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**St Paul's**  
Catholic College  
Booragul

24 March 2020

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

***COVID-19 Update No. 7.***

Today we began the first day of the new reality in schooling. I would firstly thank all our parents and caregivers for their support as we transition to an online learning experience. This is new for our children and new for our staff. We will continue to develop our skills along with the students over the coming weeks and potentially months.

At this point we are successfully delivering work to students via Compass. Students are working on tasks and participating in online learning experiences through Education Perfect, Maths Online, Click View and other more bespoke platforms developed by teachers. Our staff are continually networking through their professional bodies such as the English Teachers Association (and similar associations aligned to all Key learning Areas). They are also liaising with colleague teachers in our own Catholic Schools Network and other school systems in order to bring quality teaching and learning to our students. I have asked staff not to use video conferencing at this time. Programs such as Zoom are being touted as the way forward but until we get some more clarity on online safety for students and teachers, I am reticent to go down that path. I suspect that such programs will be rolled out for senior classes if schools go into full shutdown. Hopefully that doesn't happen but in these ever-changing times, one would be foolish to speculate!

Staff remain contactable via email and other interactive platforms that they have established with their classes. Obviously, they will need time to respond to any enquiries and we can't assume that there will be an instant response to a question about work etc. If a number of students in their class asked the same question, the response may well come in the form of a direction and clarification during the next online lesson. I counsel students to stay calm and relaxed. Teachers will answer your questions as soon as is practical. I have also instructed teachers not to respond to emails in their own time. I know that some teachers in the past may have done this but for their own well-being, I am asking teachers to spend their down time with their own families during this difficult time.

There has been much commentary about online learning environments and how to manage lessons at home. Teachers are setting tasks and we have made the decision to roll them out as per the normal timetable. This is for two reasons. We still have students of essential workers and those families who are unable to have their children at home attending school. We need to continue a timetabled environment for good order and management. The other reason is to allow teachers appropriate time to set work for upcoming lessons and to continue to upskill in this online domain. Our expectation of students is to try to do as much of the work as they can. My mantra to students has always been "to make the most of every learning opportunity." That mantra remains true in these difficult times.

In saying that, I am acutely aware that these are very stressful times for families, and I do not want families to become stressed about what work has or hasn't been done during the school day. You know your children better than anyone else. You know what they are capable of achieving each day. If they are struggling, set some down time. Let them read a book, watch a movie, go out into the yard and play with the dog. Learning doesn't happen under stress. The lessons that are set on Compass remain there and students can go back in time and see what was set.

**Stage 6 Students:** NESA Board met today to discuss Stage 6 and HSC. I suspect some decision around assessment may come from this meeting but definitive decisions about the HSC will be left until much later. I will update this tomorrow.

**Could I ask parents who have made the decision to keep your child at home to send an email to the College outlining that decision.** We will then put that into our attendance system and then you won't be bombarded with SMS messages about your child being absent.

I also ask that if you have made the choice to keep your child at home that they stay at home. The purpose of this process is to protect people in our communities from the virus. "Flattening the Curve" is the talking point. It is about ensuring that our medical system has the capacity to look after people who have severe reactions to the virus. Young people in general, according to the medical experts that I have heard, are not immune to carrying and getting the virus but are less likely to have a serious reaction to it. However, the more that they interact with others, the more opportunity there is to spread it to people who are vulnerable. This includes the older population but also people who have immune deficiencies and who are on medication that lowers their immunity. This includes people who are in the middle of cancer treatments and people who have had organ transplants. I ask you to continue these discussions with your children.

**Afterschool Study has also been cancelled for the foreseeable future.**

The Uniform Shop is also closed until further notice.

The College will continue to keep you informed about the ever-changing situation. I also remind you to check the Catholic Schools Website where there will be system updates at 4 pm each day. I would also like to share some other websites that you might like to access for support.

Maitland Newcastle Catholic Schools Office Website: <https://www.mn.catholic.edu.au/>

Headspace Adolescent mental Health Support: <https://headspace.org.au/>

Mental health in general: <https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/>

NSW Health: <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/>

Once again, thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely



Mr Graeme Selmes  
**Principal**