




COVID-19 METRO MELBOURNE FAQs

AS AT OCTOBER 8, 2020



As of Monday September 28 Metropolitan Melbourne has moved to Step 2 of the Victorian Government's Roadmap for Reopening.


As of Monday Sept 28, changes to COVID restrictions in Metropolitan Melbourne came into effect, including:

- **Curfew:** no longer in place
- **Public gatherings:** increased to up to 5 people from a maximum of two households that can meet outdoors for social interaction (infants under 12 months of age are not included in the cap)
- **Childcare and early educators:** re-opens Schools: remote learning with staged return for onsite learning for Prep to Grade 6, VCE/VCAL and specialist schools in Term 4. Adult education: remains onsite only for those on permitted list
- **Shopping:** Essential shopping only; no person limits. Must still be within 5km of home.
- **Face Masks:** Must now be a fitted face mask – bandanas, scarves etc are no longer acceptable.
- **Outdoor recreation:** must be within 5km and only where facilities are not required, outdoor personal training allowed with up to 2 people per trainer, outdoor pools open.
- **Religion:** places of worship closed, outdoor gatherings (not ceremonies), with no sharing of food, drink or other items by participants of up to 5 people, plus 1 faith leader, nearby to a place of worship, are allowed.
- **Work:** Some easing of workplace requirements, including
 - Manufacturing and distribution centres,
 - gardening/landscaping services,
 - pet-grooming for genuine animal welfare where contactless service can be provided (excl mobile services)

What has NOT changed?

- **Leave home:** for 4 reasons only:
 - Work or Education (which can't be done from home)
 - Obtaining Essential goods and services (eg groceries, pharmacies, medical/safety reasons)
 - Care-giving or compassionate reasons
 - Daily exercise - 2 hours maximum for exercise or social interaction
- **Visitors to the home:** 1 nominated visitor if living alone/single parent (all children under 18) ('single social bubble'). Respite care for people with complex needs allowed.

- **Indoor worship:** Still only for the purposes of live-streaming, with five person maximum in attendance and all previous COVID protocols in place.
- **Work:** Only go to work if you are in a permitted industry, hold a valid Permitted Worker Permit (see page 4) and if you are not feeling unwell.
- **Exercise:** outdoors only, up to two hours per day total, split into a maximum of two sessions, with public gathering limits, and only where facilities are not required. Must still be within 5km of home.
- **Hospitality:** take-away and delivery only
- **Retail:** essential only with others only for click and collect
- **Weddings:** allowed in outdoor public spaces with up to 5 people (including the couple and two witnesses but not including the celebrant)
- **Funerals:** allowed with up to 10 people (not including infants under 12 months of age or people required to conduct the funeral)
- **Face Masks** must be worn outside the home including at all times in the workplace. Fines for non-compliance: \$200 for individuals and up to \$9,913 for employers.
- **Physical distancing (1.5m)**
- **Good hand hygiene** must continue to be followed
- **Cough or sneeze** into a tissue or elbow.
- **COVID safety plans** are required for all workplaces (including churches, halls etc) including
 - Attendance Contact Lists
 - Cleaning protocols
 - Physical distancing, maximum occupancy and all other COVID signage

 **Metropolitan Melbourne will remain under Step 2 of the Roadmap to Recovery until at least October 19.**

Travel restrictions between Metro Melbourne and Regional Victoria have not changed. Shopping and exercise must still be done within 5km of your home.

Penalties for illegal gatherings outdoors and in the home have increased to nearly \$5,000

As of 28/09/2020

If you have any questions, please contact
CrisisManagement@victas.uca.org.au
 or contact your Presbytery.





How will we know about further updates?

We have established a Synod Crisis Management Team which monitors changes on a daily basis. Compliance and Pastoral advice will continue to be issued via emailed letters from the General Secretary and/or Moderator. All other relevant advice will continue to be sent via the special Coronavirus editions of Synod eNews, which will appear in your inbox from "Communications". eNews and emailed letters are sent to all Presbyteries, all ministers, all church councils.

As of 05/04/2020

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: www.ethnolink.com.au/covid-19-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 and PDF)

- <https://cloud.think-hq.com.au/s/m9SX3ntGGqr7Sai>

Social Media banners

- <https://cloud.think-hq.com.au/s/m9SX3ntGGqr7Sai>

As of 13/08/2020

LIVE-STREAMING WORSHIP

How many people can be involved in live-streaming worship services?

Recording and live-streaming of worship services is permitted providing all of the following guidelines are met.

The streaming of worship services is permitted only where the number of people at the premises is limited to five (which includes those participating in the ceremony and those providing technical support) and the following social distancing requirements can be met:

- Each person must maintain a distance of at least 1.5m and must wear a facemask
- At least 4sqm of floor area per person is required in the place where the ceremony/performance takes place. This means the immediate area/room around the participants where the ceremony is performed.

In addition, you must take measures to mitigate any risk of disease transmission by ensuring the following measures are in place:

- Exclude persons who are unwell from participating in the production of the live streaming
- People in any of the identified vulnerable groups should carefully consider their need to participate in live streaming. This includes:
 - Those who are immuno-compromised, etc.
 - over 70
 - over 65 with significant medical conditions
 - Aboriginal Tasmanians over 50 with significant medical conditions
- Ensure all people present practice good respiratory and hand hygiene and provide appropriate hand washing facilities and hand sanitisers
- If live streaming worship from a church or church building,
 - a COVID Recovery Action Plan Checklist (Sections A, B & C) must be completed and maintained **and a copy sent to:** elnura.dulakovic@victas.uca.org.au

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- **In Metro Melbourne, a permitted worker form must be completed and signed off (see Permitted Worker Permits - p4).**
- If live streaming worship from a private residence, with only the residents present, a COVID Recovery Action Plan Checklist and Permitted Worker Permit are not required.

As of 13/08/2020

PRE-RECORDING WORSHIP

Are there any differences in the requirements for pre-recording worship vs live-streaming?

As the basic process is the same for both, the same practices should be applied.

As of 06/04/2020

SAFE (DIGITAL) MINISTRY

What safety measures should be adopted for ministry within the digital space?

The Culture of Safety Unit has prepared some guidelines for leaders and communities, offering commentary and interpretation of how our existing Child Safety resources and policies, and the Uniting Church Code of Ethics, continue to shape our digital ministry practices. To view the guidelines visit: www.victas.uca.org.au/safe-digital-ministry

As of 07/04/2020

GATHERINGS

What face-to-face gatherings are permitted at church?

Places of worship are not to be opened or used for worship services with any congregations, except for weddings and funerals – as indicated below. This is not expected to change until the end of October at the earliest.

Outdoor gatherings (not ceremonies), with no sharing of food, drink or other items by participants of up to 5 people, plus 1 faith leader, nearby to a place of worship.

As of 01/10/2020

Weddings are only allowed in outdoor public spaces with up to 5 people (including the couple and two witnesses but not including the celebrant) present.

Funerals may be held in places of worship, with the maximum number of 10 people present, using appropriate social distancing and hygiene practices.

The guidelines for Funerals are the same whether conducted indoors or outdoors.

Church or Community halls etc can only be used for Essential Public Services such as food banks, homeless services, permitted education, or for community support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous. They can remain open for the delivery of these services only (applying all other health and safety measures). If you are in doubt about whether the service is an Essential Public Service, seek advice either via your presbytery or contact: uca.legal@victas.uca.org.au Before any gatherings can take place, a COVID Recovery Action Plan Checklist (Sections A, B & C) must be completed and maintained **and a copy sent to:** elnura.dulakovic@victas.uca.org.au

As of 13/08/2020

What face-to-face gatherings are permitted away from church?

No face-to-face congregation-related gatherings, such as prayer groups, study groups or social groups, are to take place in people's homes or buildings. Up to 5 people from a maximum of two households that can meet outdoors for social interaction (infants under 12 months of age are not included in the cap) Church Council and congregation committee meetings may only be held via teleconference and/or videoconference.

As of 01/10/2020





HOLY COMMUNION

What changes to worship services are permissible?

Assembly Standing Committee has approved temporary pastoral measure guidelines for congregations and faith communities to enable the celebration of Holy Communion as part of online worship. These guidelines can be found at:

<https://www.assembly.uca.org.au/news/item/3163-temporary-arrangements-for-holy-communion>

As of 16/04/2020

CORONAVIRUS FUNERALS

Are there any special requirements for holding the funeral of someone who has died of Coronavirus?

The Victorian and Tasmanian governments each have guidelines for cases of suspected or confirmed COVID-19. These mean that some cultural and ministry funeral practices need to change, especially how families interact with the body of a person who has (or may have) died with COVID-19. Ministers need to consider how their ministry practice may need to alter and should discuss with Church Councils ahead of time how families can be supported in this situation.

As of 17/04/2020

PERMITTED WORKER PERMITS

In Metro Melbourne, the Victorian Government requires all Permitted Worker Permits to be re-issued with new dates and be reapproved effective from September 14, 2020. This applies to all paid staff and volunteers.

If your congregation held one or more Permitted Worker Permits (pre Sept 13) it should have received an email from the Crisis Management Team on Sept 10 requesting information on your permit requirements. If you have not received this, please email CrisisManagement@victas.uca.org.au.

If you have not previously held Permitted Worker Permits but now require one please follow the Permitted Worker Permit process. Only those who have not previously held a UCA Permitted Worker Permit need to follow this process

As of 17/09/2020

Failure to comply carries fines of up to \$19,826.40 (individuals) and \$99,132 (bodies corporate).

This is the Permitted Worker Permit process.

1. The Permitted Worker scheme template available from <https://victas.uca.org.au/all-you-need-to-know-answers-to-your-frequently-asked-questions/> has some of the information filled in.

The individual, with the approval of the Church Council Chairperson or other appropriate person, needs to complete the employee details and work location sections, sign the employee space, and on page 2, under the employer statement, add the nature of the Permitted work (from the Sector Summary document also available at the same web page)

2. Then return the form to the presbytery AND to CrisisManagement@victas.uca.org.au Sending both at the same time at this stage means there are no undue delays for urgent requests.
3. As well as returning the form, please attach a statement by the Church Council Chairperson or person supporting the application saying
 - all reasonable steps have been, and will continue to be taken, to maintain a safe working environment for the employee, and a COVIDSafe plan is in place;
 - that the information provided on this permit is a true representation relating to a current employee and their employment details;
 - the attendance of the Employee at the Work Premises is required for the provision of a Permitted Service (the wording inserted on page 2) and that they support the application.

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4. Please ensure that there is an email address for the person so the form can be returned promptly to the individual

As of 17/09/2020

MINISTERS IN HIGH RISK GROUPS

What if a minister is part of a Coronavirus high risk group?

All people who are

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

are urged to stay at home. This includes ministry agents in these at-risk groups, whether retired or in active placement, who might have otherwise led funerals.

Ministry agents in these risk groups are encouraged to talk with their Church Council and have clear arrangements in place in advance as to who may be called on for funerals, especially where a person has died with confirmed or suspected COVID-19.

As of 17/04/2020

RENT RELIEF REQUESTS

What do we do if we are approached by tenants for Covid-19 rent relief?

Rent relief is not automatic. Our Property Services and Legal departments have compiled guidelines for handling rent relief requests, both commercial and residential. If you wish to support a rent relief application, there is a form which needs to be completed before any rent relief can be offered. Details available on the first info sheet at:

www.victas.uca.org.au/resources/property/forms-and-resources/

As of 16/04/2020

OP SHOPS

Can we keep our Op Shop open?

In Metropolitan Melbourne only prescribed essential retail is now permitted to open. All Op Shops must remain closed for the duration of Stage 4 restrictions.

As of 13/08/2020

KINDERGARTEN

We have a kindergarten operating from a church-owned building. Do we need to close it?

The current advice from the Victorian Chief Health Officer advises that Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services remain safe places for staff and children.

From Monday September 28 all Kindergartens and early Childhood Learning Centres may open. All appropriate risk mitigation measures should continue to be observed. All staff must hold a Permitted Worker Permit (see page 4).

As of 01/10/2020

WORSHIP RESOURCES

Where can I access worship resources to help me keep connected?

Our worship resources page, which caters for all people across our Synod, is updated each week. Available at: <https://victas.uca.org.au/resources/covid-19-worship-resources/>

As of 06/04/2020

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:

Shweta.Paliwal@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 20/04/2020





SYNOD

What if we need to contact someone from Synod Ministries and Operations?

Whilst they may be working remotely, all Synod staff are still working. Please contact any staff member as normal, but please be aware that they may not have all of the answers at their fingertips quite as readily as usual.

As of 05/04/2020

UPDATED INFORMATION

How will we know if the information on this page is still current?

This FAQ sheet will be updated WEEKLY and re-sent in every Coronavirus edition of eNews. Please check this page each week for anything which is of particular interest. If in doubt, check with Synod Ministries and Operations or with your presbytery.

As of 06/04/2020

CONGREGATION WEBSITE TRAINING

Will training sessions for new congregation websites still go ahead?

These have been postponed indefinitely. Congregations and presbyteries that have booked training days will be contacted with alternative dates when this becomes possible.

As of 27/03/2020

OTHER QUESTIONS

What if we have questions that aren't on this FAQ sheet?

Ask the relevant person/department at Synod or your presbytery. This FAQ document will contain additional topics as they become known.

As of 06/04/2020

CROSSLIGHT

Will *Crosslight* continue to be published?

Our Communications team will continue to produce *Crosslight*, however while the current lockdowns are in place in Melbourne, it will only be available online, as either a “**flip book**” which can be read on screen) or as a printable PDF.

The October “flip book” edition is available from <https://crosslight.org.au/>

News and feature stories are posted to *Crosslight*'s website on a regular basis available at: www.crosslight.org.au

As of 01/10/2020

COVID SAFE APP

Should we encourage downloading the Federal Government's Covid-Safe tracing app?

Synod Ministries and Operations would strongly recommend that all people in ministry download the Covid-Safe tracing app and also encourage all Uniting Church members to do so. As worship services recommence, this is a simple measure to help maintain the safety of our members as they start to gather again.

As of 14/05/2020

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).

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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

JOBKEEPER PAYMENTS

What is happening with the Jobkeeper payments?

On July 21, the Government announced it is extending the JobKeeper Payment until March 28, 2021 and is targeting support to those businesses and not-for-profits which continue to be significantly impacted by the Coronavirus. From September 28, 2020, eligibility for the JobKeeper Payment will be based on actual turnover in the relevant periods, the payment will be stepped down and paid at two rates.

Eligibility will be required to be reassessed on actual turnover in the September quarter 2020 for the period September 28, 2020-January 3, 2021 and again for the December quarter 2020 for the period January 4, 2021-March 28, 2021. Given the eligibility is on actual turnover, it is too early at this stage to make any assessment. Appropriate communications will be forthcoming in later in September 2020.

For further information click on the following link: <https://treasury.gov.au/coronavirus/jobkeeper/extension>

Congregations should record the JobKeeper payments in their accounts as a receipt – “Grants received Government”. **The amount should not be paid to ministers/staff as they have already been paid through the normal payroll processes.**

The Synod will manage all reporting to the ATO, including monthly declarations of revenue. This is based on the Synod operations and not on individual congregation results. There is no need to submit monthly revenue results.

Unfortunately efforts to qualify for the Cash Boost Payment have been unsuccessful at this stage.

Congregations are reminded that the JobKeeper Payment has been implemented by the Government to help employers keep staff and restart when the crisis is over.

Some questions:

Do casuals need to submit timesheets?

Where a casual is normally paid by submitting timesheets, these need to continue to be submitted, even if it's for a small shift.

Do staff need to continue to work?

Yes. The JobKeeper payment processes allow an employer to reasonably alter an employee's duties, location and days of work. We would advise congregations to find all staff (including casuals) some work tasks to do even if it's from home. You might need to be creative and/or ask the staff what they may be able to contribute. Some ideas shared in the zoom meeting – for Playgroup workers contacting parents, providing activity packs, zoom catch up with children, sing alongs etc. Admin staff may also be used to keep in contact with members, email/deliver newsletters, filing etc. The work may not be what they normally do.

For Part-time/Casuals who receive a top up payment does LSL levies (portable LSL) apply on \$1500?

Portable LSL Authority - levy for “Community Service Workers”: For those employees who are receiving a top-up payment, the top-up portion is not included in the calculation of the LSL levy.

The situation is the same as what has been calculated in the past (the actual total hours worked and the totals ordinary pay received by the worker, not including the JobKeeper top-up payment).

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For example, if a worker's regular fortnightly wage is \$1,000 before tax, and this is topped up with as additional \$500 under the JobKeeper scheme, you must include only the \$1,000 regular wage.

As of 10/09/2020

During this time of second wave lockdowns, it is important that we all take care of ourselves and of each other. Sometimes we may need help to do this. Below are just some of the places you can turn to if you, or someone you know, may need some assistance coping with Stage 3 or 4 COVID restrictions:

WELLBEING

- Lifeline** ph **13 11 14**
- Beyond Blue** ph **1300 22 4636**
- Kids Helpline** ph **1800 55 1800**
- 1800RESPECT** ph **1800 737 732**
(Domestic & Sexual Violence)
- SafeSteps** ph **1800 015 188**
(support & planning to escape domestic violence)
- LGBTQIA** ph **1800 184 527**
(peer driven support)
- Alcohol or Drug related issues**
ph **1800 888 236**

A great workbook to help build resilience during isolation: <https://thewellnesssociety.org/free-coronavirus-anxiety-workbook/>

YMCA – Virtual Y – online platform with loads of fitness, nutrition, wellbeing, family and youth content. <https://virtualy.ymca.org.au>

Vic Govt Food and personal care packages for people in mandatory self-isolation, delivered to your door.

ph **1800 675 398**

FINANCIAL

- Centrelink**
Online financial resources for existing customers:
www.servicessaustralia.gov.au/individuals/help-emergency
- Centrelink Crisis Payments** ph **132 850**
- Uniting Vic Tas**
<https://www.unitingvictas.org.au/contact-us/>
- Aust Govt** (early release of Superannuation):
www.australia.gov.au

