

From the desk of the Principal

Monday March 23, 2020

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Dear Parents, Guardians and Students

As mentioned earlier today the Victorian Government announced that in order to try and limit exposure to the Coronavirus COVID-19, Victorian schools will begin the Term 1 school holidays for students as of today, Tuesday 24 March. We expect that Term 2 will begin on Tuesday 14 April, which is a student-free day, with students scheduled to return on Wednesday 15 April. Any changes to these dates will be guided by the ongoing advice of the Chief Health Officer, and will be communicated to parents.

We continue to follow the advice of the Commonwealth Chief Medical Officer and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) regarding the spread and response to COVID-19. We are also monitoring the advice of the Australian and Victorian Governments, the Catholic Education Office and Mercy Education Limited. We will continue to communicate with you as decisions are made.

Care and Supervision Program

For those parents who are currently working in **essential services** (ambulance, fire, hospitals, medical professions etc.), the school will be providing supervision for their children during school hours for the remainder of this week. If you are intending to send your child to school, please notify the college as to the essential service you are involved in, along with your child's name, to allow us to have adequate supervision during the day.

This includes a care and supervision program for students who are vulnerable. These may include:

- children in out-of-home care
- children deemed by Child Protection and/or Family Services to be at risk of harm
- children identified by the school as vulnerable, including via referral from a family violence agency, homelessness service, mental health service or other health service.

Parents/guardians/caregivers of these children need to register their intent with the college in advance of the commencement of the school day for this week only. Beyond this period, a decision has not yet been made. Students will be supervised for private study in the college library. All college rules apply whilst these students are in attendance.

It has become clear that as a community we need to respond differently to contain the spread of the virus. I am both grateful and humbled by the response of our community to supporting each other as we navigate our way through such difficult times.

Learning

SACs scheduled for this week will not proceed, and will be rescheduled at a later date.

VCE students would normally be expected to complete study during the term break. We will expect all students to follow the advice of their teachers regarding holiday study. This will continue to be available through SIMON, Google Classroom or others digital platforms.

Although the school holidays begin tomorrow for students, a number of senior teachers (Years 11 and 12) may offer classes or tutorials in the next three weeks. This is similar to what has been offered in previous years except they will be delivered remotely.

We expect there to be no capacity for practical classes to operate here at the college. Students completing work placements with essential services will continue as scheduled, however a number of work placements, school-based apprenticeships and external VET subjects will not be able to continue.

Term 2

At this stage Term 2 is scheduled to resume for students on Wednesday April 15. It is important that you continue to monitor Skoolbag and PAM for further information. As you are aware many things are changing rapidly and we will continue to communicate with you as circumstances alter and more information is made available.

Parent/Student/Teacher Interviews scheduled for Term 2 will not proceed. The learning progress of your child will be available on the Parent Access Module (PAM).

Online Learning

Over the last few weeks, the college's staff have undertaken an enormous amount of work preparing for teaching and learning that will be delivered remotely from the start of Term 2. We will be distributing material to all parents, families and students detailing these programs later this week. These documents will include details on electronic platforms for teaching and learning, advice on setting up for remote schooling at home, wellbeing support, IT support, etc. Our staff will gather this week to complete these preparations.

Information will be provided to both students and parents regarding online learning should we need to proceed to that scenario.

Lockers and IT Support

Students have been asked to ensure they take all of their learning devices, school books and stationery home at the conclusion of classes today. We are awaiting advice on what capacity there will be for the college to be open after this week. Therefore, any student materials that remain in lockers or at school will need to be collected by 3.00pm Wednesday March 25.

Due to our Child Safe Policy, parents will be asked to wait in reception while their children empty their locker. If your child is unwell, please contact Mrs Jacinta Jones Personal Assistant to the Deputy Principal Students to make alternative arrangements. As previously advised the college will be undertaking a deep clean as soon as is practical. Once this has taken place the college will not be accessible until the school term begins, subject to Government announcements.

The usual IT support email of inttec@sjcmda.vic.edu.au should be used in the event of a laptop, keyboard malfunction or breakage.

Finally

The Department of Health and Human Services has a number of resources on its website, which explain the virus, detail risk-reduction practices and behaviours, and answer frequently asked questions. These are available at www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus.

You can also find information about Catholic education's response to COVID-19 at www.cecv.catholic.edu.au/Coronavirus-information-for-parents.

My personal message to everyone in our St Joseph's College community – students, parents and staff – is to look after yourself and those you cherish. Please take heed of the health and public order announcements that are being made. Each of us must support the efforts to slow the spread of COVID-19, otherwise our world-class health system and its workforce is going to be overwhelmed. Unfortunately, the most vulnerable in our society will be the most affected – the elderly, those with underlying health concerns, and the poor.

In the weeks and months to come, I urge all in the St Joseph's College community to reflect upon the hallmarks of a Catholic education in the Mercy tradition: Compassion, Community, Spirituality, Excellence, Hospitality, Justice and Service.

In the meantime, we thank all in our community for your ongoing understanding as we seek to keep our college community safe. Further updates will be provided if there are additional changes. If you have any queries or concerns, please contact the college directly.

Yours sincerely



Mrs Marg Blythman
Principal