

**From:** Michael Shaw michael.shaw@multicultural.nsw.gov.au  
**Subject:** RE: Public Health Orders Clarification - Hindu Council  
**Date:** 17 July 2021 at 12:05 PM  
**To:** Rama Athreiya vedasabha@gmail.com

MS

Thanks Rama,

We really appreciate your support and kind words.

Let's keep in touch. This morning's announcements might make it even more difficult I fear, but I will let you know nonetheless.

Hope you are keeping safe and well my friend.

Mike



**Multicultural  
NSW**

**Michael Shaw**  
Director Community and Policy  
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E michael.shaw@multicultural.nsw.gov.au  
56 Station Street East | Parramatta, NSW 2150



*Multicultural NSW acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land and waters where we work. As part of the world's oldest surviving culture, we pay our respect to Aboriginal elders past, present and emerging.*

**From:** Rama Athreiya <vedasabha@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, 17 July 2021 11:53 AM  
**To:** Michael Shaw <michael.shaw@multicultural.nsw.gov.au>  
**Subject:** Re: Public Health Orders Clarification - Hindu Council

Good Morning Mike

Thank you very much for sharing with me .. My self and the members of the Hindu Clergy very much can feel your sincere effort being bridge between authorities at Health NSW and all the relevant govt. agencies working help us, We are very much appreciative and thankful for that.

It is indeed is a testing time for every one, especially people like us those who are at the forefront answering the community every day are coping the full impact unfortunately, kind of wedged between.

I pray to the Almighty Paramathma to provide us all lots of patience and more strength to go through this difficult moments presented to us. Day by day it is getting increasingly harder and mentally challenging to keep the mental composure. It is a very tight rope walking every day for the authorities in particular for the Govt. and Health NSW.

I can see the Premier and her ministers, the Health officials police and many others who are working behind them are on TV, and medial briefing being grilled by the media and the press. My sympathy for them be there.

I can assure Australian Hindu Clergy members fully value your effort and shall inform our community to continue to wait for the process to complete to hear the (hopefully favourable) out come for the wider Australian community, and accept the out come as you stated taken by the Highest Authorities considering all our reasons presented to them.

Once again for and behalf of the Wider Australian Hindu community in particular Hindu to Clergy members I THANK YOU and your Team for all the help so far, and assure that Hindu clergy shall extend our fullest cooperations possible and continue to work with Authorities come out of this very difficult situation all are in.

Take care, Stay safe.

Warm regards

*Pundit Rāmāchandrā Athreiya*

[vedasabha@gmail.com](mailto:vedasabha@gmail.com)

President for and behalf of

Australian Council Of Hindu Clergy Inc.

<https://www.australiancouncilofhinduclergy.com>

On 17 Jul 2021, at 9:39 AM, Michael Shaw <[michael.shaw@multicultural.nsw.gov.au](mailto:michael.shaw@multicultural.nsw.gov.au)> wrote:

Good morning Rama,

Thanks for the phone call Thursday and apologies it has taken me a little time to come back to you. I have spoken to Health Thursday and again late yesterday. They are progressing the request for exemption and is likely to be assessed on Monday. I had hoped it would be assessed on Friday, but as I hope you can imagine it is a very busy and trying period in Health at the moment as well as within the community. I am confident they are moving as quickly as they can under the circumstances.

At this stage, the Monday determination (providing it doesn't get delayed) will be the final stage and an exemption will either be granted or not.

Whilst I am hopeful, there isn't much more we can do at this stage and I am at least comforted that regardless of the outcome, you and I have exhausted all avenues and have had it assessed at the highest possible level.

I will keep you informed where I can.

Kind regards,

Mike



**Multicultural  
NSW**

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**From:** Michael Shaw <[michael.shaw@multicultural.nsw.gov.au](mailto:michael.shaw@multicultural.nsw.gov.au)>  
**Sent:** Saturday, 10 July 2021 3:56 PM  
**To:** Rama Athreya <[vedasabha@gmail.com](mailto:vedasabha@gmail.com)>  
**Subject:** FW: Public Health Orders Clarification - Hindu Council

Hi Pandit Rama,

Please see below an initial reply from NSW Health, noting they are seeking further legal advice on the specifics of this matter.

I will keep you informed once I hear more.

Please pass on my thanks to your Clergy on behalf of Multicultural NSW for their support of the community in response to the pandemic.

Kind regards,

Mike



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NSW

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**Michael Shaw**  
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**From:** Jan Fizzell <[Jan.Fizzell@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Jan.Fizzell@health.nsw.gov.au)>  
**Sent:** Saturday, 10 July 2021 3:46 PM  
**To:** Michael Shaw <[michael.shaw@multicultural.nsw.gov.au](mailto:michael.shaw@multicultural.nsw.gov.au)>  
**Cc:** MOH-COVID-MassGatherings <[MOH-COVID-MassGatherings@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:MOH-COVID-MassGatherings@health.nsw.gov.au)>; Paul Byleveld <[Paul.Byleveld@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Paul.Byleveld@health.nsw.gov.au)>; Richard Broome <[Richard.Broome@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Richard.Broome@health.nsw.gov.au)>  
**Subject:** RE: Public Health Orders Clarification - Hindu Council

Dear Mike,

At this time, we are awaiting legal advice regarding the ability of two clergy to enter a household in Sydney. It is likely a single priest is permitted, and we will check with our legal department:

*We will see if the following provisions apply to priests doing home visits, given the following provisions in the Public Health (COVID-19 Temporary Movement and Gathering Restrictions) Order 2021*

*(5) A person is authorised to visit a place of residence in Greater Sydney for the following purposes, but no more than 1 visitor may be at the place of residence for the purposes at any one time— (a) to fulfil carers' responsibilities, (b) to provide care or assistance, including personal care, to a vulnerable person,*

*Schedule 1 Reasonable excuses*

*14 For a person who is a priest, minister of religion or member of a religious order— going to the person's place of worship or providing pastoral care to another person*

Regarding a centralised service, the less desirable option – we will see if memorials are permitted in the new public health order, along with funerals. Assuming they are, it is likely they will be permitted with up to 10 people, including the priests conducting the services.

I have cc'd my colleagues to let them know of this request – understanding the significant cooperation of Pandit Rama and the Hindu community in supporting our COVID-19 response and understanding the significant impacts on mental health if rites associated with a person's passing are not able to be observed. I do note, however, that these are critical times and we are concerned for the health of both the priests and the mourners and their community, as well as for them as individuals.

Kind regards

Jan

**Dr Jan Fizzell MB BS BSc(Med)(Hons) MPH FAFPHM**

Public Health Response Branch  
Senior Medical Advisor  
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**From:** Michael Shaw <[michael.shaw@multicultural.nsw.gov.au](mailto:michael.shaw@multicultural.nsw.gov.au)>  
**Sent:** Saturday, 10 July 2021 3:39 PM  
**To:** Jan Fizzell <[Jan.Fizzell@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Jan.Fizzell@health.nsw.gov.au)>  
**Subject:** Public Health Orders Clarification - Hindu Council

Hi Dr Jan,

As discussed, please see below an urgent request from Pandit Rama on behalf of the Australian Council of Hindu Clergy. There are clarifying the Public Health Orders in specific reference to the formal ceremonial practices.

As part of authorised Hindu cremation rites and rituals, a Chief Priest and Assistant Priest are required to undertake official religious duties within a formal 13 day mourning period. An essential component of the mourning service is a post cremation ceremony. This involves visiting the principal residence of the Principal Mourner of the deceased to undertake specific ceremonial duties over a 4 day period. Importantly, until this function is complete, the cremation service to the deceased is incomplete. This is the barest minimum permitted under Hindu Cannon Law. All of these duties can be undertaken in observance of social distancing measures. The Hindu Clergy are seeking clarification if this practice is permitted under the current Public Health Orders as well as the travel (via direct route) of priests to official cremation and ceremonial duties. The Australian Council of Hindu Clergy are willing to verify these official duties of Priests by way of a formal letter from the Council, identifying and authorising the undertaking of these duties, to ensure an accurate record is kept.

The Clergy also has a formal place of business, registered for use by The Australian Council of Hindu Clergy, which could be used as an alternate centralised place to undertake the ceremonial rites, instead of the principal place of residence of the Principal Mourner. Whilst this option is not the preference, it is an option provided by The Clergy in an effort to comprise.

It is believed that the above duties are provided for under the current Public Health Orders (*Public Health (COVID-19 Temporary Movement and Gathering Restrictions) Order 2021*) given:

- 1) The work of Hindu Priests is an official work function
- 2) The Priests are providing compassionate care as a function of their official work duties
- 3) The post cremation ceremony is a vital component of the mourning ceremony
- 4) The Hindu Priests are providing pastoral care as a result of undertaking these functions. *NB: There are specific functions required during this pastoral care and post cremation service that must involve two priests.*

Any advice or assistance you can provide will be greatly appreciated.

Kind regards,

Mike



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