

Memorandum

TO: Clergy, Parish Leaders, Parish Leadership Teams, Parish Staff

CC:

FROM: Fr Andrew Doohan VG

DATE: 18/10/2021

ATTACHMENTS: 0

SUBJECT: Reopening of Churches for Phase Two of 'Roadmap to Reopening'

Dear Colleagues,

You will be aware from NSW Government announcements that it is expected the percentage of full vaccinated persons in NSW will reach the 80% milestone this past weekend, which is earlier than expected. At 80% fully vaccinated, the 'Roadmap to Reopening' moves to Phase Two, seeing the lifting of additional restrictions for residents of NSW.

Amendments to the current public health order that directly impacts on parish life – the *Public Health (COVID-19 General) Order 2021* ('the Order') – have been gazetted, and takes effect from the beginning of Monday 18 October.

The purpose of this memo is to provide clarification about what will become possible in Phase Two..

General Provisions

The following general provisions are applicable to our church buildings, including for the celebration of Mass, weddings, funerals, other public liturgies, and for personal or private prayer.

1. Church buildings are permitted to be open for use for public liturgy and private prayer.
2. A new COVID Safety Plan has to be prepared using the form available at www.nsw.gov.au/form/covid-safety-plan/places-of-worship and ensuring a copy is available in the church building (**NB:** the requirement of the COVID Safety Plan for churches has been updated to reflect the requirements of Phase Two).
3. Compliance with your updated COVID Safety Plan is mandatory under the Order.
4. It is not necessary to be fully vaccinated to enter a church building.
5. Density limits for church buildings are based on the 4sq m rule.

6. Ventilation is a key component of the COVID Safety Plan and consideration must be given to maximising this wherever possible
7. The wearing of fitted face masks is still required indoors, including in church buildings.
8. The collection of contact details via the Service NSW App or on a paper form is mandatory upon entry to church buildings.
9. Singing by the liturgical assembly is not permitted inside church buildings.
10. Singing by the members of a small choir of not more than 10 fully vaccinated members is permitted inside church buildings.

Weddings and Funerals

Under the current Order, weddings and funerals are still considered 'significant events' (with their own specific COVID Safety Plan required), and the limitations advised in my memo of 11 October appear to remain in effect. It would be prudent to assume that this is the case until further clarification is available or additional amendments are made to the Order.

This may be an unintended consequence of amendments to the Order.

We will continue to monitor this requirement in coming days. Further advice will be provided as things are clarified.

Instructions, Liturgical Directives and General Advice

The document entitled ***Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle: Continuing Life During COVID-19*** remains in effect for the time being, except where changes to public health orders require adjustments to be made.

The current version (version 1) can be found on the Diocesan website and downloaded by clicking www.mn.catholic.org.au/media/4673/02062021-instructions-and-advice-to-parishes-covid-19-pandemic-event-edition-1.pdf.

The contents of this document are currently being reviewed in preparation for Phase Three of the 'Roadmap to Reopening' – scheduled for 1 December – and you are invited to raise any particular issues that you might like to be considered as part of that review by emailing them to me.

I hope the above advice is of some help to parishes. As always, if there are any concerns about the restrictions or requirements under the current Order, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards,



(Fr) Andrew Doohan VG