

**PRESS RELEASE: AUSTRALIAN CHURCH MEMBERS RE COVID-19**  
**March 17th, 2020**

Dear Church Members,

Today, we met as Union officers and Conference presidents from across Australia. We met for several purposes, but at the forefront of our meeting was prayer and the wellbeing of our members and the wider community. Today, we prayed for you—for our elders and our children, our young people, and the thousands of faithful church members we have across this country. We prayed for the current pandemic affecting millions of people around the world, and we prayed for those directly involved.

As we are sure most of you are aware, last week a decision was made by the executive committees of four conferences to cancel their camp meetings for 2020. Today, as leaders, we have taken an action to recommend that churches suspend all services until the end of April 2020.

As a leadership team, we recognise the importance of community and worshipping together, especially on Sabbath. However, we have considered the current advice of the Australian Government and their health experts; as well as many of our own Adventist health professionals; and similar actions by Adventist church leaders around the world, and have made this decision—one we believe is timely and needed to protect our members, particularly those who are more vulnerable in our churches and the wider community. As Christians, we have a responsibility to help minimise the stress on our health system and those who work in it.

This is an unprecedented measure for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Australia, and please know that it is not a decision we have taken lightly. But while the doors to our churches are shut, it is our prayer that today, more than ever, we open our lives and our hearts to our God.

These next few Sabbaths will look a little different to what most of us may be used to. We will miss our churches, and being together. But our worship does not depend on the place; but rather, in our hearts we will choose to worship the Father, as Jesus called us to, “in

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Spirit and in truth." We may not be together physically or sharing a meal with others, but we will be worshipping together, praying together, singing together, and meditating in the Word together. This pandemic may have closed our churches, but there is nothing that can stop us from worshipping God together. He will receive our adoration and our praise, no matter where we are. If you are able, you may want to gather together in a home group—either in person, or through digital means.

We invite you to take this crisis as an opportunity. Today, we close our church doors, but we invite you to open your hearts. Let us use this time to connect in creative ways with others that may be on their own or isolated. Reach out to your neighbours to check that they are well; offer to help and pray for them. If you are able, offer to help your neighbours and friends to pick up essentials or assist them as needed.

The time will come when we will re-open, so let us re-enter our places of worship as people who have prayed intensely for one another, for our communities, and the world in which we live. Above all, pray for God to continue leading in the affairs of this world until we see Him face to face.

Blessings,

Darren Slade	President Northern Australia Conference
Brett Townend	President South Queensland Conference
Adrian Raethel	President North New South Wales Conference
Terry Johnson	President Greater Sydney Conference
Cristian Copaceanu	President South New South Wales Conference
Graeme Christian	President Victorian Conference
Gary Webster	President Tasmanian Conference
David Butcher	President South Australia Conference
Steve Goods	President Western Australia Conference
Peter Cameron	Chief Financial Officer Australian Union Conference
Michael Worker	Secretary Australian Union Conference
Jorge Munoz	President Australian Union Conference

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