



AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL IMAMS COUNCIL



18th of March 2020

PUBLIC STATEMENT COVID-19

Dear Community Members,

Assalamu Alaikom Wa Rahmatu Allahe Wa Barakatuh,

We are deeply concerned that the rapid spread of COVID-19 (coronavirus) around the world will also have a significant impact on the Australian Muslim community.

We acknowledge that this is a difficult time for all Australians, and as a Muslim community we are being confronted with exceptional circumstances which will require unprecedented responses and measures.

Accordingly, The Australian National Imams Council (ANIC) is taking what it considers to be the necessary steps to ensure that the Muslim community remains informed about the ever-changing announcements and laws being made by both federal and state governments. It is important that the advice being issued is closely aligned with the directives, including guidelines around social distancing, limitations on attendees at public and private gatherings, attending mosques and other religious institutions and potential school closures.

The Mufti of Australia and The Australian Fatwa Council have issued a statement addressing matters concerning congregational prayers at mosques (obligatory and voluntary) in response to these current unprecedented circumstances. (**Link to Fatwa:** <https://www.anic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Important-notice-Coronavirus-Update-Fatwa.pdf>)

We refer to the above Fatwa (*Islamic Verdict*) and have also considered today's announcement by the Prime Minister imposing bans on non-essential indoor gatherings of more than 100 people and the existing ban of outdoor gatherings of more than 500 people. In accordance with these, and in the best interests of the health and well-being of the wider community, ANIC strongly advises the Australian Muslim community, organisations and places of worship as follows:

1. Conduct the 5 daily prayers at home rather than congregational prayers in the mosque or other prayer halls in particular venues with large congregations;
2. Avoid congregational and Friday prayers until there is more clarity about the situation (which will be required by law for any congregations exceeding 100 people). As an alternative, 4 Ruk'at of Dhuhr can be performed (in private) instead of the Friday prayer.



3. With regards to Janazah prayer, please seek advice from the relevant prayer venue as restrictions will also apply. Again, It will be important to comply with laws relating to prohibitions on any indoor gatherings of 100 or more people.
4. Keep a 1.5m distance between people when interacting with others.
5. Refrain from being present at ANY non-essential gathering, whether indoors or outdoors, particularly if the gathering risks exceeding the ban (for which there are penalties);
6. Reschedule any planned gatherings, celebrations, events where there was a plan to have more than 100 people gather in an enclosed space.
7. If you are feeling unwell or have been overseas in the last 14 days, refrain from any social interactions and exercise social isolation.
8. Follow all health and safety measures outlined by the experts and health officials, this includes adopting the use of hand sanitizers and other hygienic practices.

We stress that these are steps which ANIC has taken. You will need to assess the appropriateness of some of them and how they are best implemented having regard to the circumstances of your organisation.

In providing these guidelines, we are ensuring that the best interests of the Australian community remain at the forefront. The situation is changing day by day, and government guidelines and recommendations are also being updated regularly. You may also find it useful to consult the Federal Government website Coronavirus (COVID-19) health alert and the further links on that website (**Link:** <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-resources>)

Further information can be obtained from your State or Territory Health Department.

ANIC reminds the Australian Muslim community to remain calm and composed during these difficult times and reminds that we show mercy and compassion.

We pray to Allah the Almighty for protection, guidance and wisdom during these testing times.