



Dear staff members,

## Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Update

This letter is to be read in conjunction to the letter sent home to parents, which staff members have been issued.

The Prime Minister announced recently, following a meeting with all Premiers and Chief Ministers, a number of further measures in responding to coronavirus (COVID-19).

### 1. Effective immediately the travel advice in relation to overseas travel is at Level Four: Do Not Travel.

As described on the Smartraveller website - *"At level 4, your health and safety is at extreme risk. This may be because of a high threat of terrorist attack, conflict, violent social unrest, widespread infectious disease or critical levels of violent crime. It could be a combination of risks."*

All staff **should not undertake overseas travel** while this advice remains in place.

### 2. Ban on non-essential gatherings of 100 or more people indoors. Class sized meetings only indoors.

States and Territories will be tasked with implementing these restrictions on social gatherings under public health legislation which do not apply to a range of areas including education facilities such as schools, universities, and childcare facilities.

However, as a College we have determined that we will adhere to these provisions and **avoid groups of any size greater than a class size** within an enclosed area wherever possible. Therefore, a number of excursions and events have been cancelled proactively. Social distancing should also be practised.

Events cancelled include:

- Anzac Day;
- School Fete Open Day;
- WACCSA Swimming and events;
- Easter parade.

We are also considering cancelling the high school Rewards Day, but this will be decided in the days ahead.

### 3. Schools should remain open.

The Prime Minister was very clear that he and all Premier and Chief Ministers, on the basis of expert medical advice, remained of the view that at this stage schools should remain open. The Chief Medical Officer spoke to reinforce this advice based on the experiences overseas and acknowledged the difficulties of schools seeking to meet some of the general social distancing measures.

Despite these clear statements there is still considerable discussion in the media and community in relation to possible **mandatory school closures**. Should this occur we anticipate that staff may still be able to attend the school to undertake their duties, albeit in an altered form. If this is not





possible, we will seek to facilitate temporary working arrangements at alternative locations, including potentially your home, where possible.

In all situations, however, all staff who are fit and available for work would **continue to receive their normal salary**, although a small number of allowances may not be applicable during such a period in limited cases. Normal leave entitlements would continue to be available for other staff unable to work or already on leave.

Teachers need to be aware that all teaching programmes need to be entered into SEQTA as soon as possible. Training and time will be provided to staff in order to be ready for school closure.

#### **4. No school groups should visit aged care facilities.**

This was part of the measures for protection around aged care facilities. The College will not be undertaking such visits, including travel through Walridge.

#### **5. Social distancing measures should be maintained as the primary preventative approach.**

The Government has outlined the recommended social distancing and related protective measures online here - <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/what-you-need-to-know-about-coronavirus-covid-19>.

We have outlined them in previous updates, talked about them in staff meetings and they are reinforced in posters and other material around the College. In a school context the specific recommended measures outlined are:

- *If your child is sick, do not send them to school (or childcare);*
- *Clean hands when entering school and at regular intervals;*
- *Defer activities that lead to mixing between classes and years;*
- *Avoid queuing, handholding and assemblies;*
- *Promote a regular handwashing schedule;*
- *Clean and disinfect shared high-touch surfaces regularly;*
- *Conduct lessons outdoors where possible;*
- *Consider opening windows and adjusting conditioning for more fresh air;*
- *Promote strictest hygiene among food preparation (canteen) staff and their close contacts.*

As you know **we have implemented all these procedures** within the College and will continue to do so.

The Government has identified some groups within the community who are most at risk of serious infection:

- *people with compromised immune systems (such as people who have cancer);*
- *elderly people;*



- *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (as they have higher rates of chronic illness);*
- *people with chronic medical conditions;*
- *people in group residential settings;*
- *people in detention facilities.*

We are very conscious of the needs of those in these groups within the College community, including staff and are paying close attention to keeping them safe within the school. It is important to note, however, that there are no credible Government sources suggesting any additional measures are required to protect these people within the workplace. Any suggestions to the contrary are not consistent with the current Government advice.

We are working to ensure that **all staff remain safe in the workplace** and that all workplace health and safety obligations continue to be met. Please practise the increased hygiene practices that have been communicated to staff. That is, additional handwashing, spraying work items, social distancing, etc.

Of course, despite these measures staff may become unfit for work because of this virus or a number of other reasons. In all these situations staff will continue to be able to access normal personal/carer's leave entitlements, in line with school policy and law.

The Prime Minister also reinforced in his statements yesterday that plans need to be made for any measures put in place to be sustainable for **at least six months**.

In the event that a staff member has exhausted all leave entitlements, the College may consider an ex-gratia amount of additional paid leave of up to two weeks on a case-by-case basis.

I apologise for the length of this letter and I know that we have covered many of these issues previously in different forms. I have tried to address key emerging issues and provide clear guidance to counteract the misinformation that seems to be circulating on social media and elsewhere at this time.

We will continue to keep you updated if there are significant changes or new developments, but also encourage all staff to remain personally informed themselves of the latest **credible** Government advice.

Regards,

Principal

20<sup>th</sup> March, 2020