

COVID19 INFORMATION FOR PARENTS 2 (March 18 2020)

Dear families,

As part of NT Christian Schools commitment to working in partnership with families, I am pleased to provide an update on how the leadership team across our System are thinking about and responding to the challenges presented through the presence of the COVID-19 virus in the Australian community. This communication forms part of regular and ongoing communication with all families to ensure there is clarity, calmness and consistency across our schools.

Firstly, we are seeking to faithfully hold to two truths – the seriousness of this virus, and the supremacy of our God. Threats such as this virus demonstrate to us all that life – and plans and the supposed securities we hope in – are fragile, but our God isn't. We want our starting point in all things to be that God is our refuge and hope, and in fact, our loving Father because of Jesus. This hope will underpin all planning and precautions we put in place across NT Christian Schools. We also invite you to join us in prayer for God's provision and protection for all involved in our school community.

NT Christian Schools leaders are accessing information together from the Australian Government's Department of Health website as well as the Northern Territory Government's Department of Health website. We are in regular contact with the Department of Education. Relevant information or requirements for schools received from these agencies form the basis of our decision making.

Please be aware of the following protective measures put in place by the government in seeking to protect the community by slowing down the spread of COVID-19.

Self-isolation of individuals at risk due to travel or contact with a person with COVID-19

To help limit the spread of COVID-19, you must isolate yourself in the following circumstances:

- If you have returned from international travel, you must isolate yourself for 14 days from the date of return.
- If you have been in close contact with a proven case of COVID-19, you must isolate yourself for 14 days from the date of last contact with the confirmed case, and monitor yourself for symptoms. If you develop symptoms, please contact the NT Public Health Unit on 8922 8044 for testing.

Please also consider self-isolation as appropriate: Current advice for students or family members who suspect you may have the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), is to call the dedicated hotline on 1800 675 398 (Australian Government's Department of Health website) or phone their GP first if you need medical attention. GP practices will provide advice about the appropriate means of accessing health support.

Upcoming school holidays and travel

International: All Australians are now restricted from overseas travel.

There are mandatory self-isolation requirements that are connected with travel.

Domestic: there are currently (18 March 2020) no mandatory self-isolation restrictions for individuals travelling interstate. Please consider your need to travel regardless. The situation is unfolding rapidly.

Self-isolation requirements may also apply to those who have had contact with a person who has returned from overseas within those timeframes or has been diagnosed with the virus.

Whilst NT Christian Schools are committed to ensuring timely sharing of information, the most up-to-date information is available on the websites referred to above, and also

<https://www.smarttraveller.gov.au/crisis/covid-19-and-travel>.

NT Christian Schools response

As a leadership team, we have planned for a phased response to the presence of this virus in the Northern Territory community. We are currently operating within a Standby Phase, which includes:

Symptomatic students presenting at school being sent immediately to parent care and taken to a doctor

Symptoms of this virus can range from mild illness to pneumonia. People with the virus may experience fever, flu-like symptoms such as coughing, sore throat and fatigue, and/or shortness of breath. Students showing any of these symptoms should be taken to a doctor, with advice about any necessary isolation being followed.

Should a student present at school with these symptoms, staff have been directed to keep the student in a safe and comfortable location while contact is made with their parents or guardians who will be asked to make arrangements to have their child collected from school. The school's recommendation will be that the student be taken to a doctor for further diagnosis and direction. Social distancing measures and general practice for all illness is that should your child be unwell they need to be kept home from school and isolated. Should a child present to school unwell, parents or guardians will also be asked to make arrangements to have their child collected from school immediately.

Increased hygiene measures will be in place

We know that practising good hygiene is the best defence against most viruses. There will also be an increased focus on such measures including:

- washing hands frequently with soap and water, before and after eating, and after going to the toilet.
- cover coughs and sneezes, disposing of tissues, and using hand sanitisers as they are available.

Please also be assured that an increased cleaning regimen has been implemented for school campuses.

Additional Personal Protective Equipment for staff and students

Should a student present with symptoms, staff may wear appropriate protective equipment whilst caring for the student, for the student's safety, and the safety of others in the community. Your child may also be asked to wear appropriate protective equipment, such as a mask. Should a staff member or student wear such equipment, it is not an indication that a student has the virus, but a sign of commitment to working and acting protectively for the good of the school community.

Constant reviewing of activities, excursions and camps

Where students are scheduled to participate in activities, excursions or camps in coming days or weeks, additional sensible measures are being put in place to make sure students and staff remain safe and well. Whilst these activities continue to be planned and prepared for, the decision to proceed will be reviewed regularly up until the actual departure time. Risk assessment documentation has been provided through government for this and your College is operating in accordance with all advice in this area. Whilst Colleges across NT Christian Schools will only proceed with an activity where it is sensible to do so, we see it as important for the student and parents to be comfortable with the student's participation in any activity.

Additional support provided as needed

We also understand that the uncertainty for students and families that such circumstances can produce can take additional support to deal with well. Should any child require additional emotional support at this time, we invite students or their families to discuss this with their class teachers or an appropriate Chaplain.

Thank you in anticipation for your supportive partnership, expressed in this way at this time. NT Christian Schools will continue to communicate with you concerning this matter through Compass posts. In the event of the need for urgent communication, your College will communicate through a Compass post, as well as via email and text messaging.

Should you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to communicate with your College's appropriate Head of School or Principal.

Sincerely,

Phoebe van Bentum

CEO