**[INSERT NAME OF CHURCH LETTERHEAD]**

QUEENSLAND | VICTORIA | NEW SOUTH WALES | TASMANIA

11 October 2021

Dear [NAME],

**COMMUNICATION REGARDING COVID-19 MANDATORY VACCINATION (WORKERS) DIRECTIONS**

During the pandemic, the Baptist Union of Victoria Ltd (**BUV**) has encouraged us to follow all public health directions to help keep our pastors, members, visitors and the broader community safe from COVID-19.

As you would be aware, on 1 October 2021, the Victorian Government announced that COVID-19 vaccinations would be mandated for authorised workers. This announcement was confirmed in the *COVID-19 Mandatory Vaccination (Workers) Directions* (**Direction**).

I am writing to confirm that under the Direction, [name of church] is required to collect, record and hold vaccination information from our Authorised Workers and to provide important information in relation to the collection of this vaccination information.

To explain why we have taken this position, we have set out a number of questions and answers to help you understand what steps we are taking and why we believe that [name of church] need to comply with the Direction currently in place.

**Am I an Authorised Worker?**

Under the Direction, an Authorised Worker includes a person who is, or may be, scheduled to work (or do other church duties) outside their homes from 15 October 2021 for the church.

A person who works for the church is identified under the Direction as a “**Religious Worker**”.

Under the Direction, a Religious Worker is a person who assists with the church service or is otherwise working at our church.

The definition of work includes both paid and unpaid work. This means that both paid and unpaid people (i.e., pastors or volunteers, faithful servants) are deemed Religious Workers and therefore Authorised Workers under the Direction. The definition of work does not include participating remotely in a service from your home.

**What does the Direction mean for me if am deemed a Religious Worker under the Direction?**

If you assist us with the running of our church service or are serving at the church during the church service or at any other time (from our church or place of worship) then you are deemed to be a Religious Worker under the definition of Authorised Worker in the Direction.

This means that from **15 October 2021**, you will need to provide us with your vaccination information (subject to any exception under the Direction) to continue to assist us with our church service. From **Friday, 15 October 2021**, all Authorised Workers may only continue to work at our church (i.e. outside of your home) if you have had at least one dose of an approved COVID-19 vaccine, with a second dose required by **26 November 2021**.

**Why am I being asked for my vaccination information?**

[Name of church] is required by the Direction to collect, record and hold “vaccination information” about the COVID-19 vaccination status of our Authorised Workers who come to the church.

Without providing this information, you will not be able to serve in person at church whilst the Direction is in place.

**What vaccination information do I need to provide to [name of church]?**

As noted earlier, the Direction requires you to provide us with your vaccination information. Specifically, the vaccination information is:

1. whether you have received one dose or two doses of an approved COVID-19 vaccine;
2. if you have not received any doses of an approved COVID-19 vaccine, whether you have a booking to receive a first dose by 22 October 2021;
3. if you have only received one dose of an approved COVID-19 vaccine, whether you have a booking to receive a second dose by 26 November 2021; or
4. whether you are an ‘excepted person’ because a medical practitioner has certified that you are unable to receive a dose, or second dose, of an approved COVID-19 vaccine due to a medical contraindication recognised by the Directions or an acute medical illness.

Vaccination information may be recorded in a variety of documents, such as in a letter from a medical practitioner, a certificate of immunisation or an immunisation history statement obtained from the Australian Immunisation Register (**AIR**). If you do provide us with a statement from the AIR you need only provide us with the information relating to your COVID-19 vaccinations and do not need to provide us with any other vaccination information.

If, as an Authorised Worker you respond by providing a reason recognised by the Direction for not receiving a COVID-19 vaccination to us, we need to ask you to provide supporting evidence (for example, a medical certificate in accordance with the Direction).

We recognise that the requested information is sensitive health information. As such, it is afforded a high degree of protection under privacy laws, which is addressed in further detail below.

**How and by when should my vaccination information be provided to [name of church]?**

The above information should be provided by [insert details: e.g. “by email to….”] to us as soon as possible and before **15 October** **2021**. Information that is only relevant in relation to a second dose of an approved COVID-19 vaccine may be provided no later than 22 October 2021.

**What if I have already provided such information to [name of church]?**

If you have already provided us with the required vaccination information, then you do not need to provide it again.

**Why is [name of church] collecting vaccination information?**

We are collecting this information:

* to comply with our obligations under the Direction;
* to manage our operational requirements; and
* as part of meeting our workplace health and safety obligations, owed to workers and the general public;
* as a means of expressing our love and care to one another

**Is [name of church] authorised to collect this information?**

Yes, [name of church] is authorised under the Direction and *must* collect, record and hold the vaccination information from our Authorised Workers.

**What if I don’t provide the information requested?**

If you do not provide us with any of the requested information by 15 October 2021, the Directions provide that you must be treated as though you are unvaccinated against COVID-19. In these circumstances, you will **not be permitted to work or volunteer or serve at the church** from 15 October 2021.

We expect that a similar requirement will be imposed in relation to any failure to provide vaccination information about a second dose by 26 November 2021.

**What if I’m not vaccinated by 15 October 2021?**

## If you have not received at least one approved COVID-19 vaccine dose by 15 October 2021, and have not, by that date, provided us with evidence of having a booking to receive a first dose by 22 October 2021, the Directions provide that you will not be permitted to work (including volunteering/serving) at the church from 15 October 2021 (unless an exception under the Directions applies).

## We expect that a similar requirement will be imposed in relation to any failure to be fully vaccinated by 26 November 2021.

## If you have a booking for a first dose of your COVID-19 vaccine to occur before 22 October 2021, you should provide us with evidence of that vaccination having occurred before 22 October 2021.

## If you do not meet the above requirements (including not providing us with the necessary vaccination information) for paid staff it could result in significant absence(s) from work (with or without pay, depending on leave options) and/or potentially, the termination of your employment. For our volunteers, it could mean that you are not able to serve at the church for the near future.

**How else will this information be used or disclosed?**

[Name of church] may also provide this information to affiliated parties if they request information from us about the vaccination status of our Authorised Workers. In these instances, we will be mindful to only disclose the minimum amount of vaccination information as is necessary. For example, we will seek to provide aggregated or de-identified information where possible. However, if we are to disclose specific vaccination status information, we will seek your express consent to do so, unless the disclosure is otherwise required or permitted by law.

**Can I access my personal information?**

You may request access to personal information that we hold about you by contacting [insert name (e.g. church secretary)]. We will respond to a request for access within a reasonable timeframe, and will give you access in the manner you request, if it is reasonable and practicable to do so.

**Can I request that information is corrected?**

You may request that [Name of church] corrects any information about you which you think is inaccurate, incomplete, or out of date. We will respond to a correction request within a reasonable time, and in accordance with the requirements of applicable privacy laws.

**What if [name of church] refuses access to, or correction of, my personal information?**

If we refuse to allow you access to your personal information or to correct that information, we will provide you with the reasons for such decision and will inform you of the mechanisms available to lodge a complaint about any such refusal.

**What if I have a complaint, query or concern?**

You are entitled to lodge a complaint, query or concern about our practices in relation to the protection of your personal information. To do so, please contact [insert name (e.g. church secretary)] on [insert contact details]. We will respond to you in accordance with relevant privacy laws.

Our request to you for your vaccination information is not made lightly or without prayerful and reflective consideration of what this request may mean for you personally and the life of the church.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding any of the above, please do not hesitate to contact [insert name] for further information.

Otherwise, we look forward to your cooperation so that we can continue to walk alongside you as together we seek to advance God’s Kingdom.

[Insert signoff]