

Diocesan Council COVID-19 Protection Policy

1. Objective

The Anglican Diocese of Auckland is a place of welcome to all people. We want to continue to have people gather, worship, meet and provide in person services for our communities, in a safe environment, which mitigates the spread of COVID-19 and its associated risks.

This policy is designed to incorporate all key health protection measures that can reduce the potential spread of COVID-19 within our ministry units. This means an emphasis on vaccinations as a key method of protection.

This policy aligns with the current New Zealand Government's COVID-19 Protection Framework and any related legislation.

This policy has been developed following engagement with clergy, ministry units, and professional subject matter experts.

After consultation with clergy and ministry units, and completion of a risk assessment of the clergy roles within the Diocese and approved by the Bishop, it is Diocesan Council's position that all clergy licenced to an office or holding a Permission To Officiate (PTO) will be vaccinated. A copy of this risk assessment and its outcome as an appendix to this policy.

It is Diocesan Council's general expectation that people working and volunteering for the Diocese will be vaccinated, however there may be local variations of particular roles where risk assessments will be required to determine a risk outcome.

This policy will inform decision making and will be demonstrated in our guidelines, communications, and resources. While it necessarily focuses on health measures designed to protect against the spread of COVID-19, it should not diminish our commitment and responsibility towards all people whether vaccinated or not. It is expected that strategies for ministry and worship will be established locally in communities to enable this to happen.

This policy is established to manage exceptional circumstances and thus is a temporary measure. Once the current health emergency is concluded, the policy will be withdrawn.

2. Theological Reflection

Our calling as followers of Christ is to love God and to love our neighbour as ourselves. This gospel mandate will guide our actions as we seek to respond to the changing pandemic context and manage the risks of re-gathering in our worshipping communities. To love our neighbour is to recognise their needs equally with our own. It is to understand ourselves as relational and interdependent rather than as isolated individuals. This may mean we limit some of our personal freedoms as an expression of our commitment to the common good.

In the context of a pandemic, we believe that vaccination is one of the primary expressions of our love and care for others. This is a way of exercising a preferential option to prioritise the health and safety of vulnerable people: children under 12, the elderly, those with existing health conditions or whose immune systems are compromised, Māori and Pacific communities, and those who are unvaccinated. For those choosing to remain unvaccinated, the most loving choice may be to avoid groups where they could put themselves and others at risk. All of our choices in these matters, including how we express our disagreements, will be guided by our love for those around us and our Anglican commitment to unity in our diversity.

We know that churches are not buildings but are the communities of people who gather within those buildings. Hospitality and welcome are an essential element in the nature of our church life. It grieves us to have to form a policy that prevents people attending services of worship and other gatherings. In the community in general there is a great risk that the unvaccinated population will be judged and blamed for their decision, not just unable to fully participate in many activities, but spurned for their decision. As followers of Jesus Christ that is not who we are.

We recognise that these are exceptional circumstances and so for a time we must apply some exceptional measures so that we act in the best way we can for the common good. We must not lose sight of the fact that God’s love is for the whole world and for all people. We must therefore keep working at what it means for us to show love to all people in how we will offer ministry through this time. We must be driven by love and not by fear.

3. Definitions

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| “The Diocese” | shall mean the Anglican Diocese of Auckland. |
| “COVID-19 vaccinations” | shall mean receiving all doses of a government approved COVID-19 vaccine, including booster vaccinations or having received Ministry of Health medical exemption or those who do not require vaccination e.g children. |
| “Dispensation” | a dispensation approved by or on behalf of the Bishop of Auckland to not use vaccine passes for worship services, programmes, gatherings, events, and meetings. |
| “Ministry unit” | shall mean a parish, mission district or local shared ministry unit and shall for the purposes of this policy also include any mission venture. |
| “New Zealand COVID-19 Protection Framework” | shall mean the New Zealand Government’s New Zealand COVID-19 Protection Framework as published on the covid19.govt.nz website. |
| “Office” | shall mean either the Diocesan Office, Bishop’s Office, any ministry unit or Trust where relevant. |

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| “Related legislation” | shall mean the New Zealand Government’s legislation relating to COVID-19 health responses. |
| “Risk assessment” | Method of assessing if vaccinations should be mandated for individual roles based on the risk of exposure to and transmission of COVID-19. |
| “Safety plan” | Method of assessing, documenting, implementing and managing health and safety measures to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 and other health and safety hazards for the users of or attendees at worship services, programmes, sites, retail outlets, hospitality, workplaces, gatherings or events. |
| “Vaccine pass” | The official record from the Ministry of Health or other relevant government agency showing an individual’s vaccination status, including medical exemption. |
| “Volunteer” | Under the Health and Safety Work Act 2015 volunteers are deemed to be workers and therefore organisations engaging volunteers have an obligation to ensure they have a safe and healthy work environments and volunteers have an obligation to follow health and safety protocols. Volunteers are people who carry out work in any capacity for a ministry unit on an ongoing basis with the knowledge and consent of the ministry unit. <i>More information on volunteers will be provided in the Guidelines.</i> |

4. Background

In March 2020 the New Zealand Government introduced a four-tiered Alert Level system to help combat COVID-19. Each Alert Level had a differing set of restrictions that were applied regionally, depending on the level of risk presented by COVID-19. In August 2021, the more transmissible Delta variant of COVID-19 began circulating in the community. In October 2021 the New Zealand Government announced the introduction of the COVID-19 Protection Framework, or “traffic light system” as the response plan to move out of lockdowns and allow more freedom of movement.

A focus of the framework is using vaccinations as a primary tool to protect the community and to avoid the reliance on lockdown as the main measure to stop the virus spreading.

Up until October, the Diocese was operating the Alert Level system, and communications, guides and resources were provided to support and inform ministry units on how to operate within that system.

However, the changes announced in October resulted in a rethinking and realignment of our information and communications to reflect the new traffic light system, and how this will impact our communities and how they will operate locally, as well as what resources will need to be made available to support ministry units as we move through the different levels.

5. Application

This policy applies to all ministry units of the diocese and all people insofar as they are engaged in an activity of the diocese. This policy should be read and applied in conjunction with the provided guidelines.

The application of this policy has been designed with special consideration for those within our community that are vulnerable or may have special requirements e.g. children, elderly, disabled.

6. Policy

To follow Government-mandated COVID-19 protection measures and to meet the objectives of this policy Diocesan Council adopts the following:

6.1. Public Health Measures

People within ministry units and other diocesan places of work will use public health measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19, including vaccinations, contact tracing, physical distancing, face coverings, building ventilation, restricted gathering numbers, personal and venue hygiene and work from home where recommended.

6.2. Mandated COVID-19 Vaccinations

6.2.1. Vaccinations will be mandated for

- a. Roles subject to a government health order; and
- b. All clergy who hold a licence or Permission to Officiate; and
- c. Any person performing a role which, by a risk assessment performed by the relevant authorised person as per clause 6.5, is deemed that vaccinations should be mandated.

6.2.2. Registers of the vaccination status of those of which 6.2.1 applies will be kept as follows

- a. for each clergyperson and licenced minister, by the Bishop's Office
- b. for each Diocesan Office employee, volunteer, and contractor, by the Diocesan Office
- c. for each local employee, volunteer, and contractor, by the ministry unit office.

All records will be kept in line with the diocesan privacy statement.

6.2.3. For Clergy

6.2.3.1. For clergy who choose not to be vaccinated, consultative discussions will be undertaken, including what potential redeployment or other ways of working options are available. Removal from office or withdrawal of a Permission to Officiate will be considered as a last resort.

6.2.3.2. Removal from office or withdrawal of a Permission to Officiate will follow relevant Canons and diocesan statutes and/or conditions of licence.

6.2.4. For Employees

6.2.4.1. For employees who choose not to be vaccinated, consultative discussions will be undertaken, including what potential redeployment or other ways of working options are available. Termination will be considered as a last resort.

6.2.4.2. Processes to terminate employment agreements will follow relevant employment law or organisational policies and/or conditions of their employment.

- 6.2.5. For Volunteers
 - 6.2.5.1. For volunteers who choose not to be vaccinated and who can no longer perform their volunteer duties, consultative and pastoral discussions will be undertaken.
- 6.2.6. For Contractors
 - 6.2.6.1. For contractors to whom 6.2.1 applies, who choose not to be vaccinated and who can no longer perform their contractual duties, consultative and pastoral discussions will be undertaken where appropriate.
 - 6.2.6.2. Processes to terminate contracts will follow the relevant terms of the contract for service or independent contractor agreement.
- 6.3. Vaccine Passes
 - 6.3.1 Gathering/events/meetings
 - 6.3.1.1 Use of vaccine passes for gathering, events and meetings will be mandated based on
 - a. Government health order; or
 - b. The Government's COVID-19 Protection Framework levels. All ministry units will be required to undertake a safety plan, and vaccine passes must be used for any worship service, programme, gathering, event or meeting. Where vaccine passes are not to be used, ministry units must adhere to the gathering numbers and a dispensation must first be obtained. Dispensations may be one-off or ongoing. Dispensations will be approved as per the criteria in diocesan provided guidelines.
 - 6.3.2 Sites/Workplaces
 - 6.3.2.1 The requirement to present a vaccine pass to access a site or workplace, except where it applies to 6.3.1b, will be mandated based on
 - a. Government health order; or
 - b. The policy of the governing body responsible for the site.
 - 6.3.3 Diocesan Council will delegate authority to the Bishop of Auckland or a representative of the Bishop's choosing, to approve dispensations to not use vaccine passes applied for under clauses 6.3.1.
 - 6.3.4 Requests for and approval of dispensations and the management of dispensations must follow the process specified by the Diocesan Office. The Diocesan Office will issue a guide regarding the agreed procedures.
- 6.4 Care and Support
 - 6.4.1 Vaccinations

Clergy and staff will be provided with paid time off to be vaccinated; and fair and reasonable paid time off to recover from any side effects from the vaccination as negotiated with the employer.
 - 6.4.2 COVID-19 Leave
 - a. Isolation

Where they are unable to work from home, clergy and staff will be provided with paid leave to isolate when waiting on a negative COVID-19 test until they are given clearance to return to work by the Ministry of Health.
 - b. COVID-19 positive cases

Clergy and staff will be provided with 10 days paid special leave to isolate when recovering from COVID-19 and waiting on a negative COVID-19 test and clearance to return to work by the Ministry of Health. After 10 days, other leave provisions, including sick and annual leave, will be able to be accessed.

6.4.3 New Ways of Working

The relevant office shall provide support and flexible working options and resources to all staff who may need to work differently or who are redeployed, including information technology advice and equipment.

6.4.4 Pastoral Care/Counselling

The relevant office shall provide appropriate support to those who are impacted by the effects of COVID-19, including those who have contracted the disease, are experiencing termination of their role or redeployment, or are suffering other anxieties related to COVID-19.

6.4.5 Consultation

The relevant office shall consult in good faith with those staff who may be impacted in any way by changes to policies and procedures related to COVID-19 safety measures.

6.4.6 Vulnerable Persons/Groups

When developing safety plans for worship services, programmes, sites, gatherings or events, consultation with and special consideration of vulnerable persons and groups, including the needs of people with disabilities, that might be affected will be given.

6.5 Supporting Implementation of the Policy

- a. Episcopal Team and Diocesan Office management will be tasked with providing guidelines and resources to ministry units.
- b. Local ministry unit management will operate within the scope of this policy to provide guidelines and policies, including employment related policies within their local contexts.

6.6 Costs of implementation

Costs associated with implementing this policy will be met by the relevant office, including costs of supporting staff, volunteers, and others impacted by this policy or statutory obligations, such as paying for leave or implementing safety measures.

7. Reporting

Ministry units are required to notify the Diocesan Health and Safety Working Group (Keepsafe) when their church buildings or other workplaces e.g. op shops, offices, have been deemed a place of interest or where a clergy or staff member or volunteer has contracted COVID-19. Local notifications shall be managed with care and within Privacy Commission guidelines. Any Government or other health authority-required notifications must also be made.

8. Review

This policy and related procedures will be reviewed by the Diocesan Health and Safety Working Group each time the government makes changes to the COVID Protection Framework, or when a change in levels is proposed.

Any changes will be approved by Diocesan Council.

9. Related Policies

- Diocesan Privacy Policy and Statement

10. Related Legislation

- COVID-19 Public Health Response Act 2020
- COVID-19 Public Health Response (Vaccinations) Order 2021
- Any other Government legislation related to COVID-19
- Health and Safety at Work Act 2015
- Human Rights Act 1993
- Privacy Act 2020
- Employment Relations Act 2000

11. References

- [New Zealand Government COVID-19 Protection Framework](#)

Roles Requiring Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccination

Risk Assessment

Risk assessments must be undertaken for all roles of the Anglican Diocese of Auckland that are not covered by a Government issued COVID-19 Public Health Response (Vaccinations) Order

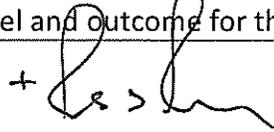
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|--|--|---|------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| Role/s being Assessed | Clergy – Diocese of Auckland | | | Date | 23-11-2021 |
| Category | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Clergy <input type="checkbox"/> Lay | Ministry Licence | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Type (choose all that apply) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stipended <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Non-Stipended <input type="checkbox"/> Salaried/Wage <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer | | | | |
| Office/Ministry Unit | Diocese of Auckland | | Department/Team | | |
| Brief Role Description | Leading worship, funerals, weddings baptisms etc Visiting sick, offering pastoral care including home and hospital visits Chairing meetings, facilitating workshops/study groups, attending community events Working with children, young people, and the elderly and their families | | | | |
| Assessment Undertaken By | Name | The Venerable Carole Hughes | | Title | Archdeacon |
| | Role | Archdeacon, Vicar-General, Member of Episcopal Team | | | |
| Consultation with Role Holder/s | Weekly cluster groups for Vicars/Priests in Charge across the Diocese of Auckland Diocesan Survey to all clergy re vaccination Diocesan Survey to all ministry units re vaccination and gatherings | | | | |
| Hazard being assessed | Exposure to and/or transmission of COVID-19 because of the work activities involved in performing the role including interactions with others in the course of their duties including but not limited to colleagues, volunteers, contractors, customers, clients, visitors/guests, group participants and members of the public. | | | | |
| Possible consequence | Complications may include pneumonia, acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS), multi-organ failure, septic shock, and death. | | | | |

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| Who could be affected by the hazard? | All parishioners, and more specifically children and the elderly |
| Current controls in place | Following the appropriate Framework Level requirements and recommendations including encouraging working from home during “red” traffic light, always providing tools for online engagement, encouraged wearing of face coverings, stay home if unwell, hand sanitiser available on site, use of QR codes for contact tracing, good personal encouraged, ensuring venue hygiene protocols are followed, physical distancing if possible, ventilation of buildings where possible, encouraging vaccinations as a primary tool of safety for all, continuing to communicate all health and safety messages and protocols. |
| Additional Controls | - |

Risk Assessment continued...

| Risk Factor <i>Consider the following risk factors, add additional risk factors if required.</i> | | Response/Rationale <i>Provide details of the risk factor being considered and how it relates to the role being assessed.</i> | Rating <i>Add a risk rating between 1 –5. Use the chart provided.</i> |
|--|---|---|---|
| 1 | How many people does the role holder carrying out that work come into contact with? (very few = lower risk; many = higher risk) | Clergy in contact with many people with diverse needs, so higher risk | 4 |
| 2 | How close is the role holder carrying out the tasks in proximity to other people? (2 metres or more in an outdoor space = lower risk; close physical contact in an indoor environment = higher risk) | Meetings and services indoors provide a higher risk, as does close contact in pastoral situations as well as giving communion | 4-5 |
| 3 | How long does the work require the role holder to be in that proximity to other people? (brief contact = lower risk; lengthy contact = higher risk) | Average of 1-2 hours per meeting or service | 3-4 |
| 4 | What is the risk of COVID-19 infection and transmission in the work environment when compared to the risk outside work? (equal to outside work = lower risk; higher than outside work = higher risk) | Higher risk as clergy are required to physically gather indoors with diverse groups of people over a prolonged period of time | 4-5 |
| 5 | How easy will it be to identify the people who the role holder comes into contact with? (easy to identify, such as co-workers = lower risk; difficult to identify, such as unknown members of public = higher risk) | Clergy will know the majority of people who attend worship and meetings. Funerals, weddings and some events will be considered a higher risk as they will not know members of the public who attend. | 3 |
| 6 | Does the work involve regular interaction with people considered at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19, such as people with underlying health conditions? (little to none = lower risk; whole time = higher risk) | Elderly, sick and dying are high risk | 4 |
| 7 | Will the work continue to involve regular interaction with unknown people if the region is at a higher level of restrictions e.g. Red traffic light? (no = lower risk; yes = higher risk). | Under red traffic light system clergy are able to gather 100 people for worship. | 3-4 |
| Total Rating <i>Add ratings above</i> | | | 25-29 |
| Risk Level <i>Refer to Risk Assessment (Total Rating) Outcome Matrix</i> | | | High |
| Outcome Role Requires Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccination | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |

Risk Assessment continued...

| Risk Assessment Approval | | | | |
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| I, [NAME] agree that the risk assessment has considered all risk factors for this role, appropriate consultation with role holders has been undertaken and the risk level and outcome for this role are accurate, in line with Government requirements and I have authority to approve this assessment. | | | | |
| Signature |  | Title | Bishop | Date 3-11-2021 |