

18 March 2020

Dear Parents/Caregivers,

RE: CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

As of Monday, the Australian Government has advised that all organised non-essential static mass gatherings attended by more than 500 people must be cancelled. As a consequence, the College has cancelled its weekly Friday Morning Worship Services and Sub-School Devotions until further notice. Alternative arrangements will be put in place for these devotions for the foreseeable future.

The College is also reviewing its Calendar of Events with the view to cancelling or postponing those that are not essential. At the same time, numerous events within our local community and state have been cancelled.

As we have seen over the last few weeks the situation regarding the coronavirus continues to evolve rapidly. As a response, a small number of College families have made the decision in the last day or two to self-isolate. Whilst we respect the decision made by individual families, we want to reassure parents that we are following all government advice with regard to maintaining hygiene standards and social distancing.

In a conference call with the Premier, Education Minister and senior health leaders late on Monday afternoon, it was emphasised that the directive at the moment is to keep schools open. According to health officials this can help to reduce the spread of the disease to those who are more vulnerable in our community. In addition, if schools close, families will have to make alternate care arrangements for their children, meaning that parents and caregivers may not be able to work. This could lead to many children being in the care of grandparents who are considered a vulnerable group in the current situation. School closures will also have a negative impact on health professionals, such as doctors and nurses, who will be unable to do their jobs if they are caring for their children.

In the case of families who choose to self-isolate, the College is only able to provide the normal level of educational support available through SEQTA Learn, in line with that currently accessed by students. Students can also continue with assignment and book work. A student may communicate with teachers via e-mail to get some basic support, but at this stage we do not feel it is reasonable to burden teachers with extra expectations on top of their normal teaching load.

The College is currently developing a plan for the possibility of a prolonged school closure in the future. We are looking at how we might deliver a learning programme to students via online methods. As you would expect, we have staff with varying levels of skill in this area. Therefore, a key priority at the moment, apart from the normal day to day operations of regular teaching, is to prepare and upskill staff for such an eventuality. As you can imagine, this is a major challenge that is taking up significant extra staff time.

We understand families making the best possible decisions for their children, particularly where students or family members have pre-existing health conditions, or where a student or family member is unwell.

We thank you for your ongoing understanding and support as we endeavour to continue to meet the educational needs of our students. If you have any questions, please contact the College Front or Ark Office.

Yours sincerely,

Alan Connah
Principal