



ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF TASMANIA

THE RIGHT REVEREND
DR RICHARD CONDIE
BISHOP OF TASMANIA

Pastoral Letter – 25 January 2022

Covid19 Roadmap

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I wanted to write about our Covid19 Roadmap for the Diocese. It is a challenging period as Covid is now widespread in the Tasmanian community, and we are taking steps to keep everyone as safe as possible.

As you are probably now aware, we are implementing a policy that for a limited time, all face-to-face and up-front ministries can only be done by people who are fully vaccinated. This includes all clergy, staff and volunteers involved in these roles. You can read more about it [here](#).

The Diocesan Covid roadmap was endorsed by the Diocesan Council and is implemented by a small group including the Diocesan Medical Officer, the Diocesan Registrar, the Director of Ministry Development and me. We are meeting regularly to monitor the unfolding situation and all feedback to us. It is inevitable that there are a variety of opinions on how to manage this, and I appreciate that some might implement a different course of action. We would really appreciate your prayers for wisdom as we navigate a complex and difficult situation. I can assure you that the Diocesan team are trying their best.

The motivations behind the policy have always been to provide a safe environment for vulnerable people in our congregations, and for people involved in face-to-face ministry. We are called to love our neighbours before ourselves, and that is what gives our communities their distinctive character. In particular the bible calls us to look out for the vulnerable among us – the biblical categories are often the widows, the fatherless and the refugee – which I take it means a broad group of vulnerable people.

Our advice is that unvaccinated people are more at risk of contracting coronavirus and are more at risk of serious illness, hospitalisation, and death, than the vaccinated. By limiting their close contact with others in the congregation, by not allowing them to do face-to-face ministry at the moment, their risks of infection are lowered.

Our advice is also that unvaccinated people are also more likely to pass the virus to others. All of our churches have many vulnerable people as part of their congregations

– particularly the elderly. By limiting face-to-face ministry to the vaccinated only, we provide a measure of risk reduction and pastoral care to the vulnerable in our congregations. We recognise that this is a limited protection as we know that the vaccinated can also share the virus.

If we failed to provide the safest possible environment, we may inadvertently drive vulnerable people away from worship. Our current plan aims to be as inclusive as possible to allow vaccinated, unvaccinated and vulnerable people all to attend, which we believe to be a gospel driven approach.

As an employer, the Diocese has a responsibility to provide a safe workplace. We cannot require our workers and volunteers to put themselves in a potentially risky situation to do their jobs. We have a responsibility for over 100 employees and several thousand church attenders.

We know that the policy impacts people across our church, especially those who are not vaccinated. We want to thank you for the sacrifices that you have made, and the personal cost to you, and assure you of our love and support.

We recognise that local circumstances mean the one size-fits-all policy can feel a little blunt. For example, while some up-front speaking ministries may take place more than 1.5 metres from others in some of our larger buildings, this is not the case in our many small church buildings throughout the Diocese. To avoid confusion, we have adopted one policy for all.

We expect that these restrictions will be in place until the current wave of infections subsides, when we will be able to return to a more normal mode of operation. We are aware that the Omicron variant seems to act differently to previous variants, and so are monitoring the situation. It is my hope we will be able to lift the restrictions as soon as possible.

Some of us will have times when we are unable to attend church services in person, such as when we are quarantining, or for particular health reasons. If your church doesn't provide an online service option, there are a number of different service styles available each week at anglicantas.org.au/online-church/.

As we continue on, let's remind ourselves again that the Lord Jesus rules over his church (Colossians 1:18) and he encourages us to keep on meeting together to encourage one another (Hebrews 10:25). We need to be especially attentive to working towards unity and avoiding division over these matters (Philippians 2:2).

You are all daily in my prayers,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. Below the name, there is a short, horizontal, slightly wavy line.

The Rt Revd Dr Richard Condie

Bishop of Tasmania