

COVID-19 VICTORIA

FAQS

METRO MELBOURNE AND REGIONAL VICTORIA | APRIL 28, 2022



As of 11:59pm Friday April 22, most Coronavirus restrictions in Victoria were eased. However, the requirements for venues to maintain a COVID-safe plan and for workers in most sectors to be either double- or triple-vaccinated still apply.

- **Masks** are only required to be worn in limited high risk settings including:
 - Visiting a hospital or care facility, in any healthcare setting including allied health
 - Publicly accessible areas of an airport, on public transport, in taxis or rideshare vehicles, in tourism vehicles and on commercial flights
 - Working in high risk settings – healthcare, aged care, justice settings
 - After being tested for COVID-19 whilst awaiting results
 - If the person has COVID-19 or is a household contact whenever leaving the house in line with quarantine, isolation or testing requirements.
- **QR Code Check-in** is no longer required at any venue in Victoria. Venues are no longer required to maintain attendance records in any form.
- **Close contacts, isolation and quarantine:**
 - If you test positive for COVID-19 you are required to self-quarantine for seven days from the day you took your test.
 - Household contacts are exempt from self-quarantine, provided they:
 - wear a mask indoors if aged 8 and above,
 - avoid hospitals and care facilities, and
 - receive a negative rapid test on five of the seven days after exposure.
 - You are exempt from testing or quarantine for 12 weeks after you've had COVID-19.
- **Religious gatherings (including weddings and funerals)** The only requirements are that all venues maintain COVID-safe plans, and the vaccination requirements for religious workers.
- **Work and Vaccination requirements:**
 - All work places must have a COVID-safe plan in place.
 - Unless they have a valid exemption, workers, both paid and volunteer, in most work sectors must be at least double-vaccinated to be able to work outside their residence. This list includes:
 - Care facility workers,
 - Social and Community workers,
 - Funeral workers and Marriage celebrants,
 - Most Religious workers (see page **2** for details)
 - A full list of workers who require at least two or three vaccination doses can be found at <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/worker-vaccination-requirements>
- **Cleaning** – Workplaces and other venues exposed to a positive COVID-19 case do not have to undertake any form of deep cleaning.
- **Pubs/Restaurants/Cafes/Entertainment Venues** are all open with no restrictions or check-in requirements. Vaccination requirements only apply to staff. Face masks are no longer required to be worn.
- **Retail Goods and Services** are open with no restrictions. Staff must be at least double-vaccinated but are no longer required to wear masks.
- **Community Facilities** may open without restriction, provided they maintain a COVID-safe plan.
- **Hospital Visitors** must wear a face mask and follow the rules and policies set by each hospital.
- **Aged Care Visitors**
 - Residents at care facilities may have up to five visitors per day, providing the resident is able to show a negative rapid antigen test result.
 - If the facility does not have rapid antigen tests, the resident may have up to two visitors per day.
 - The government recommendation is that all residents and visitors have three vaccination doses.
- **Childcare, Early Learning and Schools** – open. The pandemic orders require all education staff to receive a third dose of the COVID-9 vaccine in order to be onsite in an education setting. This also applies to all out-of-school and/or after-school care settings.
- **Adult and Higher Education**
 - All staff and students must have received at least two doses of COVID vaccination.

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THESE COVID FAQs are prepared with great care, based on the best available advice at the time they are written. We try to provide guidance as soon as possible to give all councils of the church time to act in accordance with Covid-safe requirements. However whenever restrictions change, the detail is increasingly either absent from government information or is updated after these FAQs are published. Where this is the case, we deliberately err on the side of caution.

For further information visit: <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au>. Should you have any further questions please email Synod's Crisis Management Team.

MULTI-LINGUAL RESOURCES

Where can I find the current government guidelines in other languages?

Victorian Multi-cultural Commission Coronavirus (COVID-19): In-language advice and information at <https://www.multiculturalcommission.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-language-advice-and-information>.

Ethnolink have information available in 51 languages at: <http://www.ethnolink.com.au/covid-%2019-coronavirus-translated-resources/>

The Department of Home Affairs has extensive multi-lingual resources available at: <https://Covid19inlanguage.homeaffairs.gov.au/>

The Victorian Multicultural Commission have release multi-lingual resources including:

- Audio messages: <https://cloud.think-hq.com.au/s/m9SX3ntGGqr7Sai>
- Posters (JPG / PDF): <https://cloud.think-hq.com.au/s/m9SX3ntGGqr7Sai>
- Social Media banners: <https://cloud.think-hq.com.au/s/m9SX3ntGGqr7Sai>

GATHERINGS & CHURCH COUNCIL RESPONSIBILITIES

With an increased likelihood that at some stage an attendee at a gathering will be COVID positive, there are a number of requirements and considerations which still apply for all Church Councils:

COVID-safe plans. It is still a mandatory government requirement that a COVID-safe plan be maintained. Given the changes outlined in these FAQs, all current COVID-safe plans will need to be reviewed and updated as required.

Vaccination Status records. All staff and volunteers must still be at least double-vaccinated and must provide proof of their vaccination status. The Church Council must be able to readily provide this information if requested by any authorised health officer. Therefore the Vaccination Status record should be maintained where the work is done, or from where the work is co-ordinated. (see below for further detail)

VACCINATION STATUS

Unless they have a valid exemption, workers, both paid and volunteer, in most work sectors must be at least double-vaccinated to be able to work outside their residence, and in some cases there is a requirement for all workers to be triple-vaccinated. A full list of workers who require at least two or three vaccination doses can be found at <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/worker-vaccination-requirements>

Who would this apply to at our church?

A religious worker is someone who works in connection with a place of worship, including a chapel, church, mosque, synagogue or temple. This would therefore include, among others, people such as cleaners, organist/musician, children's leader, anyone involved in building maintenance or gardening, and anyone involved in co-ordinating catering. This would also apply Church Council members for the purposes of attending meetings etc. where they should be deemed as volunteer staff.

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However, this does not include *workers who conduct services of public worship and acknowledgments of faith, perform marriages, funerals and special memorial services according to tradition and ecclesiastical and civil law, or who visit members of the community to provide advice and religious comfort for the purpose of end of life faith reasons.*

Therefore, whilst the faith leader is not required by law to be double-vaccinated for the purposes described above, every other worker, whether paid or volunteer, must be double-vaccinated. It must also be stressed that the above list outlines the only work which may be undertaken by an unvaccinated faith leader --- things like pastoral care visits would not be possible.

It remains the recommendation of Synod's Crisis Management Team that all Ministers and Lay Leaders also be fully vaccinated for the protection of their worshippers.

The only exemptions are for people who are medically exempt and whose treating practitioner has completed the Australian Immunisation Medical Exemption Form (commonly called an AIR Form).

As of 23/04/2022

HOW SHOULD THE INFORMATION BE RECORDED?

The Synod of Victoria and Tasmania has produced a simple form to assist all Church Councils to meet the above obligation. [This form can be found here](#)

WHO WILL HAVE ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION?

Synod's Crisis Management Team is recommending that no more than two people at any location have access to that location's staff vaccination records. It may be required at some point that authorised staff from either the Synod or Presbytery be able to verify compliance. At any time, this information may be requested by an Authorised Health Official.

REQUIREMENTS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH COVID-19

If you have COVID-19 symptoms or are a household contact of someone with COVID-19:

- Get a rapid antigen test.
- If you are unable to access a rapid antigen test, get a PCR test.
- If you can't get a PCR test, stay isolated until you can access either type of test.
- If you do not have symptoms and you are not a household contact, monitor for symptoms.

If you test positive on a rapid antigen test you must:

1. [report your result online](#) or call 1800-675-398 as soon as possible.
2. Immediately isolate for 7 days from the day you took the rapid antigen test.
3. Follow the [government checklist](#) and tell your contacts you have COVID-19.
 - Your household contacts no longer need to isolate for 7 days, providing they wear a face mask in all indoor situations (except at home) and providing they return five negative Rapid Antigen Tests during the first 7 days
 - Your social contacts must get tested if they have any symptoms
 - Advise your workplace or education facility that you have COVID-19.

As of 23/04/2022

MINISTERS IN HIGH RISK GROUPS

Ministers in high-risk groups should discuss with their medical practitioners, presbytery and Church Councils the appropriateness of their involvement in services and what additional safeguards may be required to protect their own health.

High risk groups include people who are:

- aged over 70,
- over 65 with chronic health conditions,
- immune-compromised, or
- Indigenous people over 50 with chronic health conditions

As of 28/10/2021





CHURCH/COMMUNITY HALLS

Community Facilities, including libraries, creative art spaces, halls may open without restriction, but must have a COVID-safe plan in place.

RENTED & HIRED FACILITIES

- If you rent hire or licence out property to more than one organisation or group on a casual or non-exclusive basis (eg support groups, community groups, classes) using our standard Hire Agreement (Victoria) whether one-off or recurring, the Responsibility for maintaining all COVID-19 compliance remains with the congregation as the responsible body. However, you may pass on the reasonable additional cost of cleaning or other necessary Covid-19 safety measures to the Hirer if you notify them in advance of the additional cost.
- If you rent out property to one organisation or group on an exclusive use basis (under a Lease or Licence), the responsibility for maintaining all COVID-19 compliance falls to the tenant.
- If in doubt, seek advice from your presbytery or contact crisismanagement@victas.uca.org.au

As of 23/04/2022

COVID-SAFE PLANS

Do we need to complete a CovidSafe plan and/or UCA Covid Recovery Action Checklist?

Having completed the Covid Recovery Action Plan Checklist, <https://victas.uca.org.au/download/668/faq/8852/recovery-action-plan-checklist-v5> if you are keeping this up-to-date, This can be your Covid-Safe Plan. If you have not already done so, please send a copy of your plan to elnura.dulakovic@victas.uca.org.au.

You must be able to provide a copy immediately if requested by any authorised Health officer. There are substantial fines for every breach of current COVID-safe requirements, for which the congregation will be liable.

HOLY COMMUNION

How can Holy Communion services reflect COVID safe practices?

Careful consideration should be given to how Holy Communion can be conducted appropriately, including maintaining distance, hygiene and not sharing communion ware.

For congregations livestreaming worship, the Assembly guidelines remain in place until July 2022 and can be found at: <https://uniting.church/online-worship-communion/>

For some thoughts on how to conduct Holy Communion in a COVID-safe manner read Rev Dr Sally Douglas' November 2020 article at <https://victas.uca.org.au/how-can-we-keep-holy-communion-covid-19-safe/>.

As of 19/11/2021

ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING LICENCES

What does it cost for a Zoom meeting licence?

If you plan on using Zoom frequently and/ or require full functionality, Synod Ministries and Operations along with other Synods have negotiated with Zoom to purchase a bulk deal. As such we are able to provide Zoom licences for a cost of just \$7.93 per month. If your presbytery or congregation is interested, please contact: George.Delice@victas.uca.org.au

You will need to provide: Number of licences required and the details of the contact person (including their email address).

As of 08/07/2020





OP SHOPS

Op Shops run by Uniting VicTas must follow guidance issued by Uniting.

- All staff, including volunteers, must be fully vaccinated (at least two doses), unless medically exempt, and must have provided proof of their vaccination status, and records maintained at the Op Shop.
- As of 11:59pm Friday April 22 staff are no longer required to wear face masks.
- UCA Op Shops, as church workplaces, are required to complete sections A and B of the Recovery Action Plan Checklist to ensure that they are Covid-compliant and a copy sent to elnura.dulakovic@victas.uca.org.au
- Failure to comply with all current COVID restrictions and requirements, including those above, may incur substantial fines if compliance audited by Health officials.
- Good hygiene should continue to be practiced, including regularly washing hands, using hand sanitiser whenever handling donated goods or cash.

VOLUNTEERS:

Since November 26, 2021 all volunteers are required to be fully vaccinated (at least two doses), unless medically exempt before they can attend any workplace outside their own home. They must also provide evidence of their current vaccination status to the 'employer' before attending any workplace.

Where possible you should keep at least 1.5 metres between yourself and others at all times and practice good hygiene. If you are in a high-risk group, you can volunteer, however, consider minimising the number of different people you interact with. High-risk groups include people aged 70 years and over, people aged 65 years and over with chronic medical conditions, people with compromised immune systems and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over the age of 50.

As of 23/04/2022

FIRST AID PRECAUTIONS

In the event of someone needing first aid treatment, are there any additional precautions required?

Anyone administering first aid should use general droplet and contact precautions, namely a face mask for the person they are treating which they should encourage the person to apply themselves, a face mask and gloves for the first aider, and goggles for the first aider (if available).

In the event that a first aider has a reason to suspect a person is infected with COVID-19, they should try to limit their contact with that person as much as they can, meaning they should avoid physical contact (e.g. checking pulses and performing physical assessments) unless absolutely necessary, such as performing CPR or putting people in a recovery position if they are unconscious and/or struggling to breathe.

As of 11/06/2020

