



Archdiocese of Perth
Position Statement for Clergy and Parishes
Preparation for COVID-19 in the Community
and Vaccination Support

Approved by: Very Rev Fr Peter Whitely, Vicar General	Owned by: Office of the Vicar General
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1. BACKGROUND

1.1. On Thursday, 20 October 2021, the Western Australian State Government mandated COVID-19 vaccinations for occupations deemed critical to the ongoing safety and function of the community. In addition, the direction indicates that most other occupations will be required to be double vaccinated to attend work in the event of a lockdown or similar restrictions.

1.2. The purpose of this position statement is to:

- 1) Assist clergy and parishes to understand the WA State Government mandates;
- 2) encourage clergy and parishioners to become double vaccinated by Monday, 31 January 2022; and,
- 3) fulfil the obligations of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Perth (CAP) under the *Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984 (WA)*¹, so far as reasonably practicable, to provide and maintain environments in which individuals and groups are not exposed to hazards.

1.3. On Friday, 17 December 2021, WA reached its target rate of 80 per cent double-dose vaccination for eligible Western Australians aged 12 years and above. Ninety per cent of the WA population aged 12 years and above have now had at least one vaccination.

1.4. Only 6 weeks remain to secure double-dose vaccination status by Monday, 31 January 2022. The WA State Government's health advice is that there should be 3-6 weeks between Pfizer vaccinations. All unvaccinated or partially vaccinated (single-dose) members of the Western Australian community are strongly encouraged by the WA State Government to obtain double vaccination status before Monday, 31 January 2022. This invitation, to keep our community safe, is extended to all clergy and parishioners.

1.5. The position statement of the Catholic Archdiocese of Perth reflects the views of the Holy Father, is consistent with formal Church teaching, and is part of the contribution of the Church to the common good of society. Clergy are expected to support the position of the Church and to seek always to put the common good before their personal considerations.

2. CHANGES IN HEALTH REGULATION

2.1. On Saturday, 5 February 2022, the WA State Government will embark on its *Safe Transition Plan*, as COVID-19 enters Western Australia through a reduction in border controls. These measures will include compulsory mask wearing in some

¹ and the Work Health and Safety Act 2021 (WA) when proclaimed, expected mid-January 2022



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circumstances and possible restrictions on unvaccinated and part-vaccinated people, as has been the case in other states in Australia.

2.2. The combined effect of all health regulations, introduced between October 2021 to February 2022, will prevent unvaccinated and part-vaccinated clergy and parishioners from being included in educational, aged care and community care ministries, after Monday, 31 January 2022.

2.3. The Office of the Vicar General is committed to ensuring the continuation of parish activities and the ministry of clergy, as our community transitions into a COVID-prevalent environment.

3. POSITION FOR EMPLOYEES EMPLOYED BY THE CATHOLIC ARCHDIOECESIS OF PERTH

3.1. In line with the WA State Government mandate of Thursday, 20 October 2021, owing to the nature of occupation, all employees and volunteers employed by the Catholic Archdiocese of Perth, or working in any other premises owned or controlled by the Catholic Archdiocese of Perth are to be double vaccinated by 31 January 2022. The mandate does not include other employees or volunteers based elsewhere, but who regularly visit these sites.

3.2. All other employees and volunteers are strongly encouraged to become double vaccinated (including booster shots where recommended) as soon as possible. For avoidance of doubt, clergy are not defined as employees of the Catholic Archdiocese of Perth.

3.3. Employees of the Catholic Archdiocese of Perth can attend vaccination appointments during paid working hours.

4. POSITION FOR CONTRACTORS

4.1. In line with the WA State Government mandate of Thursday, 20 October 2021, owing to the nature of occupation, all contractors engaged by the Catholic Archdiocese of Perth, or working in any other premises owned or controlled by the Archdiocese are to be double vaccinated by Monday, 31 January 2022.

4.2. All other contractors are strongly encouraged to become double vaccinated (including booster shots where recommended) as soon as possible.

4.3. Many of the contractors engaged by the Catholic Archdiocese of Perth fall within the mandates issued by State Government, as they will meet the criteria of either Group 1 or Group 2 workers. This policy is to ensure that all lawful measures are taken by the Archbishop, to provide and maintain environments in which individuals and groups are not exposed to hazards.

4.4. It is possible that contractors may refuse to provide services to people who are unvaccinated or partly vaccinated, also in the interests of their safety. This is a matter for the contractor and their employer.



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5. ADVICE TO AGENCIES

5.1. On Thursday, 1 December 2021, all Archdiocesan owned or operated agencies and organisations were advised that they were required to collate and record evidence of vaccination of their staff and volunteers in line with the State's Health Regulations.

5.2. The Archdiocese remains committed to supporting Archdiocesan owned and operated agencies and organisations to comply with the legislation, and to ensure they meet their obligations to keep our community safe. This is particularly the case where archdiocesan agencies or organisations provide services to the most vulnerable people and sectors of our community.

5.3. The majority of Archdiocesan owned or operated agencies, offices or organisations fall under Group 1 mandates, which are described below:

- **Group 1:** any organisation which provides community care services, including the following:
 - Disability;
 - Mental health;
 - Homelessness;
 - Drug and alcohol services;
 - Child protection;
 - Family and domestic violence; and
 - Aboriginal peoples.

All participants in care for these vulnerable sectors are required to be double-vaccinated by Friday, 31 December 2021.

6. CEWA ADVICE

6.1. Catholic Education Western Australia continues to align with WA Government advice to ensure the health and safety of all students and staff. All education workers in CEWA schools must be double vaccinated by Monday, 31 January 2022, unless they are exempted.

6.2. Schools and boarding schools (teachers and other support staff) are amongst those community members who are included in **Group 2** mandates, together with:

- supermarket, grocery, butcher, fruit and vegetable store or fishmonger; indoor or outdoor food market;
- restaurant, pub, bar or café;
- child care or family day care provider;
- staff working in or entering remote Aboriginal communities;
- building and construction workers (see above, at para 4, Contractors); and
- many other categories.



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7. SUPPORT FOR DOUBLE VACCINATION AND PREPARING TO TRANSITION TO COVID IN THE COMMUNITY

7.1. Please read the information and advice provided by the WA State Government with respect to COVID in the community by visiting:
<https://www.wa.gov.au/government/covid-19-coronavirus>

This website provides information and ongoing updates with respect to:

- 7.1.1.1. Latest Updates
- 7.1.1.2. Preparing for WA's Transition
- 7.1.1.3. Information on the COVID vaccine
- 7.1.1.4. Travel and Quarantine
- 7.1.1.5. Proof of COVID-19 vaccinations
- 7.1.1.6. COVID Safety Plans and Guidelines
- 7.1.1.7. Health Professional Advice

7.2. The Archbishop has invited Police Commissioner and Vaccine Commander, Commissioner Christopher Dawson, to provide mobile COVID-19 Vaccine clinics at St Mary's Cathedral, Perth, on the following days/times:

- Saturday, 18 December 2021 (noon – 6pm)
- Sunday, 19 December 2021 (9am – 2pm)

- Saturday, 8 January 2022 (noon – 6pm)
- Sunday, 9 January 2022 (9am – 2pm)

If you wish to attend this or any other vaccination centre, please advise the Office of the Vicar General and we can assist. The Office of the Vicar General remains available to discuss any queries you may have and we look forward to working with you on this important care initiative.

7.3. The State Government's directions on these matters can frequently change, given this volatile environment. Frank Tassone, Senior Operations Officer, Office of the Vicar General, will provide you with updates as necessary, particularly:

- (1) where it is necessary to comply with any Health Direction issued under *Emergency Management Act 2005 (WA)*; and
- (2) if the State Government issues further mandates to include additional groups, including ministers of religion and places of worship.

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