewing and responding to the most current and official Government issued information available. Further information is available at:

- Department of Health (Commonwealth)

<https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert>

- WA Health, Government of Western Australia

<https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/>

COCWA suggests that you follow and keep up to date with the Government issued information and resources.

If you have developed any resources that are suitable to share with the wider Church of Christ family, we would very much appreciate hearing from you. There is a great opportunity to collaborate and share our knowledge during this time. Please email these to admin@cocwa.com.au

Please continue to pray for our communities, especially the most vulnerable, our healthcare workers and for our leaders.

If you have any queries or require further advice, please contact COCWA at admin@cocwa.com.au or 9471 8500.

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