

COVID -19 and Food Ministries



12th May 2020

Dear friends,

We are writing to you to update the guidelines for food ministries issued by the Social Service Committee. These have been amended to reflect the changes in circumstances at this point in the COVID-19 pandemic. The main changes have been highlighted for ease of reference, but please ensure you comply with all the guidelines.

These guidelines apply to food ministries, both new and planned, **from 12 May 2020 until further notice:**

- All community kitchens, dinners, breakfasts and the like that provide cooked food to groups must remain closed for the time being. This is likely to be reviewed in a few weeks' time.
 - Pre-packaged goods such as pantry staples may continue to be provided. The following must be remain in place to ensure there is no gathering of people beyond the current government restrictions and to reduce the number of people who have touched goods prior to distribution:
 - **Fresh produce may be provided.**
 - **Ideally, goods should be prepacked into a bag for collection.**
 - Goods must:
 - Be prepacked into the bag at least 72 hours before individuals collect the bag.
 - Goods in bags must then be placed in a convenient location for collection and not touched for the 72 hour period.
 - Individuals can be invited to collect a bag after that period. Ideally this should be across a wide period of time so that no groups are formed.
- OR
- Be thoroughly wiped down with a good household cleaner by someone who has washed their hands and donned gloves before they clean the items. At present, COVID-19 is thought to be killed by good household cleaners.
 - Goods must then be placed in a bag and not touched again until they are collected.
 - Individuals can be invited to collect a bag after that period. Ideally this should be across a wide period of time so that no groups are formed.
- OR
- **Individuals may be allowed to select items from a pantry or shelf, however these items should only be handled by a food ministry worker who has washed their hands prior to donning disposable gloves. That is, the worker should pick up the selected item and pass it to the individual. Items should have been on the shelf, untouched, for 72 hours before distribution. The individual receiving the goods should only touch the bag that they are taking home.**
- Frozen meals can be provided. While COVID-19 can survive being frozen it does not survive when heated over 70-74 degrees. The following must be implemented:
 - Home cooked frozen meals cannot be provided. This is likely to be reviewed in a few weeks' time.
 - Frozen meals can be purchased from a retailer.

- The freezer surfaces, especially the handle, should be regularly cleaned.
- Frozen meals should be distributed by an individual who has washed their hands prior to donning disposable gloves, directly to the recipient

All persons involved in a food ministry must not have:

- Travelled from anywhere overseas in the last 14 days,
- Had a fever in the last 14 days,
- Had acute respiratory symptoms (i.e. shortness of breath, cough or sore throat) in the last 14 days, or
- Had close contact with anyone who has been confirmed to have COVID-19 / Corona Virus in the last 14 days

Social distancing requirements as set by the government must be adhered to at all times. For further information about what is required see [this page](#).

General information from the NSW Food Authority can be found [here](#).

Thank you for your cooperation with the above restrictions. May you be able reflect God's great generosity to us and show God's love and mercy to many as you provide food for people.

If you have any questions or concerns, please email me at emcclean@pcnsw.org.au and I will do my best to get back to you as quickly as possible.

Kind regards,

Liz McClean
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