



ST JOSEPH'S  
COLLEGE MILDURA

*From the desk of the Principal*

20 March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

The rapid evolution of the COVID-19 (coronavirus) outbreak continues to be a challenge for everyone in education. I am aware that it has caused concerns for some parents, staff and students. I thank you all for your trust and belief in our college staff. We are doing all we can to support your child/ren. I am very proud of our community. **We love our work and we appreciate your support.**

Because the health and safety of school communities is our highest priority, the college's decision to stay open is based on advice from the Australian and Victorian Chief Medical Officers. Currently, the advice of Dr Brett Sutton, Victorian Chief Health Officer, is that *'pre-emptive school closures are not likely to be proportionate or effective as a public health intervention to prevent community transmission of COVID-19 at this time'*. When advice from the Chief Medical Officers changes, we will communicate those changes to our college community.

We continue to actively monitor developments and are working closely with the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV). The CECV is partnering with the Victorian Department of Education and Training, and Victorian Department of Health and Human Services to ensure our practices reflect current advice and support the needs of our college community.

I am receiving regular updates from the CECV, and ensuring school leaders and staff are aware of coronavirus reporting and management practices, and are well-placed to respond as circumstances change. The college's leaders and teaching staff are committed to ensuring that learning remains available to students as part of all students' entitlement to access the Victorian curriculum.

We have plans in place to support students to learn from home but, while we remain open, the emphasis will be on the learning and teaching currently in place in the classroom. The methods our students will use to access this learning will be a school-based decision, and will vary according to need and context. We already have localised resources and ideas for supporting the students' learning from home. Learning from home requires careful management and may not be available immediately. Please contact the college directly to discuss educational continuity options.

Should you have any concerns relating to college operations, or the health and safety of students, please do not hesitate to contact the college.

God bless

**Mrs Marg Blythman**  
Principal

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One of the reasons why schools have been kept open by governments across Australia, on the basis of the advice from the health and medical experts, is that people remaining in their routine daily activities, whilst decreasing non-essential social and mass gathering activities, will decrease the opportunities for spread in our community, including those to teachers.

There is evidence that children in households may be infected by adults within the households, which is why all household contacts of confirmed cases are placed into home isolation when a case is confirmed. This will continue throughout the COVID-19 response.

Thus far, approximately 2% of total cases in China have been in children, and there have been no deaths in children under 10 years with very few hospitalisations. There is emerging evidence indicates that the people who are most unwell, and most symptomatic are more infectious than those with very mild or minimal symptoms.

There is not widespread community transmission at this point, and levels of COVID-19 illness are likely to be very low. Children who are at all unwell are advised to be at home, and schools and teachers should exclude any unwell children who present to school. Any children with undetected symptoms are likely to be minimally infectious.

At this point there is no evidence of any school clusters where infections were driven by the student population or student introductions. The evidence is reviewed daily and advice will continue to be tailored to the evidence. Any change in policy advice will consider the risk to teachers as well as the broader community.

**Adj Clin Prof Brett Sutton**  
Victorian Chief Health Officer  
Health Protection Branch

19/03/2020