



Tuesday 17 March 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Re: COVID-19 Update

I am writing to keep you updated on COVID-19. St Mary's College is guided by Catholic Education Commission Victoria (CECV) who in turn follow the advice of the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Included with this letter is a *Statement on School Closures in Victoria Dr Brett Sutton Victorian Chief Health Officer & Victorian Chief Human Biosecurity Officer*.

The Victoria Government has declared a State of Emergency, which came into effect at 12:00pm Monday 16 March giving the state the power to enforce a mandatory self-quarantine period for returning travellers, as well as the ban on gatherings of more than 500 people. The State of Emergency also gives health officials the power to detain, search premises without a warrant and force people or areas into lockdown. Anyone arriving into Australia from overseas from midnight 15 March is required to self-isolate for 14 days.

Information is constantly changing; this letter provides you with (at this point in time) the latest advice the College has received. Communication will continue to you via email and hard copies for families who do not have internet access.

A staff member was recently tested for the virus. The staff member was not at school during that time. There were no symptoms; the staff member did not return from overseas, nor had they been in contact with a contaminated person. The staff member did not have the prerequisites to be tested but the test was completed as a precautionary measure by the family doctor and the test was negative. At the time DHHS was contacted to check that correct protocols were followed. It is likely by the law of nature that as we move forward there will be more College community members tested. This virus will not discriminate. But the consistent message at home and school on good hygiene is important. If there is ever a confirmed case, the College will continue to follow CECV/DHHS guidelines for informing the College community.

Excursions and Camps

In the best interests of the College community all excursions from today Tuesday 17 up to and including Friday 27 March are postponed or cancelled. These excursions include:

Hume Swimming 17/3;

College Open Day 19/3;

Student in RAMS program 20/3;

F-10 College Assembly 20/3;

Sausage Sizzle 20/3;

P&F Colour Festival 22/3;

Foundation Excursion to the Police Station 24/3;

Enrolment Information Evening 25/3; Easter Liturgy 27/3;

College Tours.

**** The Year 7 Camp to Marysville from the 15-17 April has been cancelled.**

You will be informed of some Term Two excursions postponements and or cancellations before Friday 27 March. These excursions/camps are pending further CECV/DHHS advice and include:

Yr7 Camp 15-17/4;

3/4 Excursion Melbourne 17/4;

B4W 17/4;

1/2Excursion Melbourne 20/4;

Primary State Swimming 23/4;

Rhythm of the Drums F-6 24/4;

ANZAC Day 25/4;

Robotics 5/6A 28/4;

College Cross Country 1/5;

Careers Day Yr9 Shepparton 5/5;

Mother's Day Afternoon Tea 8/5;

Robotics 5/6B 12/5;

Robotics 5/6C 18/5;

RAMS & Primary District X Country 19/5;

Yr10 Assumption College Careers 22/5;

RAMS & Robotics 5/6D 25/5;

Sorry Day Liturgy 26/5;

Secondary Southern Ranges Sport 28/5;

Primary Division X Country 29/5;

Secondary Cross Country 1/6;

Confirmation Evening & B4W 2/6;

3/4 Sacramental Evening 9/6;

Secondary & Primary Cross Country 17/6;

Parent Teacher Progress meetings 23-24/6.

** 2020 College Pupil Free days will be reviewed in light of current circumstances.

Hygiene

College toilets have soap dispensers refilled daily. Our cleaners continue to do a wonderful job in ensuring our classrooms and toilets are well cleaned. Our students are receiving daily reminders from staff in regards in washing hands and posters displaying good hygiene are in place in all classrooms and toilets. Please remind your child(ren) and if need be demonstrate at home for younger children, the importance of washing hands.

College Shutdown

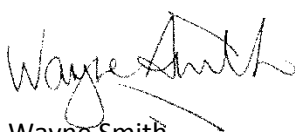
A College shutdown would come as a directive from CECV/DDHS. Curriculum and Wellbeing Leaders met Monday afternoon to begin preparing for the possibility of a College Shutdown. Glenn Stead College ICT Support will send home a brief survey to check on families (3-10) who may not have Internet access so that work can be organised in a different form. Students in F-2 will also require work in a package form. If the College is required to close there are many variables that may/will affect families in different ways. More information on learning support will be provided as CECV/DHHS updates are released.

If there is a College Shutdown staff will update SIMON attendance so that no student is marked as an unofficial absence.

The College is conscious of not bombarding you with an overload of information and that the DHHS website is the best avenue if you wish to find out more information on COVID-19.

A leading Professor of Medicine commented last night on the ABC 7.30 Report, '*Life is not normal this year and normal may not return for some time.*' There is societal pressure on us all at this time. May we all go gently, whether it be in the home, in the workplace or at the supermarket so that our society does not lose focus on the importance of the common good.

Best wishes,



Wayne Smith
Principal

DipEd(ACU) DipRed(ACU) BEd(ACU) GradCertEdAdmin(Edith Cowan)
GradDipRed(ACU) MEdAdmin(Charles Sturt) MTheoStudie

Statement on school closures in Victoria

Dr Brett Sutton MBBS MPHTM FAFPHM FRSPH FACTM MFTM

Victorian Chief Health Officer

Victorian Chief Human Biosecurity Officer

The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) met recently to consider the issue of school closures in relation to the community transmission of COVID-19.

The Committee's advice is that pre-emptive school closures are not likely to be proportionate or effective as a public health intervention to prevent community transmission of COVID-19 at this time.

As Victoria's Chief Health Officer and as a member of the AHPPC, I fully endorse this advice in relation to schools in Victoria.

There is currently limited information on the contribution of children to transmission of COVID-19. The WHO-China Joint Mission noted the primary role of household transmission and observed that children tended to be infected from adults.

Previous work suggests that the potential reduction in community transmission from pre-emptive school closures may be offset by the care arrangements that are in place for children who are not at school.

There is a particular risk associated with the fact that children may require care from vulnerable grandparents or may continue to associate (and transmit infection) outside of school settings.

Broadly, the health advice on school closures from previous respiratory epidemics shows the costs are often underestimated and the benefits are overestimated.

This may be even more so in relation to COVID-19 as unlike influenza, the impact on otherwise healthy children has been minimal to date.

School closure is associated with considerable costs.

Studies have estimated that around 15% of the workforce and 30% of the healthcare workforce may need to take time off work to care for children.

While this effect could be mitigated somewhat, it is likely that this burden will still be significant and will fall disproportionately on those in casual or tenuous work circumstances.

For pre-emptive school closures to be effective, prolonged closure is required and it would be unclear when they could be re-opened. If there were still a large pool of susceptible students when schools are re-opened, there would be likely to be re-emergence of transmission in the community.

School closures may still be considered late in the outbreak in anticipation of a peak in infection rates, for a shorter period of time. Short term reactive school closures may also be warranted to allow cleaning and contact tracing to occur.

Should evidence change in relation to school closures then my advice to the sector, in collaboration with AHPPC, would of course change also.