



# THE UNITED GRAND CHAPTER OF AUSTRALIA Order of the Eastern Star

HAVING JURISDICTION WITHIN THE STATES AND TERRITORIES OF AUSTRALIA AND ITS DEPENDENCIES

ABN 57 336 115 915  
PHONE: 03 6263 5605 (HOME)  
PHONE FROM OVERSEAS: + 3 6263 5605  
EMAIL: wgsecretary@oesaustralia.org.au

WORTHY GRAND SECRETARY  
MRS ELIZABETH TAYLOR  
44 COBBS HILL ROAD  
LOWER DROMEDARY TAS 7030

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To: Grand Secretaries : District Grand Secretaries : Chapter Secretaries

Dear Sisters and Brothers

## COVID-19 – EASING OF RESTRICTIONS

Following the latest message from the Most Worthy Grand Matron Sister Blanche Watt and Most Worthy Grand Patron Brother Paul Smith relating to the easing of restrictions there have been a number of questions.

It was indicated that the easing of restrictions would be gradual and the guidelines and timeframes set down would be different for each State and it is imperative that Chapters adhere to the guidelines that relate to their particular State and venue. We also have to take into account that vulnerable people are to continue to stay at home, which refers to a majority of our Members who are in this risk category.

Most States are following the Federal Government guidelines and attached is the 3-Step Framework for a Covidsafe Australia issued by the Federal Government and can be found at:

<https://www.pm.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/three-step-framework-covidsafe-australia>.

Also to be taken into account is the physical distancing at meetings and the cleansing procedures for venues which will be in place for some time. This can be found at the Safe Work Australia website:

[safeworkaustralia.gov.au](https://safeworkaustralia.gov.au).

When returning to Chapter meetings the following matters should be considered:

- The layout of the Chapter room or venue needs to be revised in order to ensure physical distancing guidelines are met including Members who are seated around the Chapter Room. There is guidance available as to the size of the room required to allow a certain number of people to attend while still complying with physical distancing measures. Many Chapter Rooms may not be able to comply with this requirement. As an example the following is provided relating to the size of room required for certain numbers of people.

How to calculate the number of people for the size of your room

1. Measure the length of the room.
2. Measure the width of the room.
3. Multiply the length by the width to calculate the area of your room in square metres.
4. Divide the area of your room (calculated in square metres) by 4 to calculate the maximum number of people allowed.

Number of people	Minimum space required
1	4 square metres
10	40 square metres
20	80 square metres

30	120 square metres
40	160 square metres
50	200 square metres
60	240 square metres
70	280 square metres
80	320 square metres
90	360 square metres
100	400 square metres

Example:

1. Length = 8.25 metres
2. Width = 10.6 metres
3. Square metres:  $8.25 \times 10.6 = 87.45$
4. Maximum number of people:  $87.45 \div 4 = 21$

- To comply with physical distancing the entry and retiral at meetings also needs to be revised accordingly.
- To follow the '4 square metres rule' a count of people in attendance is to be taken and managed, and those in attendance need to register in order to support COVID-19 tracing if it is required.
- Chapter/Committee Rooms or social event venues held by Chapters will need to be cleaned in accordance with Department of Health guidelines prior to the arrival of Members and at the end of the meeting or event.
- Sanitisation will need to be provided at the entrance of the room and Members requested to use it before entry. Members walking around the Chapter Room or event will need to comply with social distancing requirements.
- The handling of money and providing food or drink during the meeting or event are high risk activities which will require additional hygiene measures to be adopted.
- It is recommended that meetings be kept to a maximum of two (2) hours, even when physical distancing at that meeting is complied with. To assist in this regard, Chapters may wish to consider a Short Opening Ceremony.

### Committee Meetings

The question has been asked whether Committee Meetings can be held in a private home. This has been discussed previously by the United Grand Committee and at the Mid Term Session in June 2016 it was decided that "Committee Meetings of the Order of the Eastern Star should be held at the venue identified in the Bye-Laws except where special circumstances occur". The MWGM and MWGP have determined that the current COVID-19 Pandemic falls into the category of 'Special Circumstances' and are allowing Committee Meetings to be held in a private home during the period of this Pandemic. However, the room being used must be big enough so that Members attending can adhere to the 1.5 metre and 4square metres physical distancing guidelines. This is addressing the question of group Committee Meetings in a private home, and as mentioned previously Committee Meetings may be conducted by Skype or Zoom.

And finally it must also be noted that non-compliance with the various Guidelines set down by Federal and State Governments will result in hefty fines for the Officers responsible for the organisation or the venue at which any non-compliance occurs.

It is understandable that Members are keen to return to Chapter Meetings but the health and welfare of all our Members has to be our prime consideration and we appreciate your patience during this difficult and stressful time. It is the wish of everyone that all our Members continue to stay safe and healthy.

Yours in Star Friendship

*Blanche Watt*

Most Worthy Grand Matron

*Paul Smith*

Most Worthy Grand Patron

*Elizabeth Taylor*  
Worthy Grand Secretary