

Sample Letter to Hirer

The Group Facilitator,

I write to you on behalf of the _____ congregation of the Uniting Church in Australia and under the capacity as the owner of the premises which you hire a meeting room etc. As you can appreciate the restrictions which are in place during the current COVID 19 pandemic are constantly changing. In this regard, on Wednesday 22nd July, 2020 we were advised by our state office that all congregations of the Uniting Church must register with the NSW government as a COVID Safe business. Among other aspects of this registration, it makes the church responsible in ensuring that all users of premises are adhering to their approved COVID Safety plans and other requirements as set out by both the NSW and Federal Governments and relevant Health Departments.

In this regard, the church has been put on notice that unannounced inspections can be carried out by authorized officials to ensure that all such protocols are being adhered to and substantial fines issued if such protocols are found to have been breached. To assist both you and us a copy of your COVID safety Plan is retained in each building. Whilst it would seem advisable for a representative of the church to visit / be present at every meeting or group which meets in our buildings we know that this is not desirable as one of your group's foundational principles is that of member anonymity.

In an effort to uphold and honour this desire, we have placed in each meeting room a confirmation sheet which we require you to complete. By signing this, you are confirming that all cleaning, physical distancing and other COVID safety protocols have been adhered to. The church takes seriously its responsibilities to the safety and welfare of all that use our buildings, be they church members or those from our wider community. As such we are making completion of this document compulsory, and any failure to do so by any group will mean that its continued use of our facilities will need to be re-assessed and may be terminated.

In light of subsequent messages from both the NSW Government and our state office regarding the wearing of face masks that I am writing to you.

The wearing of masks is strongly recommended by both the NSW Government and its Health Department as indicated by the statements below, though it is not yet mandatory.

The NSW Chief Health Officer Dr Kerry Chant specifically recommends:

- the use of face masks in indoor settings where physical distancing is hard to maintain, ...
- the use of face masks (where practical) in indoor settings with a higher risk of transmission, ...

Premier Gladys Berejiklian has stated

- a mask is not a substitute for physical distancing.
- "People should continue to maintain their physical distance – it is our most effective weapon.

- However, if you find yourself in a situation where you can't maintain your physical distance you should wear a mask"

In response to these comments, and subsequent guidance from our state body, we recommend that safety plans include:

Social Distancing and the Wearing of face masks:

Participants will be reminded as regularly as necessary:

- of the serious need to maintain social distancing.
- that it is highly recommended that they wear a face mask most particularly where they can't be confident they can maintain social distancing.
- that the wearing of a mask should not reduce the effort to, or regulations concerning the maintain of social distancing.

We acknowledge that in some situations the wearing of masks will be prove problematical in either the adequate speaking or hearing of people within your group. The intent however of this inclusion to all safety plans is to highlight that the wearing of face masks has become an accepted and additional tool to assist in the spread of this virus and should therefore be included in any practices that groups implement. This should be done in conjunction with existing safe distancing procedures and not at the exclusion of such practices.

To date we have had a wonderful working relationship with all the groups which use our facilities, including yours, and we wish for this to continue. Therefore, let us work together to keep all who us these facilities safe, as well as our community at large.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. If you have any question, or if you see anything which can either be improved or if cleaning products etc, have run out, please do not hesitate to contact me.

[Relevant congregation officer]

