



A PASTORAL LETTER FROM THE BISHOP OF TASMANIA

September 2021

ANGLICAN DIOCESE
OF TASMANIA

THE RIGHT REVEREND
DR RICHARD CONDIE
BISHOP OF TASMANIA

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I wanted to write to you about the current COVID-19 situation in Tasmania and some pastoral matters.

As we look towards the Tasmanian borders opening up, I want to encourage as many Anglicans to be vaccinated as are able. We live in an amazing country where free, safe, and tested vaccines are available. It is heartbreaking to see places close to our hearts like India, Nepal and Indonesia, where there is little availability and desperate need.

There are some in our communities who are unable to have a vaccine for health reasons and a few with tender consciences or other concerns over whether taking the vaccine is wise. We need to make sure that all have a place in our churches and that we pay special attention to praying against any division creeping into our communities over people's choices. We are one in Christ.

I want you to know that I, along with a number of other Christian leaders, have reached out to the government to discuss ways vaccination status will work in the community when the borders open. Our desire is that churches will be free to gather regardless of vaccination status, and we will be asking for that.

I am very grateful to God that I am now fully vaccinated against COVID-19. I have taken the vaccine on the basis of the expert medical advice given through our government processes, and after speaking with my GP about it. For me, in addition to protecting myself, I consider it is part of a duty of love to the Christian community. We have spoken a lot in our Safe Church processes, about caring for the vulnerable in our midst, and I see this as one more way we can do that.

It seems to me that of all people Christians should be quick to follow what is required of us by our government in line with Romans 13; should not assert our own rights over others, but love the weaker ones in our church in line with Romans 14; and be willing to submit to one another in love in line with Ephesians 5:21. It can be complicated in

working out how to apply these things, but worth our effort in thinking how we can follow the commands of Christ in so doing.

I asked our Diocesan Medical Officer, Dr Richard Lord, for some advice and he wrote the following:

In the midst of this dangerous COVID 19 pandemic, it is exciting to be able to play a part in protecting not only ourselves but also our vulnerable loved ones, vulnerable members of our church fellowships, and those in the wider community by getting vaccinated. As each one of us gets vaccinated we make our families, our churches and our communities safer places.

In Tasmania we are in the privileged position of having free access to vaccines which are no longer experimental, but are now well tested, well tolerated and effective. Complications from being vaccinated are rare, well recognised, and can be treated.

Being vaccinated means that if you catch COVID 19 you are dramatically less likely to be admitted to hospital, to ICU, or worse. It also means that you are around half as likely to pass on COVID 19 infection to those around you, so helping to keep them safe as well.

The time to get vaccinated is now, before COVID 19 starts to spread in Tasmania. We can show by example that we care for those around us. We can be part of the solution, and can make a difference.

Can I please commend this to you? If you have any concerns about the vaccine, please discuss them with your General Practitioner, who will be best placed to advise you. Of course, I want to encourage all our congregations to observe social distancing and check-in requirements and for individuals not to attend church activities if they have any of the symptoms listed in public health guidelines.

Let's not cease in doing good to each other and praying for the unity in the body of Christ.

Warm wishes in Christ,

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