



Health

Our ref H20/88782-1

Dear Religious Leaders

I would like to thank you for your ongoing support of the efforts to control COVID-19. I recognise the significant impact that COVID-19 is having on the community. I urge all leaders to encourage and support compliance with the health advice to prevent COVID-19 transmission at religious gatherings and places of worship.

There have been several clusters of COVID-19 in New South Wales in recent weeks, including a cluster linked to a church choir and attendance at a variety of activities related to a funeral.

Singing in groups (whether by choirs or by congregants) or chanting is a particularly high-risk activity and must not take place at this time, irrespective of whether singers or chanters are wearing masks. The only COVID-Safe singing that is permitted is a solo singer distanced at least five metres away from other people and not directly above the audience.

The Public Health Order was amended on 24 July 2020. The Public Health Order requires all places of worship to register themselves as COVID-Safe with the NSW Government, and to comply with a COVID-19 Safety Plan.

I am also urging you to encourage congregants to wear a mask during attendance at places of worship. Wearing a mask is not mandatory but is highly recommended, especially in areas where there have been community transmission. Mask wearing is not a substitute for physical distancing, but may further reduce risks.

I urge you to exercise extreme caution when it comes to gatherings at places of worship, and to adapt your religious practices in a COVID-Safe manner. The spirit of the Public Health Order and our health advice is to protect each and every member of our community from the ongoing risk of COVID-19 transmission.

For further information on the requirements, please see:

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/industry-guidelines/places-of-worship>

Yours sincerely

Dr Kerry Chant PSM
Chief Health Officer and Deputy Secretary
Population and Public Health
14 August 2020