

Dear Parishioners,

As you know, now that we have reached 80% vaccination of those over 16, there is a further easing of the Covid safety restrictions.

The key change for us is that **churches and places of worship are no longer listed as “higher risk” venues**, and hence those who are not (yet) fully vaccinated are allowed to gather in a church and to mix with the majority of people who are fully vaccinated.

Commencing tomorrow, Monday October 18, public Masses, other liturgical celebrations, and church activities such as Sacramental preparation classes are permitted for all who wish to attend. It is **not necessary to verify** whether an attendee is vaccinated or not, but **Covid Safe check-in is required**.

Obviously, because churches are now places where vaccinated and unvaccinated people may gather together, **other precautions are essential**:

- **1 person per 4 square metres.** Please measure your church building and determine **your maximum number of attendees**. You will need to tell this to people wanting to book funerals and weddings.
- At outdoor gatherings, the limit is 1 person per 2sqm.
- **Everyone using masks**, except when reading or presiding etc.
- Hand Sanitiser available at church entrances.
- Attendees must **check-in using the Service NSW App**, or using a written record kept by the Parish.
- **Congregational singing is not permitted.** In our parish we will wait until further restrictions are eased before our musicians and singers return to their ministry.
- Readers, acolytes and other ministers are not required to be vaccinated, though this is recommended for all of us.
- **Clergy and other Ministers taking Holy Communion to people in their homes should be vaccinated** (like nurses etc.)
- **Social gatherings whether indoors or outdoors are not recommended**, given the continuing restrictions at places of hospitality even when all are vaccinated.
- The situation with weddings and funerals is complicated! Even though unvaccinated people are normally allowed to gather in the church, in the case of weddings and funerals, if **some of the attendees are not vaccinated**, then **the numbers are limited to 5 at a wedding and 10 at a funeral. If all the attendees at a wedding or funeral are fully vaccinated, there is no limit on numbers** (subject to the 4sqm rules).
- Note that clergy and others visiting schools and hospitals etc. are required to be fully vaccinated. This is now a normal requirement for the future.

This link gives a good summary of the new restrictions: [Easing restrictions at 80% full vaccination | NSW Government](#). Note that the Public Health Order is mostly framed in terms of what is allowed for those who are fully vaccinated. Many of these new freedoms are not available to those who are not fully vaccinated.

We understand that in some Parishes there is anxiety among parents and others about mixing between vaccinated and unvaccinated parishioners. **We are following NSW health guidelines**, and also ensure that we are meeting the requirements that remain for us regarding check-in, sanitising, masks, etc. It is likely there will be a further easing of restrictions by December, but in the meantime, we ask everyone to be patient and respectful of the different concerns that individuals may have.