



## COVID-19 responding to a question about providing pastoral care

4 April 2020

To the Recorder,

A question has been raised in the event that individual members are challenged by the Police whilst away from home and carrying out acts of pastoral care to ecclesial members. This has been prompted by the [recent COVID-19 Public Health Orders](#)<sup>1</sup> which state that we “may **only** leave home with a reasonable excuse (*which does include*) ... to go to a place of worship<sup>2</sup> or to provide pastoral care if you are a priest, minister of religion or member of a religious order” and to “provide care or assistance (including personal care) to a vulnerable person or to provide emergency assistance”. There are significant penalties for any breaches of these new orders.<sup>3</sup>

Christadelphians in Australia have long been recognised by government authorities to be “vowed members of a religious order”. We should therefore be permitted to provide pastoral care to our members as long as we are complying with other COVID-19 regulations such as being limited to 2 people and keeping at a safe distance (of 1.5 metres from others and with 4 square metres of space for each person). In doing so, it is recommended that pastoral care visits to vulnerable members by physical attendance should only occur if online and telephone support is insufficient to meet the member’s needs. Particular care and strict adherence to social distancing rules must be observed in relation to all those who are at a high risk of COVID-19<sup>4</sup>.

**If you are challenged, please be prepared to give an answer such as “I am a vowed member of the Christadelphian church and I am providing pastoral care and support to a vulnerable church member”.**

[Please protect yourself and others](#)<sup>5</sup>.

NCC Secretary

Sent to ALL NSW ecclesias

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://preview.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/public-health-orders>

<sup>2</sup> There is little justification in attending a meeting hall unless arranging broadcasting or streaming, particularly if your meeting has adopted an interim online alternative such as Zoom, WhatsApp, Skype, Google Meet, CIL Meet, Google Hangout, YouTube or similar internet or telephone dial in facilities.

<sup>3</sup> In the case of an individual, the maximum penalty for breaching the Public Health Orders is \$11,000, or imprisonment for 6 months, or both and a further \$5500 penalty may apply for each day the offence continues. The NSW Police may also issue on-the-spot fines of \$1000 for an offence.

<sup>4</sup> Those who are at a high risk for COVID-19 include:

- people aged 65 years and over
- people with chronic medical conditions
- people with impaired or compromised immune systems
- people with diagnosed chronic medical conditions
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as they have higher rates of chronic illness
- very young children and babies.

<sup>5</sup> <https://preview.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/how-to-protect-yourself-and-others>