



### **EAC Community Update: Coronavirus COVID19 (16 March 2020)**

The College continues to receive updates from the Department of Health and the Association of Independent Schools (AIS) regarding the evolving situation regarding Covid19. The AIS has developed a portal for all Principals to access containing the latest health information and advice which has been gathered and developed in consultation with health agencies, relevant government departments and education authorities to provide up-to-date advice and support to help minimise the impact of the Covid19 on schools and their communities.

#### **About Covid19**

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness caused by a new virus. Symptoms are similar to other colds and flus and include:

- fever
- cough
- sore throat
- fatigue
- difficulty breathing

Some people who are infected may not get sick at all, some will get mild symptoms from which they will recover easily, and others may become very ill. Based on what we know about coronavirus, people most at risk of serious infection are:

- People with compromised immune systems
- elderly people
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (as they have higher rates of chronic illness)
- people with chronic medical conditions
- Very young children and babies

The College encourages families of students who have an identified medical condition that increases the student's risk of severe infection to seek medical advice in relation to additional protective action. This may include self-isolating the student to reduce the risk of infection. Please keep the College informed in relation to any medical advice received relating to these students who are at increased risk.

#### **General Advice**

There are no reported cases of Covid19 in the EAC community and no cause for alarm in relation to the spread of the virus, however, it is important that we are all well informed, calm and have a common approach.

If a person has a confirmed case or has been in close contact with someone who has a confirmed case of COVID-19 they must immediately self-isolate and seek medical advice.

The most elementary response is to practice and encourage good health and hygiene habits including:

- Washing hands regularly (for 20 seconds at a time and frequently)
- Covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing

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- Using disposable hand wipes, tissues and paper towels
- Isolating yourself and seeking medical advice if symptoms similar to those of Covid19 develop

All staff have been asked to remind students of these practices that promote good health and hygiene. Many classrooms have Hand Sanitiser Dispensers on the wall and all classrooms have tissues available for students. I ask that parents continue to reinforce the message around good health and hygiene practice.

It is important to remember that most people displaying cold or flu like symptoms will NOT have Covid19.

If a student displays the relevant symptoms at school, teachers are asked to send the student to the office and their parents will be asked to come and collect them. Families will be advised they must seek medical advice and the students must be symptom free prior to returning to the College. The same expectations have been placed on all EAC staff.

### **Social Distancing Strategies**

The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee has also advised that all Australians should practice social distancing strategies involving restricting gatherings to fewer than 500 people to further protect against the potential spread of the virus. At this point this advice does NOT apply to schools, however, the College Executive has met this morning to review calendared events and current school practices and as a result of this meeting the following protocols have been put into place:

- The College has cancelled all whole College, Primary and Secondary school assemblies and Chapel Services. Gathering of students will be restricted to Stage and Year groups and these will be kept to a minimum.
- The Primary Disco (March 17) and the College Open Evening (March 24) have been postponed indefinitely.
- All NCIS events scheduled up to the 18 May 2020 have been cancelled. A decision about events beyond this date is pending.
- Rounds Four and Five of the HICES Debating Northern Conference have been cancelled.
- The primary sport classes, Friday afternoon secondary sport and concert band rehearsal (performances are under review) will continue as scheduled.
- Before school sports training for Swimming, Cross Country, Touch Football and Basketball have been cancelled as the relevant representative competition has been cancelled.
- Parent and Teacher Interviews will continue to take place, however, will take place as phone interviews, with the teacher calling the parent at the pre-booked time.
- All student excursions will be reviewed on a case by case, with most rescheduled or cancelled. Further information about specific events will be distributed to the relevant groups.

### **Advice relating to international travel**

The current travel advice (effective midnight March 15) requires all travellers returning to Australia to self-isolate for 14 days. This relates to all staff, students and their families. If they become unwell in this period they must seek medical advice.



All school related international travel has been suspended until further notice.

### **Containment and Contingency Planning**

#### *Temporary Closure Strategy*

Should a member of our community test positive to the virus, the Department of Health will make contact and advise the College. If this was to happen during the College day and involved either a staff member or student, the College would be placed in lockdown and processes put in place to arrange for students and staff to go home. The school would be closed and advice taken from the Department of Health and other agencies about the appropriate measures to be followed. The website, email and social media would be used to keep the community updated regarding the situation.

#### *Continuity of Teaching and Learning Strategy (in the event of an extended closure)*

In the event on an extended site closure (more than 3 school days) the College would maintain continuity of teaching and learning by moving to a flexible online delivery mode for Kindergarten to Year 12.

This would involve the use of College email and the google classroom suite along with other online subscriptions and tools such as Stile, Clickview, Seesaw, Mathletics and the like to communicate with student and families to facilitate the provision and exchange of work, assessment and feedback.

Teachers and students would be expected to be available to participate in teaching and learning for the normal duration of learning time throughout Monday to Friday.

The College IT team has been looking at ways to facilitate this process and is developing a number of information sheets to demonstrate how to use various online tools to support continuity of teaching and learning.

### **Staying Informed**

I encourage all families to remain informed and updated. Additional information can be found at:

<https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert>

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-schools-and-early-childhood-centres>

I thank you for your support with this matter.

Robert Tobias  
Principal