

NATIONAL VICTORIA **CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC**

This was published 5 months ago

# Police raid ultra-Orthodox prayer group above store in Ripponlea

For our free coronavirus pandemic coverage, [learn more here.](#)

By **Paul Sakkal**

April 9, 2020 – 2.04pm



Share

A A A

Police raided an ultra-Orthodox Jewish prayer group in Melbourne’s inner-east on Thursday morning where a group of at least 10 men were praying in contravention of social-distancing rules.

Just after 11am, about 10 police vehicles swooped on an apartment above an IGA store in Glen Eira Road, Ripponlea.



0:39

Police raid ultra-Orthodox prayer group above store in Ripponlea

Police raided an ultra Orthodox Jewish prayer group in Melbourne's inner-east on Thursday morning where a group of about 10 men were praying in contravention of social distancing rules.

Police warned men meeting at the same venue on Wednesday and issued several warnings to the organiser of the group to not hold gatherings.

Police attended the location again on Thursday after being made aware of people heading to the address for a meeting.

They fined the group's leader \$1652 for failing to adhere to directives designed to slow the spread of coronavirus. Police are working to ascertain the identities of the other attendees before determining whether more fines will be issued.



The scene at Ripponlea

Alex Fein, a local who witnessed the raid, said there were “heaps and heaps of police”.

About two weeks ago, prayer groups organised by members of the Satmar Hasidic sect, an offshoot of the Adass grouping, were revealed to be meeting for daily “minyan” prayers that require 10 men to attend, in defiance of social-distancing rules.

No immediate action was taken in response to reports about the prayer meetings but they prompted police interest and officers have since patrolled the locations at which they know they have taken place.

Jewish leaders closed all synagogues several weeks ago, well in advance of government bans on attending places of worship.

Federal Labor MP Josh Burns, whose Macnamara electorate takes in Ripponlea, said the behaviour was "dangerous" and "stupid".

"Again I want to thank the vast majority of the community who have done the right thing and are looking out for one another by heeding the rules set by the

Chief Health Officer," he said.

"But this is dangerous and stupid behaviour by a small group who has been warned before."

Conducting daily prayers with 10 or more people is an important ritual for the Orthodox Jewish community, and the closure of synagogues has pushed some to establish improvised places of worship.

Many Jewish people are gathering online for prayers to avoid face-to-face contact, or not gathering at all.

Last month Shlomo Kohn Shlita, Chief Rabbi of the Congregation Adass Israel, sent a letter to his congregation instructing them to pray at home rather than in groups.

"One should pray at home until the doctors say the pandemic has passed ... The danger negates the requirement to pray with a congregation," he wrote.

It is understood that a group often met to pray in the apartment before Victoria went into lockdown.

"It's inexcusable," said Ms Fein, a member of the Jewish community.

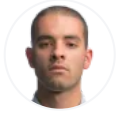
---

## Sign up to our Coronavirus Update newsletter

Get our Coronavirus Update newsletter for the day's crucial developments at a glance, the numbers you need to know and what our readers are saying. Sign up to *The Sydney Morning Herald's* newsletter [here](#) and *The Age's* [here](#).

---

**Paul Sakkal**



Paul is a reporter for The Age.