

## Queensland Baptists COVID-19 Update 14 May 2020

In follow up to our communication this week regarding the “step down” approach to COVID -19 with a gradual lifting of restrictions, we are looking again to try and stay ahead of the trajectory of changes and obligations for our churches.

It is important to note that just like the journey of tightening restrictions, the roadmap to lifting them will be marked with areas of uncertainty, some ambiguity as details are yet to be defined, and an ongoing need to be adaptive and nimble in our responses.

On 8 May, we saw the [3 Step Framework for a COVIDSAFE Australia](#) as released by the Federal Government. We have also seen the [Roadmap to easing QLD's Restrictions](#) and a subsequent [Framework for COVIDSAFE Businesses](#) as a part of the QLD Government's [Unite against COVID - 19](#) initiative.

### State Level Jurisdiction Implications

The Framework for a COVID SAFE Business (Framework) identifies a mandatory requirement for any business to operate. This requirement hinges off the current WH&S obligations and specifies that there must be a WH&S plan to manage COVID – 19 which is also to be displayed. This is an internal plan that does not need to be submitted for approval. The attached QB COVID – 19 WH&S Checklist is offered to assist and guide thinking as churches develop a plan specific to their individual context.

The Framework also identifies that for Stage 1 there is a mandatory requirement for a COVID SAFE Checklist. At present, this is only for high risk industries and business - currently only Beauty Therapy & Nail Salons, seated dining in restaurants, cafes, clubs, RSL's and hotels have been specified here.

In relation to Stage 2, it has been identified there will be an option for certain industries to demonstrate that they are prepared to meet best practice, so they can potentially be allowed a more flexible application of the baseline restrictions. This would involve a COVID SAFE Plan, developed by industry bodies that is based on best practice to allow additional customers on business premises. While this is currently defined for eligible industries, such as restaurants, pubs and clubs, we will be exploring the opportunity for the QB Movement to develop a COVID SAFE Plan for our churches in preparation for Stage 2, to enable greater participation where best practice in relation to social distancing and hygiene can be upheld.

### *Recap Stage 1 – Step Down*

#### **STAGE 1: 15 MAY 2020 (4 weeks)**

- Gatherings in homes (max 5 visitors, allowed from separate households)
- Gatherings of up to 10 people:
  - weddings
  - places of worship and religious ceremonies
  - Funerals (max 20 indoors or 30 outdoors)

Social distancing, 1.5 metres and hygiene • Stay at home if you're sick • Tracking, tracing, rapid response • Work at home if it works for you and your employer.

Please see the recently issued [Unite Against COVID - 19 FAQ's](#) where greater explanations around the maximum 10 group size and 4m<sup>2</sup> rules are provided, as well as the [Roadmap to Easing Restrictions \(Stage 1\)](#) for more on gatherings in relation weddings, funerals, religious services and also outdoor gatherings.

### Federal Level Jurisdiction Implications

While at a State level we currently have specified what the restrictions will mean in Stage 1 for churches, we must also consider what the Federal Government is calling for in relation to record keeping. We acknowledge that States and Territories can implement changes, but we also recognise that the QLD Chief Health Officer is yet to release updated directions, in particular for the [Non-Essential Business, Activity and Undertaking Closure Direction No.9](#) and the [Home Confinement, Movement and Gathering Direction No.4](#).

There is generally a small window between the release of updates to the Directions, and the commencement of conditions. As such we are being proactive for our churches in flagging the Federal requirement for record keeping, and the potential for this to be applied at a State level for churches. This position is supported by the fact that the record keeping requirement has been applied in QLD for Stage 1 to Beauty Therapy & Nail Salons, seated dining in restaurants, cafes, clubs, RSL's and hotels (while not even required at a Federal level for these businesses).

*Weddings, Funerals & Religious Services – Step 1 (Federal Government)*

**WEDDINGS, FUNERALS & RELIGIOUS SERVICES**

- Weddings may have up to 10 guests in addition to the couple and the celebrant
- Funerals may have up to 20 mourners indoors and 30 outdoors
- Religious gatherings may have up to 10 attendees
- Every gathering must record contact details

MAINTAIN 1.5M DISTANCING AND GOOD HYGIENE • STAY HOME IF UNWELL • FREQUENTLY CLEAN AND DISINFECT COMMUNAL AREAS • COVIDSAFE PLAN FOR WORKPLACES AND PREMISES

For churches planning to gather in Stage 1 for a service with up to 10 attendees, we recommend taking a documented record of the contact details of attendees. We also reiterate from the afore mentioned FAQ's, that the limit of 10 is for each business premises, which includes indoor and outdoor spaces.

We share the strong desire to reach a point where there are no longer restrictions to our gatherings, and we also see the opportunity to take that journey as socially responsible leaders of our communities. As such, we encourage our churches to be patient and avoid loopholes or "works arounds" as we wait for more detailed directions to be issued by QLD Health. God has blessed us richly in how we have been equipped to respond during this season, learning new ways and delivering ministry differently. We pray for His patience and wisdom to reign over our movement as we look forward to doing church life in a post pandemic context.

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