

THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA



The Eighteenth Session of General Synod

Message from the General Secretary (Circular 08)

Eighteenth Session of General Synod

29 April 2022

To all General Synod Members

COVID Safe Arrangements at GS18

It is anticipated that a number of General Synod members may contract COVID-19 or be confirmed as a close contact, in the lead up to, and even during, GS18.

Every effort has been made to ensure GS18 is a safe event and arrangements have been put in place to minimize any COVID transmission and ensure full participation by members.

This circular provides important information relating to your attendance at General Synod. Please read it carefully and clarify issues arising with your diocese or directly with the General Synod Office.

COVID Safe Plan – GS18

The Provisional Business Committee has amended some of the operational arrangements for GS18 to provide the safest possible meeting environment. Most of these arrangements exceed the requirements of Government health directives.

Room configuration and catering - Members will share tables with only 4 other persons and the room capacity provides a ratio of one person for every 6 square meters. Catering arrangements during the week are based on COVID safe arrangements. All meals will be served in a spacious foyer area providing excellent room capacity ratio.

Mask Wearing –Queensland Government health directives no longer require the wearing of masks indoors. However, members will be asked to wear a mask in the Synod Hall unless speaking in debate and in other indoor areas unless eating or drinking.

Worship – The Synod opening service of Holy Communion on Sunday evening has been moved to an undercover, outdoor setting (on the tennis courts). This is the only service at which there will be hymn singing. The wearing of masks is recommended.

All other liturgies - the daily service of Holy Communion, Morning and Evening Prayer will be conducted with brevity and with minimal opportunity for COVID transmission.

At services of Holy Communion, the Common Cup will be available for those who choose to drink from it. It is made available for those who feel that it is necessary to receive the sacrament in both kinds. Reception of the Common Cup is entirely at the discretion of individual worshippers,

Registration – Usually members are invited to register to receive business papers and name badges on arrival on Sunday. We have arranged a contactless registration process.

On arrival at the hotel, you will participate in an express check in process and will proceed to your allocated room. Your registration pack will be in your hotel room.

Limitations on attendees – There has been an intentional approach to limiting the number of persons attending GS18. There will be no exhibitors at GS18 and most media will view the proceedings online, rather than attend in person. Sessions of General Synod are open to the public and a public gallery will continue to be available but numbers will be limited.

Monitoring of COVID symptoms – It is important that you take responsibility for your own health and support the COVID safe arrangements. You are requested to undertake a Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) before leaving home. You will be provided with a Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) in your registration pack and are encouraged to bring additional supply.

What if I become sick, or am required to isolate, before I leave or when I am there?

Appointment of an alternate member - Should you contract COVID-19 in the next week you should advise your diocese immediately. Your diocese will deal directly with the General Synod Office on your behalf. Depending on the time available the diocese may be able to appoint an alternate representative to attend in your place.

Do not request any changes to your flight and accommodation arrangements, because, where possible, the alternate representative will take over your existing travel and accommodation bookings. This will be dependent on how much notice can be provided to the General Synod Office.

Legislation to allow participation by videoconference

In anticipation that some members will contract COVID-19 or become a close contact in the week leading up to and during GS18, a Bill has been prepared to enable members to participate online at GS18 should it be required.

The Bill is designed to enable GS18 members who are prohibited from attending in person to fully participate at this session of General Synod by videoconference. Please review Bill 13 on the GS18 portal – *Eighteenth General Synod Participation Canon 2022*.

The Bill will allow the session to operate as a hybrid meeting where most members will be in attendance in the Synod Hall and others will be able to fully participate by Zoom. Full participation means a member can engage with all proceedings including submitting amendments by email, speaking in debate and voting using electronic means.

The Bill makes this access available to members needing to comply with isolation requirements as they have contracted COVID-19 or are a close-contact of a person who has COVID-19. These circumstances will occur in the week before the session commences, or even during the session, when it is too late for the diocese to appoint an alternate member.

The Bill will be considered as the first item of business on Monday 8 May 2022. As soon as it is passed the 'affected members' will be granted access to the session by videoconference.

'Affected member' accommodates two categories of GS18 members:

- Those who, prior to the commencement of the session, advise that they are unable to travel and attend the session as they are required to isolate due to having contracted COVID-19 or are a close contact. The names of these people will be advised to the General Secretary by dioceses, and included in a schedule attached to the Bill.
- Those who, during the session, advise the General Secretary that they are required to isolate on 'medical grounds' as they have contracted COVID-19 or are a close contact. These members will be required to remain in their hotel accommodation. The Bill allows that these members can participate by videoconference when they provide notice to the General Secretary.

The Bill does not include any requirement for proof of a medical condition. A medical condition is not limited to COVID-19. However, the Bill is not designed to accommodate members who prefer to participate online when there is no medical reason why they cannot attend.

After you arrive at General Synod, if you contract COVID-19 or are a confirmed close contact, please advise your diocesan bishop and contact the **General Secretary – Anne Hywood (tel) 02 8267 2701 or (email) generalsecretary@anglican.org.au**.

You will be required to isolate in accordance with health directives in place in Queensland at that time. You will be supported in your isolation arrangements including having meals arranged for you. The General Secretary will make arrangements with the hotel to extend your accommodation as required and reschedule any return travel bookings.

Most State Governments, including Queensland, have recently removed the requirement for close contacts to isolate and now require a schedule of regular rapid antigen testing. However, in the interests of COVID safety for other members, any GS18 member who becomes a close contact in the lead up to, or during GS18, is requested to isolate and not attend the session in person.

If you are well enough, access to full participation in GS18 by videoconference will be provided at your request.

The cost of extended accommodation stay and changes to travel bookings will initially be the responsibility of the General Synod. All members, as volunteers of the General Synod, are covered by the General Synod's Business Travel Insurance, which provides some cover for travel disruption arising from COVID-19. The General Synod Office will coordinate an insurance claim with the member's assistance. It should not be assumed that insurance will cover all costs and some costs may be referred to the diocese.

Electronic Voting and Online Elections

Assuming that at least some members will participate in GS18 online, it has been necessary to provide electronic voting on motions at this session to ensure the same voting arrangements are in place for all members – whether they are in the Synod Hall or connected by videoconference.

Members will be sent a link to enable electronic voting on motions, as called by the President, from their computer laptop, phone or other smart device. A circular providing full details of these arrangements will be distributed next week and a time will be set aside to test the system to ensure it is operational for all members.

The General Synod Elections usually conducted by ballot paper will also be conducted online. Again, members will receive log in details and be able to vote for their preferred candidates online when the election is open. More information will be provided next week.

Travel and Arrival Confirmation

Every GS18 member should have received final confirmation of travel and accommodation bookings by email this week.

If you have registered online and requested flights and accommodation and you have not received a confirmation email please contact the GS18 Registration Team at gs18@fcctravel.com.au and provide a copy to this office at gs18@anglican.org.au

Final Instructions

You will receive a further circular from this office next week containing further details on airport transfers, arrival arrangements for hotel check in and Synod registration.

Please contact the GSO at GS18@anglican.org.au or by telephone on 02 8267 2700 if you require any assistance in preparation for GS18.

I look forward to seeing you on the Gold Coast on Sunday 8 May 2022.

Anne Hywood
General Secretary

