

22nd March 2020

Dear families, staff and students

Good evening everyone, no doubt you have been monitoring your newsfeeds along with the rest of the nation. We have met as a College Leadership group this afternoon to discern what lays ahead. My communication this evening pertains to the coming days only, and I will continue to keep you informed of further developments as they arise.

The Victorian Government announced this afternoon (as attached) that it will bring forward the school holiday period to commence on Tuesday 24th March. In light of this decision, Damascus College will be open tomorrow, Monday 23rd March for the last day of Term 1 and school holidays will commence on Tuesday 24th March. We do appreciate that families will exercise their own judgement regarding attendance and we wish to reassure you that students will not be compromised by staying away tomorrow.

The College will run our normal timetable tomorrow for students, with staff spending time in regular classes on how to stay connected - socially, emotionally, spiritually and academically, throughout a possible future remote delivery period in line with our remote learning plan.

We will ask students to take home the items from their lockers that they may need for a period of remote delivery next term. The school will be open until 7 pm tomorrow for any family that wants to come in later in the day to collect student belongings or who feels that their student's belongings may be too heavy for them to carry.

For students attending school tomorrow, further restrictions will be in place around student gatherings. All buildings will be open at recess and lunchtime, and students will be asked to spread out as much as possible. Doors will be left open to discourage physical contact, and the hygiene practices I emphasised in Friday's letter will continue to be in place. Please talk with your student about social distancing and hygiene practices. We are asking classes to spread out as much as is possible within our spaces.

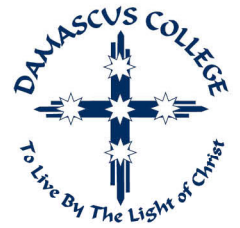
I advise families that the canteen will only be available for lunch orders tomorrow, to restrict traffic in this area. Students are encouraged to bring their lunch. The St Martin's Resource Centre will only be open to limited numbers tomorrow, but alternative indoor spaces will be available.

The Year 12 common room will be closed tomorrow.

VCE and VCAL students who have SAC's scheduled later this week will receive communication from their teachers. This situation applies to the whole state;

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adjustments will be made for all students to ensure senior assessment is fair and equitable. Please do not worry about this; it is outside everyone's control.

We are progressing as planned tomorrow; I just wanted to communicate to families tonight due to the short notice for the holidays being brought forward. We will maintain routine tomorrow and extend the best care we can to our school community, as we try to always!

Thank you for your support and understanding in these challenging times.

God bless!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M Byrne".

Matthew Byrne
Principal

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Statement

The Hon Dan Andrews MP
Premier



Sunday, 22 March 2020

STATEMENT FROM THE PREMIER

I will inform National Cabinet tonight that Victoria will proceed over the next 48 hours to implement a shutdown of all non-essential activity across our state to combat the spread of Coronavirus.

This is not something that we do lightly, but it's clear that if we don't take this step, more Victorians will contract coronavirus, our hospitals will be overwhelmed and more Victorians will die.

Victorians will still be able to go to the supermarket, the bank, the pharmacy and other essential stores, like petrol stations and convenience stores. Freight, logistics and home delivery are also considered essential and will remain open.

I will also inform National Cabinet that school holidays will be brought forward in Victoria, starting on Tuesday 24 March.

All measures to be implemented by Victoria are consistent with the health advice provided by the Victorian Chief Health Officer.

The decision whether to re-open schools after the Term 1 holidays will likewise be determined following advice from the Chief Health Officer.

I will have more to say on these measures tomorrow morning.