



**290 Inkerman Street  
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**Dr Debbie Herbst**

12th September 2021

Dear Mr Andrews,

I am a GP who has been working in the heart of the Jewish community for over 30 years.

Together with many of my colleagues, I have been very much on the frontline of supporting our communities through the many and varied challenges that the Covid 19 Pandemic has thrown our way.

I deal with many young families and have shared the heartbreak and ongoing stress that they are dealing with on a daily basis. In particular the alarming rates of anxiety/depression/suicidal ideation/eating disorders and self harm among too many people from all backgrounds, has been extremely concerning and distressing.

It is well known and documented, that spirituality, including meaningful prayer, is a key factor in peoples health and wellbeing. In fact there are a number of studies that have confirmed the power of prayer in improving health outcomes.

To put it bluntly, the blow to the Jewish community of not being able to have communal prayer services over the current High Holyday period, for the second year in a row has been nothing less than devastating and crushing to those already deeply suffering. It is worth noting that we are the only Jewish community in the world that has not been able to pray together at this important time. This fact only serves to further increase distress.

We all know that business and other essential services have covid safe plans in place to ensure they can continue with their necessary activities.

Prayer, communal prayer, is a necessary and essential "business" particularly over the High Holydays.

Please review this matter, in allowing covid safe ,registered, socially distanced small groups that could be monitored for compliance , as a matter of the utmost urgency prior to Yom Kippur which begins this Wednesday evening.

As an important and noteworthy aside, each time there has been a person who has tested positive to covid 19 in our community, including in March 2020, the response of the community has been nothing short of exemplary. The community rallies, all those who need to isolate which has been 100's of people, do so with the endless care and support of the entire community to ensure compliance. We have collectively, on more than one occasion, shut down any clusters in the community extremely efficiently.

Yours Sincerely

Dr Debbie Herbst

*Electronically signed and sighted*