

Queensland Baptists COVID-19 Update 25 August 2020

Latest News

In following on from the changes announced over the weekend in relation to the [Movement and Gathering Direction \(No.3\)](#) and our subsequent updates, we thought it may be helpful to provide a recap of how churches can be operating under current restrictions.

How are Churches affected?

Church activities that are undertaken at a private residence can continue to occur if the Church is **operating under the Industry Approved COVID Safe Plan for Places of Worship**.

The announcement on the weekend clearly identified that “if your business is operating under a COVID Safe plan, you are not affected by these latest restrictions for the Greater Brisbane and Ipswich areas”,

The new restrictions on gatherings fall under the [Movement and Gathering Direction \(No.3\)](#), and this Direction excludes businesses operating under [the Restrictions on Businesses, Activities and Undertakings Direction \(No.5\)](#).

Places of Worship fall under Restrictions on Businesses, Activities and Undertakings Direction (No.5), and are captured even when operating in a private residence **(when using a COVID SAFE Framework i.e. Industry Approved COVID Safe Plan)**.

What does this mean for Home Groups etc?

For a church to continue operating ministry activities from a private residence each ministry/activity would require a documented risk assessments/WH&S plans that sit under the Industry Approved COVID Safe Plan.

This would involve application of certain elements of the Industry Approved COVID Safe Plan in the private residence to ensure full compliance. Churches would need to consider signage, record keeping, social distancing, hand and cough hygiene and risk assessments of any other potential hazards. It would also involve display the required Certificate of Compliance and Checklists form the Industry Approved COVID Safe Plan.

What could go wrong?

There is obvious risk attached to continuing ministries from a private residence. There is potential to draw attention to the number of people “gathered” at a household. The public are on high alert after the sudden and somewhat unexpected changes on the weekend, and so there may be heightened awareness and diligence in reporting suspected breaches.

There is also the issue of oversight. How can the church establish surety around willingness and compliance to implement the requirements of the Industry Approved COVID Safe Plan?

What are our Options?

Churches do have the option of returning to online versions of their ministries or a hybrid of this. For example, perhaps splitting the home group to have some meet in person and the other half ZOOM in. This way the group could not exceed the 10 max – although this is not required it would manage the perception and drawing of attention to the “gathering”

What if we don't use the Industry Approved COVID Safe Plan?

The Industry Approved COVID SAFE Plan for Places of Worship is optional.

For churches who do not wish to use this they are able to operate with a maximum of 50 people with 4 square metres per person is provided and physical distancing observed. This option also requires a comprehensive WH&S Plan demonstrating fulfilment of mandatory obligations in relation to COVID 19 risks.

If the Church is using this option (not using the Industry Approved COVID Safe Plan) activities and ministries of the church must be operated from the Church property, not private residences.

Can we have a Wedding in a Private Residence and use the Church's Industry Approved COVID Safe Plan?

No. If the wedding was to be held at a venue with a COVID Safe Plan or at the church premises and the church was operating under the COVID Safe Plan it would be doable.

Wedding ceremonies and funerals in venues with COVID Safe Plans can have up to 100 people. Services held in private homes or public spaces are restricted to 10 in greater Brisbane and 30 in the rest of the state.