

THE AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND DIOCESE OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA

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5th August 2021

No. 8-1-21

Ms Anastacia Palaszczuk
Premier of Queensland
Member for Inala

Dear Ms Palaszczuk,

RE: Restrictions for Locked Down Areas (South-East Queensland) Direction (No. 4)

We write to you regarding the Chief Health Officer's Public Health Directions which came into effect on 4 August 2021 (Directions) and specifically in relation to restrictions imposed on places of worship under Schedule 3 of the Directions. The amendments under Schedule 3 now require that places of worship only livestream services where participants involved in the livestream do so only from their place of residence and not from the place of worship. We note that under the previous directions, as revoked, places of worship were able to livestream with the person conducting the service and a camera operator but that parishioners and members of the public were not permitted to attend.

Since the beginning of the COVID pandemic in March 2020, our church has continued to operate, as permitted under restrictions and in accordance with public health directions as issued from time to time. This has, at times, meant that only live stream services were available to parishioners who were prohibited from attending church e.g. Easter of 2020, or have only been able to attend on a limited basis due to physical distancing requirements within a church. While livestream services are incomplete when compared to in-person attendance, not allowing participation in the central component of the service, it has been understood that indoor venues are places where respiratory sickness can spread, and that places of worship have been treated with fairness.

We are deeply concerned by the latest Directions which prevent parishes from livestreaming from the church building entirely. Much like other business, activities or undertakings, we are not able to simply transport our workplace into a residence. However, until now, our parishes in Brisbane have been able to comply through livestreaming with only a priest and one other member.

We are not able to see an apparent reason behind closing places of worship entirely. This difficulty is compounded by evaluating other activities permitted to operate under the Directions. Café's are permitted to serve customers take-away, and bottle shops are permitted customers with physical distancing, while the Directions prevent places of worship, staffed by two individuals to create a broadcast, from the opportunity to act in a COVIDSafe manner.

Most Australians have felt the emotional, financial and mental strain as a consequence of the various restrictions. The ability to livestream services allows us to support the mental health and

wellbeing of throughout Orthodox Christians in Queensland, ensuring that they are able to comply with the public health directives while also participating in the practices of their chosen beliefs.

We propose that two people in their place of work, abiding by substantial physical distancing and other COVIDSafe principles, does not constitute an additional risk to the public health of the citizens of Queensland. Indeed, quite the reverse.

We ask that the current Directions be amended to immediately rectify this situation and that places of worship be permitted to continue to livestream with minimal attendees as per the restrictions under the previous directions.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you wish to discuss this further.

Yours faithfully,



+Bp. George

Fz. Makarov.

Bishop George (Schaeffer),
Bishop of Canberra,
Administrator of the Diocese
of Australia and New Zealand (ROCOR).

Archpriest Gabriel Makarov,
Dean of Queensland,
Parish Priest of
St Nicholas Cathedral, Woolloongabba.

*Cc: Minister for Health
Chief Medical Officer
Federal Member for Griffith
State Member for South Brisbane
Councillor for The Gabba*