

COVIDSAFE Plan to support the sittings of the Legislative Council (LC)

This COVIDSAFE plan has been developed to support the sittings and committees of the Legislative Council from 14 – 25 February 2022 at the same time as the sittings of the Legislative Assembly (LA).

This Plan has been developed to minimise potential transmission of COVID-19, and negative health outcomes to Members, Members staff, Parliamentary staff and the broader community.

This plan should be read in conjunction with the NSW Parliament’s Pandemic Plan (Parliament’s intranet [here](#) Employment & Policies - WHS) and the Legislative Assembly Plan at Appendix 1 below.

The Plan gives consideration to advice provided by independent expert (Hibbs), NSW Public Health orders and the requirements of the Members of the Legislative Assembly.

It should be noted that the approach outlined in this plan is aligned to Scenario 2 of the Hibbs advice and the NSW Public Health orders.

Decreasing (14-day average) hospitalisation rates, as an indicator of negative health outcome from the virus in the state.

This plan will cover:

- Chamber Sitting Scenario
- Committee meetings
- Access to Parliament House
 - Members
 - Members and Ministerial Staff
 - LA and DPS Staff
 - Media
 - Contractors – Building works
 - Public and Authorised Visitors
- Entry conditions, including rapid antigen testing.
- Member and staff movement around the precinct.
- Service availability.

Chamber Sitting Scenario

Undertaking of in-person Chamber proceedings in a physically distanced manner will be achieved by 42 Members including the President, 4 officers on the floor of the Chamber and 6 advisers in the President’s Gallery.

If agreed by Members, participation can be arranged for Members to participate remotely either from their parliamentary offices or their homes in a “basic hybrid” model. These Members would be able to fully participate except in relation to voting.

Seating is to be allocated in accordance with physical distancing and room density guidance from NSW Ministry of Health, as shown NSW Legislative Council Plan - Room Density and Seating Allocation Layout Map - 2m², Figure 1.

- All seating within respective Chambers is to be allocated to specific individuals, with compliance to assigned seating at all times when participating in Chamber proceedings.
- Assigned seating is to be determined based on the seat mapping as indicated. Specific seating assignments are to be informed by respective parties and the President.

- The Chamber density capacities for persons participating in Chamber proceedings are not to exceed those indicated. Rostering and pairing practices should be applied to ensure the density capacities indicated for the Chamber are respected during all proceedings.
- Entry and exit to the Chamber is to be conducted in a structured and ordered manner to enable physical distancing at all times.
- A physically distanced staging area is to be established and maintained for persons waiting to enter the Chamber.
- When voting, Members must wear masks and are encouraged to spread out their attendance in the Chamber over the full time period of the division.

Committee Meetings

Members, witnesses, advisers and staff are to observe the entry requirements and physical distancing of >1.5m in the committee rooms at all times. All Members, witnesses, advisers and staff must comply with the requirements of this plan.

Access to Parliament House

Access for Members to the Precinct

Members will continue to be provided with full access to the precinct.

Members accessing the Parliamentary Precinct should be fully vaccinated, with the strong recommendation to be boosted with a third dose of an approved vaccine. The definition of fully vaccinated, as aligned with the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI), is at least 7 days after receiving the 2nd vaccine dose.

No more than 13 LC Members are permitted to access the Parliamentary Precinct, who are either unvaccinated or partially vaccinated being defined as having only received a single dose, or less than 7 days after receiving the second dose.

Access for Members Staff and Ministerial Staff to the Precinct

It is recommended that Members' staff and Ministerial staff continue to work remotely unless essential to support the sitting of the House.

All staff must be fully vaccinated (ATAGI Definition – 2 doses), with the strong recommendation to be boosted with a third dose of an approved vaccine.

Members are responsible for ensuring that their staff are aware of entry requirements and safety provisions in this plan.

LC Staff and DPS Staff

A minimum staffing arrangement will be provided to enable the operation of the sitting.

All staff must be fully vaccinated (ATAGI Definition – 2 doses), with the strong recommendation to be boosted with a third dose of an approved vaccine.

Staff who are identified as vulnerable persons will not be permitted to attend the precinct. Vulnerable Persons as defined by Safe Work Australia (2021) include:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 50 years and older with one or more chronic medical conditions
- People 65 years and older with one or more chronic medical conditions.
- People 70 years and older.
- People with compromised immune systems.

Staff may be allocated an arrival time window to access the precinct to ensure daily health screening can be undertaken in a COVID safe manner.

Media

Media personnel attending the Parliamentary Precinct are to be official Press Gallery authorised representatives and support staff, with any additional media subject to the approval of the Presiding Officers.

Where media conferences are to be held, these are to be conducted either in an outdoor area, or in an indoor area with sufficient space to enable the respecting of physical distancing (>1.5m), separate inflow and outflow access pathways, and ventilation conditions (ideally 8 ACH & 100% fresh air). All participants at the media conference are to remain physically distant and wear a mask (recommended N95/P2), unless speaking on camera.

All personnel must be fully vaccinated (ATAGI Definition – 2 doses), with the strong recommendation to be boosted with a third dose of an approved vaccine.

Contractors – Building works

Contractors relevant to the operation of parliament or involved in other essential works, may be permitted at the precinct.

Public and Authorised Visitors

Parliament House will be closed to the public. However, authorised visitors, function, and booked catering guests may be permitted to the precinct, subject to the conditions of entry.

Exceptions for visitors or visitor groups relevant to the operation of parliament may be authorised by the Presiding Officers.

Entry conditions, including rapid antigen testing.

Staff may be allocated an arrival time window to access the precinct to ensure daily health screening can be undertaken in a COVID safe manner.

It is a requirement for everyone entering the Parliament Precinct to comply with the following conditions of entry:

NSW Ministry of Health COVID-19 protection guidance is to be followed by everyone including the physical distancing of (>1.5m), wearing a mask indoors, regular sanitising of hands, and QR code check-in for contact tracing purposes.

Daily health screening is to be undertaken by everyone entering the precinct in a COVID safe manner, upon arrival at Parliament House, in two designated health screening areas (Car Park and L6 Education Centre).

Daily health screening includes:

- COVID-19 symptom check and declaration. Common symptoms as defined by NSW Ministry of Health - <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/health-and-wellbeing/symptoms-and-testing>.
- Voluntary declaration of vaccination status upon request.
- Body temperature check (<37.5°C).
- QR code check-in for contact tracing purposes
- Rapid COVID antigen test, for screening purposes only. Seating will be provided in the testing areas while awaiting a test result. Masks must be worn in the waiting area.
- No one will be allowed to move through the building until the full testing regime is completed (including waiting for rapid antigen test results)

Any person with a declared or detected COVID symptom or positive COVID Antigen Test will be moved from the screening area to a designated isolation room. The individual will remain in the isolation room until further guidance is received from NSW Health, as initiated by the Chief Executive of NSW Department of Parliamentary Services or sent to a NSW Health COVID testing clinic as determined by the onsite health practitioner.

If the onset of symptoms occur during the course of the day the individual is to isolate until further guidance is received from the suitably qualified health practitioner conducting screening or NSW Health, as initiated by the Chief Executive of NSW Department of Parliamentary Services.

People that have “passed” the testing will be issued with a wrist band. Anyone found without a wrist band by any authorised officer of the Parliament (including Special Constables) will be sent to the closest testing area to be tested. Any staff refusing to participate will be asked to leave the precinct.

Member and staff movement around the precinct.

Movement

NSW Ministry of Health COVID-19 protection guidance is to be followed by all Members and staff including the physical distancing of (>1.5m).

Mask Wearing

Masks must be worn at all times, including when accessing the Parliamentary Precinct.

Masks may be removed while speaking in the Chamber and replaced when no longer speaking. Masks may be removed while eating or drinking. Masks may be removed while working in a location where no other people are present.

Masks are to be changed at least on a daily basis. N95 masks are recommended for use, with mask change stations positioned throughout the precinct.

Hygiene Measures

Hygiene measures, aligned with NSW Ministry of Health guidance, as stipulated following are to be applied by all Members and related staff during Chamber proceedings, and generally throughout the Parliamentary Precinct.

- Hands are to be sanitised on a regular basis, at established hand sanitising stations throughout the precinct.
- Hand sanitiser is to be provided throughout the Parliamentary Precinct.
- Lecterns / dispatch boxes in the respective Chambers, including microphones are to be positioned in accordance with physical distance guidance (>1.5m), from other Members and related Chamber staff.
- Seats in the respective Chambers that maybe shared by differing Members or other authorised Chamber personnel, across periods of sitting, are to be cleaned with hospital grade sanitising wipes between users.
- Microphones in the respective Chambers are to be fitted with disposable hygiene covers that are replaced during cleaning conducted at the end of each day.
- Physical distancing (>1.5m) guidance is to be complied with, while in the toilet, with cleaning conducted daily on sitting days.
- Hands are to be washed and sanitised upon exiting of toilet facilities, at established hand sanitising stations at the access points to toilets.

COVID Marshals

Designated COVID Marshals are to be present in common areas throughout the Precinct, to assist in maintaining compliance with scenario guidance, particularly at entry and exit points to the respective Chambers, and during key periods of the day such as arrivals, breaks, and departures.

Chamber COVID Marshals are to be designated, to assist in maintaining compliance with guidance, particularly relating to movement in the Chamber, wearing of masks, allocated seating, and physical distancing.

Services Available

Catering

Café Quorum and the Public café will provide a take-away service and limited seating (1 person per/ 2m²).

The Members Dining Room and Strangers Dining room will be open in line with Public Health Orders, including separate QR codes.

A compliant COVID safe plan will be implemented with fully vaccinated staff and other exposure controls for service staff and patrons as required by NSW Health.

Hansard

A Hansard service will be provided with transcripts anticipated to be available within 24 hours.

If anyone urgently requires access to a record of what has occurred in the chamber, please note that the Parliament on Demand service is available for use.

Members or their staff must email speeches to DPS.Hansard@parliament.nsw.gov.au after delivering their speech. Electronic copies of speech notes and any other reference material used by Members greatly assist Hansard, ensuring the accurate spelling of names and that quoted material is rendered correctly.

AV Broadcast

Broadcasting and the Parliament on Demand service will be provided for the sittings.

Building Facilities, IT Services and Security

Minimum staffing will be provided for building facilities such as division bells and ventilation systems along with emergency building services.

IT Services will be prioritised for urgent IT support to enable the sittings and committees.

Special Constables will continue to deliver security services for the Precinct.

Cleaning

A single stage cleaning process, incorporating high touch point and general cleaning is to be defined and documented for the respective Chambers and common Parliamentary Precinct areas, including information on cleaning agents and equipment to be used, PPE worn by cleaning teams, and locations / touch points to be cleaned.

The single-stage cleaning process of the respective Chambers and common precinct areas, incorporating high touch point and general cleaning components is to be conducted at the end of each sitting day.

Cleaning chemicals with high residual efficacy for microbiological particles is recommended for use on high touch surfaces.

Ventilation

The operation of respective Chamber ventilation systems to achieve 100% fresh air inflow, ideally with a room air exchange rate of at least 8 Air Changes Per Hour (ACH). Additionally, the operation of ventilation systems in all precinct common areas, lifts, and offices with, where possible, maximum fresh air intake and reasonable air exchange per hour.

It is recommended that respective Chamber doors remain closed during sitting, to enhance the efficiency of Chamber ventilation systems, in achieving the air changes per hour noted, and allowing for effective movement and change of air in the Chamber, as designed.

It is further recommended to have optimum ventilation conditions (ideally 8 ACH & 100% fresh air) beginning 2 hours prior to the parliamentary sitting commencing and 2 hours after adjournment.

Appendix 1 – LC Chamber Plan

Figure 1: Room Density and Seating Allocation Layout Map - Legislative Council

