



**MARY
MACKILLOP
CATHOLIC
COLLEGE**

16 March 2020

Dear Parents

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RE: Updates regarding Covid-19

I hope you are well. Please see below State/Federal updates and modifications made to the running of Mary MacKillop Catholic College as a result of the ongoing spread of Covid-19.

Continued speculation about broad school closures:

State, Territory and Federal leaders are meeting weekly to manage Australia's response to COVID-19 ('the National Cabinet'). Any advice coming out of this process will be made available to you as soon as possible. You can follow their communiques here: <https://www.coag.gov.au/>.

The National Cabinet met yesterday, and the Prime Minister confirmed:

- Schools will remain open and respond to local issues as required on the advice of health authorities (i.e. spot closures only);
- All international travel arrivals will be required to self-quarantine on arrival back in Australia for a period of 14 days;
- Social distancing will continue to be a key response to this virus and to contain its spread – no hand shaking, 1.5 metre safe distancing, etc.
- Mass gatherings of 500+ people are not to proceed; and
- For other non-essential gatherings, consider the need to proceed and the issues of health and hygiene/social distancing as further mitigations to the spread of the virus.

Our national and state authorities continue to make it clear they will look at appropriate measures to slow transmission rates to limit the pressure on our health system as necessary. You may know that Geelong Grammar announced it would close its school one week ahead of the scheduled Easter break (which was due to start on 30 March in Vic). It is clear from comments made by the PM that broad school closures will (and are) being weighed up as a part of the containment strategies. We will continue to closely monitor and be guided by the advice of our state and national authorities which (to date) have not proposed broad school closures.

Of course, as has been previously communicated, individual schools dealing with staff and students being tested for COVID-19 may in the future be directed by health authorities to undertake short term site closures as they manage positive test cases (i.e. spot closures). Fortunately, this has not been required yet in our area.

There is potential for two types of closure in the foreseeable future;

1. **Spot or site closures – critical incident response**
2. **Broader school closures – disaster response**

As a College, we have developed action plans based upon both. Broadly speaking, years 7-12 will be expected to access learning on-line via One-Note, Canvas and Microsoft Teams. Students should contact their teachers regarding access. This is also the case for students who self-quarantine. Guidance will be distributed regarding P-6.

There are number of reasons for full or partial school closures, and I ask that you be prepared for any of them. Whilst there could be mandated closures it is also possible for parts of the College to be closed due to staff absence. There is no way of knowing at this point what impact there will be on

staffing, but my priority will be maintaining safe staffing ratios at all levels. For example, in the event of several teaching or admin staff being unable to report for work, it may be necessary to not open the College for a certain class, grade or cohort. If this occurs, we will communicate via email, the College App and social media as required. Decisions will be made up to 12 hours before the start of the school day so please keep checking for updates.

Whole School Gatherings:

Please note that for the foreseeable future, Mary MacKillop Catholic College will NOT be holding;

- Junior, senior or whole school liturgies
- Junior, senior or whole school assemblies

These include whole college attendance to Stations of the Cross and ANZAC Day memorial services. Awards such as MJR, Westies and Making Learning Real will be distributed within class and form groups.

Class WESTIE and Making Learning Real awards will still be presented in the Junior School. However, they will be presented during class time on a Friday morning. We ask that parents do not attend classrooms for these presentations.

Excursions:

There are increased challenges in ensuring hygiene and social distancing in out of school activities. For that reason, from 16 March on, all planned excursions are cancelled until further notice.

Hygiene measures for students and classrooms:

A regular message from medical authorities is the importance of consistent hygiene measures. To that end;

- Students will be required to wash their hands
 1. In the morning when starting classes;
 2. Before going to lunch;
 3. On return from lunch.
- Students will be reminded to wash hands when going to the bathroom
- Students will be reminded to cough and sneeze into their elbow or a tissue, and away from others
- Students will be reminded not to share food
- Where possible, distances will be increased between students (e.g seating arrangements) and they will be encouraged to avoid close contact
- Classrooms have been resourced with disinfectant and paper towels to support in keeping learning spaces clean.

Many of these actions are replicable at home and I ask that you start to develop them as habits for your children.

Self-Isolation/Social Distancing:

From 16 March, Mary MacKillop Catholic College will maintain a strict policy of self-quarantine if there is any evidence of flu-like symptoms. This includes any members of our community (staff, parents,

students). Please note that any students in self-quarantine will need to advise the College daily unless there is a medical certificate issued for a set period.

At this stage, several members of our community have decided to self-quarantine for various, however, they are not displaying symptoms nor had exposure to the virus. If we receive confirmation of a member of the community having the virus this will be communicated to you immediately. In the meantime, it remains an expectation that students attend school providing they meet the guidelines from [Queensland Health](#).

I ask that to maintain as much of a closed ecosystem as possible, that all parents please avoid congregating at the College before/after drop-off and pick up times.

Cross-Grade Buddy System:

To avoid cross-contamination between year levels there will be no Buddy Catch-Ups across grades until further notice.

Open Classrooms:

The Open Classrooms event scheduled for 27 March is cancelled.

Sporting Events:

Decisions on all upcoming external sporting events will be communicated as they come to hand. Please regularly check the College mobile app for these updates.

Flu Vaccination

There is an opportunity for staff to receive a flu vaccination on 3 April. We are in unknown territory regarding the normal flu season and the impact of Covid-19, we encourage you to discuss your options with your GP.

I thank you very much for your support. I will continue to communicate as much as possible as information becomes available.

Yours sincerely

Chris Gabbett

Principal