



St Mark's College

17 March 2020

To: *all resident members of St Mark's College*

Dear resident member of the College

College response to COVID-19: next steps

With daily escalation of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, including the declaration of a public health emergency in South Australia, I am writing to

- highlight the importance of every one of us – including all students of St Mark's – doing all we can to help prevent the spread of COVID-19,
- let you know about some changes in events, meals, and other arrangements to help to prevent its spread, and
- assure you that the College is actively planning for future contingencies.

The safety and well-being of our students, staff, and the broader community is our top priority.

Prevention

This pandemic requires measures unprecedented in the life of every one of us.

The measures needed will change over time, and the College – and all of us as individuals – will need to be prepared to take further action(s) at short notice. This will include responding to further expert medical guidance, government requirements and advice, and the decisions of our affiliated universities.

It is essential not to be lulled into complacency by the thought that your age-group is not likely to be catastrophically affected – though it is too early to know if that is true.

Any one of us could contract this virus and, however mild or severe our own symptoms, infect others who may be vulnerable – such as grandparents or other elderly relatives, or people with compromised immune systems.

We all have a moral duty to do all we can to help prevent the spread, including so that our health system is not overwhelmed.

A good way to think about what to do is to act as if you already have the virus and are trying not to spread it to others.

It is important to know that the common symptoms of COVID-19 are:

- fever

- cough
- sore throat
- shortness of breath
- headache.

The essential hygiene measures that must now be taken include:

- wash your hands frequently and thoroughly, ideally with soap and water for 20-30 seconds, or use sanitiser if soap is not available (hands are the number one transmitter of infectious disease)
- cough or sneeze into the bend of your elbow or into a tissue (which is then binned), rather than into your hands
- avoid (as far as possible) touching your face, especially eyes, nose, and mouth, with your fingers
- avoid handshaking and hugging
- keep at least 1.5m distance from anyone, especially anyone who may be ill
- if you are ill, isolate yourself in your room, let the Dean know immediately, and phone for medical attention promptly (more details below).

As you know, the College has taken various preventative steps – such as placing hand sanitiser in all buildings and the dining hall, with signs and other communications about good hygiene.

Staff as well as students are following these hygiene processes, monitoring their own health, and taking appropriate action if there are any concerns.

We continue to encourage the maintenance of good general health, including through getting enough sleep, regular and safe exercise, and a healthy diet, and by avoiding exhaustion. This message is all the more important today.

Next steps

To prevent the spread of this virus, further steps are now needed.

- **Events postponed or cancelled:** Because events that bring people into close proximity risk spreading the virus, the College (like many other organisations around the country) and the Old Collegians' Association have decided to postpone or cancel a number of College-organised events.

These events have already been postponed or cancelled:

- the drinks which had been organised for Tuesday 24 March to thank donors to the College for their support
- an Old Collegians' event planned for 28 March
- events on Founders' Day (Sunday 26 April)
- the Scholarship Ceremony (Wednesday 6 May).

The Heads of the various colleges are in discussion about inter-collegiate events, and will be discussing them with the SAAUCC leadership, and the Dean and I are in discussion with the College Club Committee leadership about other College and College-related events.

Arrangements for Faculty Dinners have been paused while we consider what is appropriate to do during the pandemic.

We will not be taking bookings for external events at the College at least until June, and possibly later.

- **Meals:** To minimise the risks both to students and to staff (including our much-valued catering staff), a number of changes are being made to meal arrangements. We appreciate that these changes, made to promote hygiene during the pandemic, mean a change to your routine, and ask for your understanding of this.
 - **Formal Hall is suspended** until further notice with immediate effect. **All meals will be informal.** I very much regret the loss to our community of suspending Formal Hall, and commit to restoring it as soon as that seems prudent.
 - **As much as possible, from this evening's dinner (Tuesday 17 March), meals will be served by Sodexo staff at the bain marie. This will be the case for breakfast, lunch and dinner.** Please be decisive about your choice of meal, and we ask for your understanding if your first preference is not available.
 - **A range of pre-made salad, sandwich and wrap options** will be available at breakfast and lunch for students who need to take lunch with them.
 - **Hand cleaning and sanitising:** Everyone coming for a meal in the Dining Hall is required to
 - wash your hands with soap and water for 20-30 seconds before coming to the Hall (e.g. on your floor), and
 - sanitise your hands with the hand sanitiser provided before entering the Hall, and
 - wash your hands with soap and water for 20-30 seconds after leaving the Hall (e.g. back on your floor).
 - **Stagger your attendance:** You are asked to time your attendance at informal meals to try to prevent both long queues and too many people being in the Hall at once. For now, we would like to try to stagger attendance at lunch and dinner through – as much as possible – people attending
 - **for the first half hour of the meal:** surnames A-M
 - **for the second half hour of the meal:** surnames N-Z

When a better means of staggering attendance is identified, we'll adopt that!

- **Seating in Hall:** Everyone eating in Hall is required to sit with at least one empty chair between them and the next person, and to sit diagonally opposite anyone seated on the other side of the table (i.e. not directly opposite).
- **Kitchen duty is suspended (i.e. there is no kitchen duty) until further notice.**

- The kitchen remains out of bounds to all students.
 - Arrangements for late meals are currently unchanged.
- **College tutorials** will continue, and all students are asked to adhere to the guidelines above in relation to hygiene and social distancing.
 - **Cleaning:** It is important that surfaces that people often touch that can spread viruses be disinfected regularly. In addition to the cleaning undertaken by Academy staff, we are asking each Residential Adviser to develop and implement a system on their floor for daily disinfecting of
 - door handles
 - light switches, and
 - banister rails.

. Each RA is being provided with a disinfectant pack, which can be restocked through contacting the Property Manager, Richard Foster, at maintenance@stmarkscollege.com.au.

Wherever possible, please open and close doors in shared spaces, especially bathrooms, with a clean tissue or equivalent, and bin it immediately.

- **Gym:** Please wipe down every piece of equipment you use **before** using it and **after** using it, including where you put your hands and where you sit. Be conscious that viruses may be transmitted via sweat.

So that the gym can remain open as long as possible, we will develop further protocols. Further information will be made available in due course.

If you or someone else develops symptoms

- If you are unwell with any flu-like symptoms, you should isolate yourself in your room, **immediately** advise the Dean on [mobile phone number] or dean@stmarkscollege.com.au, and seek medical advice.
- If you believe that another student has flu-like symptoms, or you have any other concerns, you should immediately advise the Dean.
- If you have had contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19, you should **immediately** advise the Dean on [mobile phone number] or dean@stmarkscollege.com.au
- RAs and other student leaders will be asked to report any poor hygiene and any concerns about the health of any person to the Dean.
- In the event of anyone developing symptoms or being diagnosed with COVID-19, appropriate urgent action will be taken.

Consideration for others

As we all practise “social distancing”, it will be all the more important that we show consideration and support for others. This includes when they are studying or resting in their rooms.

One form of this is avoiding excessive noise at all times, and avoiding all risk of noise disturbance to others between 10pm and 7am.

As I said at the outset, this pandemic and the measures needed to help prevent the spread of this deadly virus are unprecedented in our lifetimes. We all have a responsibility to do all we can to help contain its spread.

To this end, it is worth reading <https://www.newsweek.com/young-unafraid-coronavirus-pandemic-good-you-now-stop-killing-people-opinion-1491797>


The author concludes: "It's the civic and moral duty of every person, everywhere, to take part in the global effort to reduce this threat to humanity. To postpone any movement or travel that are not vitally essential, and to spread the disease as little as possible. Have your fun in June, July and August when this—hopefully—is over. Stay safe."

Please be in touch with the Dean, Professor Peter Tregear, or with the Director of Learning, Dr Rachel Buxton, or with me if you would like to discuss any aspect of this.

I will be in touch as and when there is further information.

I hope that you are having an enjoyable and productive semester – and that we will all continue to stay safe, and support each other through this most unusual period through which we are living.

With best wishes



Professor Don Markwell
Head of College