

RE: COVID-19 (CORONAVIRUS)

Earlier today we distributed information to you via Compass and our website to support you in understanding the current coronavirus issue and how to take steps to protect yourselves and others. While that information is still relevant we also know that the situation is changing rapidly in Australia and there seems to be a degree of inevitability that the coronavirus will impact on all our lives in some way.

This update contains information which will be important over the coming days and weeks. It's lengthy but please read it carefully. It's important that people don't panic but it's also important to know what the college is planning and what advice we have. Advice about upcoming college events is contained under item 14 of this message. Firstly, some definitions we all need to be familiar with:

Self-isolate – remain at home and restrict contact with others for 14 days because you've either been confirmed with the virus or you have come into contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, or you have returned from overseas.

Self-distancing – maintaining a distance between yourself and others to minimise the risk of contracting the virus, with a suggested distance of 1.5 metres. This includes limiting physical contact with others.

Close contact – having, within the last 14 days, at least 15 minutes of face-to-face contact or the sharing of a closed space for more than two hours with someone who has been tested and confirmed as having COVID-19.

1. An important step all of us should be taking to help stop the spread of any disease is to practice good hygiene: cover your mouth or nose when coughing or sneezing, wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water on a regular basis (particularly before eating and after using the toilet), avoid close contact with people who are sick and avoid touching your nose, eyes and mouth. Self distancing is also good practice, particularly if there are confirmed cases of the COVID-19 in the community.
2. The symptoms of the coronavirus include fever, breathing difficulties, cough, sore throat, fatigue or tiredness. Having a cough or sniffle doesn't mean that you've got the coronavirus. One of the distinguishing features of the virus in comparison with a common cold or flu is breathing difficulties. However if you are unwell with the symptoms above you should stay at home and not attend school. We are a school, not a medical service and we are not equipped to provide support to students who develop illness during the day. If you are not well enough to be in class you should not be at school.

If students present with these symptoms we will do what we do with any illness: we will call parents or emergency contacts and we expect the student to be collected from school as soon as possible. We have students and staff who have medical conditions which compromise their immunity, placing them at great risk if they contract the coronavirus.

3. There seems to be some confusion and concern about the need for people to self-isolate if they perceive a risk through contact with someone who is being tested for the coronavirus. The government advice on this is clear: you only need to self-isolate if you have been in contact with someone who has been confirmed as having the coronavirus.

4. It is possible that at some stage the college may be forced to close. If this is because of a confirmed coronavirus case within the college then a closure would possibly be very short; just long enough to identify others who came into close contact with the person who has tested positive to the coronavirus, so that those people can self-isolate and be tested.

In the event of the college closing access to offsite VET classes in the Hobsons Bay cluster would also be suspended for that period of time. Work placements for students would also be cancelled.

5. It is possible that there may be a longer closure of schools as part of a broader campaign to prevent spread of the virus.
6. **In either of the cases above (points 4 and 5) a closure of the college does not mean that students or staff need to go into self isolation** (unless they are known to have been in close contact with a confirmed coronavirus case). Students and staff would be free to involve themselves in normal activities at home or in the community, and they should practice safe behaviours in doing so.
7. If a decision is made to close the college we are unlikely to have much notice of the closure. It could happen with an hour's notice at the end of a school day or it could occur overnight. If this does occur we will advise students and parents via our usual means of communication – Compass, text message, email, website and Facebook. Please be monitoring these closely over the coming days and weeks.
8. The college is developing a plan to support continuation of learning in the event of any closure. It will include work being provided online via Compass and other means that teachers and students are accustomed to using. I expect many of our teachers will be quite creative!

This week staff will be advising students on how to download resources from Compass so that they have access via their device and are not entirely reliant on an internet connection.

Obviously practical activities will be impossible but there is a great deal that can be done and we expect students will engage in this diligently. There will be adjustments to SAC arrangements as needed, most likely involving a delay of the dates of assessment. Further details will be provided at the time of any closure and much of the critical advice about learning activities and assessment will come from individual teachers to their students.

9. If the college closes and students are working from home, they should try to maintain their study for classes at the normal times shown on the timetable where possible to help maintain a routine. Students can expect that teachers will be available to be contacted during those times via google classroom or other means that the teacher advises.
10. **Students need to be prepared.** Every day from now on students must be taking home their laptops, chargers and other important materials such as textbooks and workbooks, folios etc. A sensible step may be to have everything at home and bring in each day what you need for that day's classes and other study.

A small number of our students may not have access to the internet, a laptop or other device to continue learning from home. If this applies to you then you should seek help immediately via our IT Helpdesk.

Because a school closure does not mean students are in self-isolation, anyone without internet access at home is advised to seek access via a public facility such as the local library or through a friend.

11. In the event of a closure it's unclear whether there would be any staff on site to assist with inquiries or to provide access to buildings and lockers, hence the need for both staff and students to be prepared for a closure at short notice.
12. The Department of Education and Training (DET) and the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) have been clear in their advice that no student undertaking a Unit 3&4 VCE subject will be disadvantaged in terms of their subject study score or ATAR as a result of any school closures. There are existing processes to recognise disadvantage caused by exceptional circumstances and in the event of widespread closures this would affect all or most of the students across the state. We will provide further advice on this if needed.
13. Due to the current concerns we have assessed all of our upcoming college events and we can advise you that
 - a. **All Harmony Week events for the week commencing Monday March 16 have been cancelled due to the fact that they involve distribution of food on a large scale.**
 - b. **We cannot proceed with our Anzac Service assembly as planned, we have cancelled all school assemblies until further notice.**
 - c. **The College Athletics Carnival planned for Thursday April 16 has also been cancelled as have all inter school sports until further notice.**
 - d. **All camps and most excursions have also been cancelled until further notice.**
 - e. **At this stage Parent Teacher interviews scheduled for March 26 and 24 will continue as planned. Any parents/carers who are unwell should not come in for interviews at this time. I will keep you updated as this may change.**

There will no doubt be more information we need to share in the coming days and weeks. In the meantime I encourage everyone to remain alert to the risks, to monitor advice through the media and from the college and to practice safe behaviours to prevent the spread of the virus.

[Ten ways to reduce your risk of coronavirus.](#)

Could you please inform the college if your personal circumstances change in relation to COVID-19.

Yours faithfully

Christopher Mooney