



# St Mark's

ANGLICAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL

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A School of the Anglican Schools Commission Inc.

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Dear Parents and Carers

The weekend brought a number of significant changes to the measures being adopted by the Australian Government in their effort to slow or stop the spread of COVID-19. St Mark's, and all Anglican Schools Commission schools, will always act with the health and safety of our students and staff in mind, and have made decisions affecting our community in line with advice from governments and health officials.

The Prime Minister has reiterated that there must not be non-essential static mass gatherings (of more than 500 people) where large groups of people are together for long periods of time. At St Mark's we will adopt an even more cautious approach than this. Our interpretation of this is that assemblies, Chapel services, year meetings or any such gathering will not take place for the foreseeable future. This will affect our usual gatherings but also special occasions such as Easter services, our ANZAC Day ceremony, and St Mark's Day celebrations. Where there are specific events in any of our sub-schools, you will receive communication from the appropriate person to provide clarity about those events.

Earlier today, the Director General of the WA Department of Education announced that the following apply to WA Government schools – all camps cancelled, all assemblies, sports carnivals and events, major performances, etc, cancelled. St Mark's and other ASC schools must align with this direction as a minimum standard and so we must cancel the upcoming Year 7 and Year 6 camps, the OAS overnight camp, and the planned Ski Trip to Mt Hotham. In addition, excursions where large groups of students are involved will be cancelled. Those excursions with small groups of students will be assessed on a case by case basis for their safety. We have the Year 8 Canberra Trip and Year 10 OAS Camp scheduled for the latter part of the year, and decisions regarding these two camps will be made closer to the time when conditions around the country are clearer.

The Prime Minister reminded Australians of the practice of 'social distancing' and maintaining excellent personal hygiene. As much as this social distancing is possible in a school setting, this will be required at St Mark's. This is, of course, why assemblies and large gatherings have been cancelled. In classrooms, teachers will be aware of the requirement and will do their best to ensure an appropriate space is kept between people. Outside lessons will be encouraged, where possible. We will constantly and consistently remind our students about their personal hygiene - washing hands, and appropriate ways to sneeze and cough.

The Associated and Catholic Colleges (ACC) announced over the weekend that ACC sport, including upcoming swimming carnivals and CAS sport (for Term 1 at this stage) is cancelled.

We will seek to stagger lunchtime for secondary students so that not all Middle and Senior School students are at the Canteen at the same time. The Junior School has its own separate Canteen and play areas.

The Prime Minister announced yesterday that anyone, including all Australians, who enter Australia, from midnight on 15 March, will mandatorily self-isolate for 14 days upon their arrival home. Given that directive from the Australian Government, I encourage all families to reconsider any travel plans.

The Prime Minister also referred to possible school closures. Schools remain open for the time being, as an essential service. He noted that some health experts are talking about kids being in school as a better protective measure than having them out in the community. While the incidence of children falling ill from the virus is low, they may be good carriers to other, more vulnerable people. He also noted that having children at home requires them to be looked after, and we need all of our health workers at work, not at home.

A closure of St Mark's may happen in the future, but that would be under the direction of the Department of Health. We have a plan in place to ensure continuity of learning for students and our staff have time, at present, to plan effectively for the provision of 'distance learning'. That will look a bit different for students in different stages of their education through the School, and we will share details in the future as it becomes appropriate to do so.

I am sure that some students and families, especially those in Year 11 and 12, will be somewhat concerned about any interruption to their learning. We are very aware of this and the importance of these years is at the front of mind for our staff. If schools do close, it will be state-wide. The School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA) who are responsible for the curriculum and WACE studies have, in my experience, always acted in the best interest of students. I am sure that they will be very busy making plans of their own to manage any situation that presents for Western Australian students.

We have received advice that cash handling should be minimised. Until further notice cash will not be accepted at the school, including:

- School fees: Alternative payment options are included on first term statements.
- Uniform purchases: Payment can instead be made by EFTPOS or credit card at the uniform shop.
- Junior School Canteen: Orders are to be made and paid for online and need to be placed by 8.30am on the day the items are required. Online ordering instructions are at <https://www.stmarks.wa.edu.au/our-community/cafeteria>

Please try to help your children feel as calm as possible about these measures. School will feel a bit different over the coming weeks and perhaps months, but we should focus on what we can control. We can all take responsibility for excellent standards of hygiene and our social distancing, and students are in control of their attitude to learning, in whatever form that manifests.

Regarding the virus itself, anyone who is awaiting COVID-19 test results, or who has a member of their immediate family awaiting test results, should not attend school until the test results are returned as negative. We ask that you please contact the School if your child or someone in your family is being tested. Additionally, anyone who is displaying COVID-19 symptoms should remain away from School and seek medical attention.

I thank you for your support in this matter, in the best interests of our students, staff and vulnerable members of our community. It is very apparent that things can change rapidly, and I will endeavour to keep you up to date with news as it comes in and affects our community.

Stay well, and best wishes

Yours sincerely



Steven Davies  
Principal