



18 March 2020

Dear Church Family,

This is **issue #3 (three)** of regular Corporate communication. This communication supersedes previous issues #1 and #2 (one and two).

In light of the World Health Organisation (WHO) upgrading the status of COVID-19 (novel coronavirus) to that of a pandemic, the following is important information for our churches regarding COVID-19 and measures designed to prevent its spread.

At present, Australia has more than 452 confirmed cases of Coronavirus, with 78 confirmed cases in Queensland alone.

Today, **Prime Minister Scott Morrison** addressed the nation, with a basic summary of his main points as listed:

- No travel outside of Australia (level 4 travel ban)
- Ban on 500+ gatherings outdoors
- Ban on non-essential gatherings of 100+ indoors (excluding public transport, shops, medical centers, hospitals and other workplaces such as factories, mines, courts and construction sites, with rostered shifts to support social distances). The ban on non-essential gatherings includes churches, mosques, restaurants, bars etc.
- No lockdown of Aged Care facilities at present. Only limited visitations to no more than 2 visitors per day and to implement social distancing methods. No visitations from school groups
- No closure of schools at present. Schools must implement social distancing and good hand hygiene practice amongst students. Parents are to keep unwell children at home, not sending them to school and relying on school staff to identify unwell children to send home
- Prepare for these changes to last for 6 months
- Stop stockpiling on supermarket foods and other items, this is not necessary

The South Queensland Conference SDA Church (SQC) has taken into consideration all information and recommendations provided by WHO, Australian Government Department of Health, SPD Risk Management Services, AUC correspondence and most recently TED correspondence. The SQC fully supports all recommendations provided thus far. In addition to the guidance given by these entities, SQC understands its moral and ethical obligations to the church community in South Queensland as well as the general community. We have a duty of care to put into place measures that reduce the risk of transmission and contamination, also a legal obligation specified by The Workplace Health and Safety Act 2011. Measures outlined below have been carefully thought through and are considered proactive rather than reactive.

Seventh-day Adventist Church (South Queensland Conference) Limited

400 Boundary Street, Spring Hill, QLD 4000, (PO Box 577, Spring Hill. QLD 4004) **E** sqconf@adventist.org.au

T (07) 3218 7777 **F** (07) 3236 1305 **ACN:** 104 195 897 **ABN:** 23 104 195 897 **sq.adventist.org.au**

Specific Control Measures in the South Queensland Conference (SQC):

General South Queensland Conference Administration Response

The SQC Administration has decided on the following proactive measures to both maximise protection for our staff and those to whom contact may be made as well as to positively support the general community in seeking to restrict the spread of the Covid-19 virus:

- All work related air travel (international and domestic) will be suspended until further notice (additional specific requirements relating to travel will be issued to staff directly).
- Travel by staff on other enclosed public transport (rail and bus) should be reconsidered and avoided where possible.
- Any employee returning from an overseas trip must self-isolate at home for 14 days from the date of arriving back into Australia. This has now become a Federal Government directive.
- The Administration & Resourcing Centre (Spring Hill) at this stage will remain open, however will be subject to continual review.
- All Conference events scheduled between the date of this release and 30th April 2020, will be cancelled. This includes non-essential meetings/ training programs/ seminars or presentation programs.
- As a result of the travel restrictions agreed to by the Conference and the AUC, all planned and advertised "Town Hall" meetings, scheduled to provide information on restructuring proposals, have been cancelled and will be re-scheduled to a future date.
- As a result of the impact on church attendance, additional material will be provided on alternative methods for members and friends to continue to financially support the ministry of the wider church and the local church, including the electronic payment of tithes and offerings (additional separate material will be distributed).

SQC Administration and the SQC HR and Compliance Departments, continue to monitor and review the current conditions and climate on a daily basis.

Churches:

Yesterday, the Australian Union officers (AUC) and Conference presidents from across Australia met to consider the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and have released a statement recommending that churches suspend all services until the end of April 2020.

The South Queensland Conference Crisis Management Team has moved to support the recommendation and as of the issuing of this notice all church services and allied meetings will be suspended until end of April.

To quote the AUC:

...we recognise the importance of community and worshipping together, especially on Sabbath. However, we have considered the current advice of the Australian Government and their health experts; as well as many of our own Adventist health professionals; and similar actions by Adventist church leaders around the world, and have made this decision—one we believe is timely and needed to protect our members, particularly those who are more vulnerable in our churches and the wider community. As Christians, we have a responsibility to help minimise the stress on our health system and those who work in it.

The South Queensland Conference has moved to provide each of our Pastoral team with professional subscriptions to ZOOM (an online video conferencing tool) to allow each minister to continue to conduct various administrative meetings of the church, without added cost to the local church as it carries out its ministry.

The SQC requests the following:

Everyone should practice good personal hygiene to protect against infections as directed by the WHO and Government Department of Health. Good hygiene includes:

- washing your hands often and thoroughly with regular soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- using a tissue to cover your mouth or cough and sneeze into your elbow
- avoiding close contact with others, such as touching and shaking hands
- Discard used tissues in a bin or bag immediately and wash your hands immediately
- Don't touch your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands
- Frequently clean and disinfect regularly used surfaces and public areas, such as hand rails, door handles and benches
- Maintain social distance at all times with a distance of at least 1.5 meters between yourself and the next person (for public interactions)
- Stay home, self-quarantine and call your doctor if you feel unwell

The SQC seeks the co-operation of our local churches, and requests that all South Queensland churches update the **attached** poster with specific details and place in visible areas noting temporary church closure.

Church Tithes and Offerings Support:

We refer to separate communication issued by our Chief Financial Officer, Mr Scott Hopkins, dated 18 March 2020.

The SQC understands the financial impact COVID-19 is having and will have on our members. The Treasury department is offering churches with flexible tithe and offering support. Alternatives outlined are:

- **Access to Electronic Giving (e-giving) via the internet website**
- **Access to e-giving by the new APP that can be easily downloaded to your mobile phone and/or ipad**
- **Details on Manal Credit Card Sheet that can be completed and emailed to us to allow for giving via credit or debit cards**
- **Access to Phone Service, should you wish to phone your credit card details**

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through for our staff to assist you in your tithes and offerings

- **Details for Direct Bank Transfers to our Conference bank account, should you prefer to give in this way**
- **Details on a personal Deposit system, available here at our Administration and Resourcing Centre (Spring Hill)**
- **Details on Mail Delivery for giving donations**

Schools:

The school company has implemented their Critical Incident Management Plan section Pandemic Protection and Response Management Guide. They are cancelling all larger gatherings, sporting events, programs, functions and camps that may expose their communities to additional risk. All schools have developed Continuity of Learning Plans should there be a need for long term closures in the future.

Children who are displaying signs of illness will be removed from class and parents called for collection and isolation until well again, as is current policy.

Schools have communicated to parents details surrounding procedures and possible closures.

The current advice from the Government is for schools to remain open in an effort to aid community normality, employment continuance for parents who would otherwise need to stay home from work if schools close and to wait for the most opportune time for closure to take place to maximize the impact on mitigating the spread of the virus. Our schools will remain open until the directive is given to close.

Aged Care:

The Aged care team continue to work at putting into place comprehensive measures designed to protect the residents and staff.

Church members may access regular updates and latest communication from Aged Care CEO, Eric Anderson via the following link: <https://www.arplus.org.au/news/>

Aged Care will continue to adapt and respond as the coronavirus climate changes.

Watson Park, Camp Somerset & Lake Monduran Sites:

Camp Somerset, Watson Park Convention Centre and Lake Monduran Camp sites have closed and ceased hiring of facilities until 30th April 2020 with further updates to be issued.

ABC Book centers

The book centers are currently closed until 30th April 2020 with further updates to be issued.

We will continue to offer resources if available to the public BY POST, through the following options:

1. Visit <https://adventistbookcentre.com.au> website and place your order to be mailed.

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2. Email orders to be mailed:

- clr@adventist.org.au
- abcsgc@adventist.org.au
- gloriapaun@adventist.org.au

3. Phone Orders: 3340 4700 or 3886 1316 and leave a message for our return call to you.

Conclusion:

SQC has been proactive in these uncertain and difficult times. We appreciate that some of these measures will cause inconvenience and disappointment where expected programs are cancelled. We thank all in advance for your co-operation and understanding as we seek to deal as appropriately as possible with this constantly changing major and serious health threat.

With these comprehensive responses put in place, the SQC will monitor, change and adapt as the virus changes and escalates. The SQC understands that the current situation is fluid and requires extensive monitoring and will update and inform both staff and members as additional information comes to hand and/or additional measures are required in our response. May we pray together for God's continuing guidance and protection for our church and our community through these challenging times.

Thank you for noting this important notice and following the directions as set by the Crisis Management Team in supporting the recommendations of the AUC.

Yours sincerely
SQC Crisis Management Team

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