



# COVID-19

## GUIDANCE NOTE

GUIDANCE NOTE 39

29 September 2021

### The Synod Roadmap out of Covid

The Roadmap out of Covid restrictions presented by the NSW Government on 27 September 2021, has enabled the Synod to now advise the process of returning to face-to-face Worship. Please note that this guidance has been based on information available as at 28 September 2021, and is subject to change.

This information applies to all areas of NSW, including Regional and Rural areas and LGA's of concern. Separate advice will be issued for the ACT.

It is acknowledged that this advice does not fully cover all the varied aspects of a Congregation's normal life. At this stage, there is insufficient detail to be able to give detailed guidance to congregations in reopening all their ministry activities, but further advice will come as when more information becomes available. This will include more information about the safety of staff and workers.

The following table summarises the path for the coming months noting key restrictions.

Level of Vaccination	70% Double Vaxxed* Expected 11 <sup>th</sup> Oct	80% Double Vaxxed Expected 25 <sup>th</sup> Oct	1 <sup>st</sup> Dec 2021
<b>Who</b>	<b>Fully vaccinated only</b>	<b>Fully vaccinated only (except places of worship)</b>	<b>Everyone</b>
<b>Places of Worship</b>	Open, uncapped but limited to 1 person per 4sqm, fully vaxxed only. No singing	Open, uncapped but limited to 1 person per 4sqm, unvaxxed can attend. No singing	Open, uncapped but limited to 1 person per 2sqm, singing allowed
<b>Weddings &amp; Funerals</b>	Max 50 guests, subject to 1 person per 4sqm	Unlimited but limited by 1 person per 4sqm	Unlimited but limited by 1 person per 2sqm
<b>Visitors to homes</b>	Max of 5, where all adults are fully vaxxed	Max of 10, where all adults are fully vaxxed	Unlimited
<b>Gatherings outdoors</b>	20 where all vaxxed, 2 if not fully vaxxed	20 where all vaxxed, 2 if not fully vaxxed	Unlimited
<b>Masks</b>	Mandatory in all indoor settings, public transport, airports, business premises	Mandatory in all indoor settings, public transport, airports, business premises	Mandatory on public transport & in airports
<b>Op-shops</b>	Can re-open subject to 1 person per 4sqm. Workers must be fully vaccinated to serve	1 person per 4sqm continues	1 person per 2sqm applies
<b>Third party hire: Dance, exercise, yoga classes etc – subject to industry-specific restrictions</b>	1 person per 4sqm up to a limit of 20 people	1 person per 4sqm up to a limit of 20 people continues	1 person per 2sqm uncapped

#### PRESBYTERIES

CANBERRA REGION | FAR NORTH COAST | GEORGES RIVER | ILLAWARRA | KOREAN | MACQUARIE DARLING | MID NORTH COAST | NEW ENGLAND NORTH WEST | PARRAMATTA NEPEAN | RIVERINA | SYDNEY CENTRAL COAST | SYDNEY | THE HUNTER | UAICC



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Level of Vaccination	70% Double Vaxxed* Expected 11 <sup>th</sup> Oct	80% Double Vaxxed Expected 25 <sup>th</sup> Oct	1 <sup>st</sup> Dec 2021
<b>Attendance recording</b>	Congregations must be registered as a Covid Safe Business and use the NSW Government's QR code	Congregations must be registered as a Covid Safe Business and use the NSW Government's QR code	Congregations must be registered as a Covid Safe Business and use the NSW Government's QR code

*\*Note: It is not our intention to contribute to any division by using language of "vaxxed/unvaxxed", but to provide clarity as you engage with your own discussions and decision-making.*

Of particular importance is that people who are unvaccinated are not able to attend worship until the 80% fully vaccinated milestone is reached. Based on this, the Synod Office is recommending that congregations don't regather for worship until the 80% fully vaccinated milestone is achieved. Regathering prior to then may present several issues:

- Will the congregation feel comfortable in excluding someone from worship?
- Will excluded people feel their rights are being violated?
- Will they be able to deal with someone who may become angry or aggressive due to being excluded?
- What is our duty of care for Congregation Stewards who will need to cope with any resulting conflict?
- How will a congregation monitor who is vaccinated or not?
- If an unvaccinated person is allowed in, it would be in breach of the Public Health Order (PHO) and a fine could be applied.
- If the PHO is breached, the church insurance is rendered null and void if any harm to people was caused.

For the sake of 2 weeks (at this stage), waiting until the 80% milestone is reached avoids these potential issues and also supports those who are not yet vaccinated. Please note, this is not a direction, only a strong recommendation and each Church Council will need to decide whether they wish to regather at the 70% milestone and plan accordingly to manage the additional safety and compliance issues.

We also advise congregations not to serve morning tea or refreshments until the 1 December milestone is reached, and subject to their Covid plan.

### Other Ministry Activities and Site Uses

Synod would also recommend delaying the re-opening of Op-shops and Third-Party hire until 1 December 2021 for many of the same reasons. Should any wish to commence at the 70% vaccination mark, clear plans would need to show how this would be managed so that only vaccinated people enter the premises, and how this would be communicated to the congregation. I am concerned about the possibility of the resulting conflict and division.

Congregations may also consider waiting until early next year to resume face-to-face worship. Perhaps some of the issues around vaccinations and the higher Covid numbers expected after we begin to move around more freely may resolve.

The Synod advises caution in the careful planning that needs to be done, as the priority continues to be the safety and wellbeing of all people.

### PRESBYTERIES



Uniting Church  
SYNOD OF NSW & ACT

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**Covid-19 Safety Plans** have recently been changed by the Government and will need to be updated prior to a Congregation returning to worship. These are available from NSW government [covid safe website](#): Once completed and approved by Church Council, please forward to [Covid19@nswact.uca.org.au](mailto:Covid19@nswact.uca.org.au) and/or to your Presbytery as per your current practice. Advice on specific safety measures is available on the [Synod Website](#).

The information in this document has been sourced from the following NSW Government websites. Please refer to them for further details:

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/freedoms-for-fully-vaccinated-people>

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-09/FACT%20SHEET.pdf>

If you have any queries, please contact: [covid19@nswact.uca.org.au](mailto:covid19@nswact.uca.org.au) or Kingsley Murphy - [kingsleym@nswact.uca.org.au](mailto:kingsleym@nswact.uca.org.au)

We are a church united by Jesus Christ, called to be people of hope as we share God's Good News with the world. Whether we are vaccinated or unvaccinated, whether we meet in person or online, all remain loved and valued. May our differences lead us to greater learning and understanding rather than feed conflict and division.

In this long and challenging time, you have been patient and understanding. You have all adapted to great change during times of personal challenge. Many have found ways of continuing to serve local communities, who have also faced great challenge in the lock down period. We look forward to the coming good news stories as hospitality and welcome is extended.

You are an inspiration.

Please know we will be praying for you as you work through your plans.

May the LORD bless you and keep you;  
the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;  
the LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace. Numbers 6:25-26

Regards and blessings,

Rev. Bronwyn Murphy  
Associate Secretary

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