

## Safe Ministry

*Safe People, Safe Places, Safe Programs*

### Health & Hygiene during COVID-19 - Church Operations

26th May 2020

#### **Preamble**

The Anglican Church Central Queensland (ACCQ) has a duty of care to parishioners, staff and the broader community to ensure that all operations of our church are places where people can safely enter and leave buildings, as well as safely participate in programs and activities. These guidelines are based on the info supplied by Government agencies and health authorities at the time of writing

Government health advice states that “COVID-19 is a respiratory illness caused by a new virus. Symptoms range from a mild cough to pneumonia. Some people recover easily, others may get very sick very quickly. There is evidence that it spreads from person to person. Good hygiene can prevent infection.”

Whilst the impact of COVID-19 on individuals amongst the regular parishioners, and Clergy of (ACCQ) is certainly “Major” and potentially “Extreme”, the likelihood of virus transfer is considered at the date of writing as “Rare - Medium” giving the overall risk rating of Church operations as “Possible - Likely”. With recommended mitigation strategies the risk rating can be reduced to “medium” indicating that Churches can, under strict Hygiene protocols, resume activity in line with the Government road-map to easing restriction . This risk rating is based on Government advice that there are, at the time of writing, only one case of COVID-19 currently known in the ACCQ Diocese boundaries. It must be noted that should the number of active cases in the region increase, the risk rating would immediately increase.

#### **Safe People**

As at any other time, having trained and endorsed clergy and volunteers in accordance with the Safe Ministry protocols of the Diocese<sup>1</sup> is essential in the operations of ACCQ Churches. Churches are considered places of refuge, safety and provision for many vulnerable people and groups with our communities, therefore everyone who works in this space, in either a paid or voluntary capacity, is seen as a representative of the church. These positions, rightly or wrongly, are seen as the face of the church, and come with perceived authority. It is therefore vital that ACCQ Clergy and volunteers are appropriately trained and endorsed.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- Current Blue Card
- Current Safe Ministry Endorsed
- Signed Faithfulness in Service
- Signed training matrix for COVID-Safe Measures

Additional elements may be required depending on the local requirements.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://anglicanchurchcq.org.au/safeMinistry.html>

**ACCQ Mitigation strategy 1:** to reduce the “Possible consequence” level of the virus been contracted by staff and volunteers, all ACCQ Churches are to follow Government advice as to who is suitable to fulfil paid activity and volunteer church rosters, or to be working in such environments. <sup>2</sup>“For many people COVID-19 causes a relatively mild illness. However, it can make some people very ill and, more rarely, the disease can be fatal. These people include:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over 50 years of age
- People 70 years and over
- People 65 years or over with chronic health conditions
- People with compromised immune systems.”

ACCQ Staff and Volunteers who fall into any of these identified categories must not be utilised in services. These restrictions will stay in place until the community risk levels are changed or lowered by the Australian Government.

**ACCQ Mitigation strategy 2:** to reduce the “likelihood” level of the virus being contracted or spread by staff and volunteers all service leaders / assistants rostered for each service must make a self declaration of fitness to serve; this declaration is to be kept with service records for the day. Declarations must include that:

- They have checked their temperature and are free from fever
- They are not currently suffering from any cold or flu symptoms
- That they have not in the last 14 days been knowingly exposed to the COVID-19 virus
- That they have not travelled outside their region in the last 14 days

Individual ACCQ churches may choose to temperature check all volunteers and parishioners before entering the main worship area. If this option is selected:

- Contactless thermometers are to be used
- Calibration of equipment is to be traceable to NATA standards and stored according to instructions.
- Any volunteers or staff using the equipment are to be trained in the use and storage of equipment and this training added to their training matrix.

### **Safe Places**

In light of the heightened risks associated with COVID-19 we need to take extra precautions to ensure that ACCQ Churches are safe places for parishioners, visitors, volunteers and staff.

COVID-19 is spread from person to person most likely through:

- close contact with an infectious person
- contact with droplets from an infected person’s cough or sneeze; or
- touching objects or surfaces (like door knobs or tables) contaminated by cough or sneeze droplets from a person with COVID-19 infection, and then touching your mouth or face.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-frequently-asked-questions>

All ACCQ Churches need to take extra precautions to provide a safe and hygienic environment for everyone who attend or utilise our buildings for worship, private prayer, other church related activity, or private hire . It is the role and responsibility of local wardens and parish council to provide appropriate access to facilities, while doing everything we can to keep everyone who uses our facilities safe and healthy.

**ACCQ Mitigation strategy 3:** Communal Bibles, Prayer Books and Hymn Books are to be removed from worship areas. Where the use of Bible/Prayer Book/Hymn Book is an essential part of worship and can not be replaced through electronic means then a system of BYO Bible/Prayer Book/Hymn Book should be put in place until further notice (Loan arrangements can be made where a person has a “church kit” provided for the duration of the restriction).

**ACCQ Mitigation strategy 4:** All areas of worship, preparation and communal use shall be cleaned thoroughly and surfaces disinfected

- Surface cleaning of all “high touch areas” such as door knobs/handles, lectern, microphone etc throughout the service. Local Wardens and Incumbents are make arrangements appropriate to their local context.
- Parishioners are to remain in the same seat throughout the service.
- Thorough deep cleaning of the worship space must be carried at the end of the day and between each service including all contact surfaces, carpets and chairs/ pews, sound desk/production desk, any ceremonial communion items, vestry, entrance area, extra chapel spaces and any communal spaces utilised.
- Appropriate hand washing facilities shall be made available to staff and volunteers (and parishioners on request).
- Hand sanitiser shall be made available at the entrance of the church and in strategic places throughout the church to enable easy access to staff, volunteers and parishioners
- Toilet and hand washing areas are to be thoroughly cleaned after each use.

**ACCQ Mitigation strategy 5:** All rubbish bins are to be lined with a manufactured bin liner to avoid inadvertent contact with contaminated rubbish. Bins are to be emptied and liners replaced at the end of each service, at the end of the day, or as necessary throughout the day.

**ACCQ Mitigation strategy 6:** Provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): Local Wardens are to ensure an adequate supply of PPE, cleaning products and hand sanitiser for each day of operation.

**ACCQ Mitigation strategy 7:** Local Wardens are to ensure appropriate chemical storage provided, Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) stored within reach. Cleaning staff/ volunteers trained in appropriate use and storage of chemicals as well as use of PPE and such training is to be recorded on their training matrix.

**ACCQ Mitigation strategy 8:** Local Wardens and Incumbents are to ensure provision of local work instructions and training to ensure the correct implementation of all Safe Ministry protocols & COVID-19 Mitigation strategies.

**ACCQ Mitigation strategy 9:** All staff and volunteers are to be trained in implementing COVID-19 protocols

- Hand washing <sup>3</sup>
- Use of provided PPE <sup>4</sup>
- Safe use and storage of provided cleaning products in accordance with manufactures safety data sheets (or label safety instructions) as appropriate.

**ACCQ Mitigation strategy 10:** Local Wardens and Incumbents are to calculate and communicate maximum person limits for each usable area based on Government social distancing guidelines of 4sqm per person. Maximum numbers are inclusive of clergy and lay leaders on roster for any given service. Maximum capacity is to be shifted in line with any Government recommendations<sup>5</sup>:

- **15 May - 11 June:** 10 Person Maximum capacity regardless of and limited by square metre calculation (Funerals max 20 indoors or 30 outdoors)
- **12 June - 9 July :** 20 Person Maximum capacity regardless of **and limited by square meter calculation**(Funerals max 50, Weddings Max 20)
- **10 July - until further notice:** 100 Person Maximum capacity **limited to square meter calculation.** (Funerals & Weddings max 100)

Maximum person limits shall be displayed prominently at the entrance to church buildings and any additional identified areas of communal gathering. All rostered welcomers / sides people are to be trained how to provide alternate instructions to those who arrive at the building when spaces are full. Any training shall be entered in that persons training matrix.

### **Safe programs**

To create a safe gathering and worship experience for all parishioners, staff and volunteers some temporary operational changes are required; these include strict physical distancing regulations, attendance recording, communion protocols, service and special service practices.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.hha.org.au/local-implementation/promotional-materials/posters>

<sup>4</sup> <https://professionals.site.apic.org/protect-your-patients/using-ppe-the-right-way/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.covid19.qld.gov.au/government-actions/roadmap-to-easing-queenslands-restrictions>

**ACCQ Mitigation strategy 11:** COVID-19 is spread through person to person contact. It is vitally important that staff, volunteers, local parishioners and visitors are made aware that they should not attend a church service or activity if they:

- Are suffering from any cold or flu symptoms
- They have been exposed to the COVID-19 virus in the last 14 days
- They have travelled outside their region in the last 14 days

**ACCQ Mitigation strategy 12:** Managing person limits: Person limits are determined in line with strategy 10 above.

- Local Wardens and Incumbents shall have a local plan for maintaining strict person limits. This plan is to be well communicated with local parishioners and posted at or near the entrance of the church / worship space/ communal area. These may include but are not limited to invitation to closed services or providing overflow with streaming facilities in a separate managed location.
- Attendance records and contact tracing information shall be maintained for all persons in attendance at every service/activity.
- Government advice for those more susceptible to known complications of COVID-19 have not changed significantly<sup>6</sup>, as such considerations should be given at the local level as to what extra precautions should be taken to protect those most at risk. These people include:
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over 50 years of age
  - People 70 years and over
  - People 65 years or over with chronic health conditions
  - People with compromised immune systems.”
- Additional considerations may include, but are not limited to:
  - Worship services held specifically for people in these categories and attended by invitation.
  - Having worship services with lower than capped numbers and increased social distance
  - Administering communion and other sacraments for these individuals before other parishioners.
- The use of the Government COVIDSafe App should be encouraged amongst staff, volunteers and parishioners.

**ACCQ Mitigation strategy 13:** Maintaining appropriate social distance. Government recommendations are that people remain a minimum of 1.5m apart at all times. Local strategies must be employed to suit the local context of each ACCQ church, this may include but is not limited to:

- Marking seating spots on pews and blocking some pews from use, or removing some pews or chairs from use.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/advice-for-people-at-risk-of-coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-older-people>

- Marking spots on the floor with fluorescent tape 1.5m distanced throughout the church in high traffic areas.
- Changing flow in high traffic zones to “one way” in order to avoid close passing.

**ACCQ Mitigation strategy 14:** Greeting of the Peace. COVID-19 is spread through person to person contact. As such “Greeting of the Peace” shall be limited to verbal greetings only whilst remaining in designated seat or omitted from services all together until further notice.

**ACCQ Mitigation strategy 15:** Communal Singing. COVID-19 is a virus which can spread through air borne particle droplets<sup>7</sup>. Communal singing has been the cause of at least two large clusters of COVID-19 around the world. To reduce the likelihood of transmission of the virus through communal singing

- Government advice regarding strict social distancing measures and person limits must be followed.
- Good ventilation must be created through windows and doors being open where possible.
- Air-conditioning units should not be utilised.

**ACCQ Mitigation strategy 16:** Administering Communion. Communion is a beautiful and meaningful part of Anglican liturgy and worship. COVID-19 is a virus which can be spread through person to person contact or handling contaminated items. To reduce the likelihood of transmission:

- Good “Barrier Hygiene” protocols need to be practiced, these include but are not limited to those preparing communion using washed hands and/or hand sanitiser, gloved hands, and being “bare below the elbow”.
- Hand sanitiser is to be made available for all parishioners prior to and after receiving communion.
- Wafers to be handled and administered utilising disposable gloves. A non contact method of delivering wafers must be achieved to prevent cross infection via gloves.
- Communion wine/juice to be served in individual cups only. Common cup may be used symbolically only.
- Local measures are to be put in place to reduce the number of people who administer communion in any service, for example a collection point for filled cups rather than being handed directly by another person. Local arrangements must also be made for the disposal of cups, gloves etc once used. All new measures shall be communicated clearly to all parishioners.
- Consideration needs to be given to maintaining appropriate social distance throughout the administration of communion.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-coronavirus-spreads-through-the-air-what-we-know-so-far1/>

**ACCQ Mitigation strategy 17:** Financial collections. To reduce the likelihood of infection vial handling communal items or money collection practices will need to be modified in most cases.

- Local Wardens and Incumbents are encouraged to provide for contactless or electronic giving where possible.
- Local practice to be changed to prevent handing plate from person to person. Changes may include but are not limited to having a box or bucket near the entrance of the church where people can place their church giving.
- Where cash or offering plates must be handled, appropriate PPE is to be provided including disposable gloves and hand sanitiser. Volunteers and Staff are to be trained in the appropriate use of PPE.

**ACCQ Mitigation strategy 18:** Sunday School/kids church. To reduce the likelihood of infection person to person contact is to be avoided and appropriate social distancing maintained. Communal sharing of resources must be minimised or eliminated if possible. “Per child packs” of set resources are an ideal way to reduce the risk of spread through contaminated shared resources.

- All volunteers must be trained in managing the COVIDSafe strategies and any training must be entered in that persons training matrix.
- Where primary aged children are involved in Sunday school / Kids Church COVIDSafe requirements should be explained to parents in advance of the service commencing.
- Where very young children are involved (pre-school/creche) per child packs are to be provided to the family and children to stay with their care(s) throughout the service.

**ACCQ Mitigation strategy 19:** Baptism. By nature baptism require some person to person contact. To reduce the likelihood of infection is essential that baptism candidates (or their parent/guardian) and their sponsors make a self declaration of fitness to attend this declaration is to be kept with service records for the day. Declarations must include that:

- They have checked their temperature and are free from fever
- They are not currently suffering from any cold or flu symptoms
- That they have not in the last 14 days been knowingly exposed to the COVID-19 virus
- That they have not travelled outside their region in the last 14 days

In the case of infant baptism children are to be held by the parents.

In the case of multiple baptisms water should be changed between candidates.

Disposable gloves to be used by priest during baptism and anointing. Implements to be sterilised in boiling water before and after use. Barrier Hygiene protocols are to be put in place including hand sanitiser, gloved hands, “bare below the elbow”.



**ACCQ Mitigation strategy 20:** Communal use Holy water. Communal use Holy water is not to be made available at the entrance to church buildings or throughout the church building until further notice. Clear signage and instruction is to be provided where this practice is currently in place.

**ACCQ Mitigation strategy 21:** Gathering for fellowship after a service is part of church community. With it however comes increased risk of viral spread through contact with food and surfaces. To reduce the likelihood of infection :

- Strict person limits and social distancing requirements remain in place.
- Use of disposable cups, plates and utensils is preferred. Where non-disposable items are used they must be washed in a dishwasher at 60 degrees celsius.
- One or two people are to serve food and make beverages. Hands are to be washed and gloves used. Tongs are to be used to handle food.
- Bins are to be made available for people to dispose of own rubbish. Dishwashers are to be stacked and unstacked with gloved hands.
- All surfaces are to be disinfected after use.

Please note that it is preferable that washing dishes by hand is not undertaken. Where this must be undertaken, water must be at a minimum of 60degrees celsius throughout the dishwashing process. Items are to be left to drain and not dried with a cloth tea towel. All cups, spoons etc to be washed in accordance with Government advice for food standards.<sup>8</sup>

**ACCQ Mitigation strategy 22:** Communal toilets. Toilets not to be open at this stage. A key for emergency use should be held with the church welcomer and/or a Warden. The closure of toilets and the location of the key should be well communicated to all parishioners and visitors. Toilets, basins and surfaces should be cleaned after each use.

**ACCQ Mitigation strategy 23:** Use and storage of cleaning products. Hygiene and cleaning are essential elements of the fight against COVID-19. Local Wardens and Incumbents are to work together the ensure the provision and safe storage of appropriate cleaning products. Appropriate chemical storage is to be provided for these products along with usage and MSDS's should be stored within reach. Cleaning staff/volunteers must be trained in appropriate use of cleaning products as well as use of PPE.

- All rubbish bins are to be lined with a manufactured bin liner to avoid inadvertent contact with contaminated rubbish. Bins are to be emptied and liners replaced at the end of the day, or as necessary throughout the day.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.foodstandards.gov.au/publications/Documents/Safe%20Food%20Australia/Appendix%206%20-%20Cleaning%20and%20sanitising%20surfaces%20and%20utensils.pdf>  
COVID-19 Safe Ministry Guidelines DC Approved 26/05/2020



**ACCQ Mitigation strategy 24: Hall Hire arrangements:** Church halls are regularly used for non-church related activities and meetings. Each hall hire agreement shall be reviewed in line with the activity being conducted and the health advice for that industry. Risk assessments and/or mitigation strategies are to be submitted for file, and the hiring organisation/individual is to collect contact tracing information for all who attend their service/activity. Hire organisations are to provide own PPE. Local arrangements are to be made for deep cleaning of the area after each use.

## Definitions & Appendices

### Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

PPE includes but is not limited to: Disposable gloves, masks as required, chemical or cleaning gloves as required, Hand wash stations & Hand Sanitiser

### Deep cleaning

Deep cleaning isn't like your casual sweeping of floors or wiping your countertop with used rags. Deep cleaning means:

- Clean and disinfect all hard surfaces & bench tops including lifting and moving all objects on each surface
- Clean and disinfect all soft surfaces
- Clean and disinfect any electronic equipment
- Clean and disinfect door handles, light switches and fan switches
- Clean and disinfect ceiling fans (where safe to do so)
- Clean any ledges and picture frames
- Clean and disinfect sinks, taps and faucets
- Mop hard surface floors
- Vacuum all carpet areas including under all pews chairs and other furniture (steam cleaning is not practical for every clean)

### Bare Below the Elbow

- No Sleeves
- No Wrist Watch
- No Stoned Rings
- No Bracelets, straps or bands
- No False nails/varnish
- No Neckties or Lanyards



### Appendix 1: Summary Table

Supplied for quick reference

### Appendix 2: Training matrix

Example attached.

Please ensure that the parish name is recorded on this document

Please ensure that each person signs and dates the training matrix.

Please use as many sheets as are required to provide for all required training including any local implementation.

### Appendix 3: Hand Washing Chart