



1 March 2020

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## Memorandum

To: Diocesan Directors; Principals of RI and PJP Schools; ACSP; CCSP; Federation of RI and PJP Schools NSW/ACT

From: Danielle Cronin, Director Education Policy

**Subject: Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Updated Advice 1 March 2020**

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**FOR ACTION: PLEASE COMMUNICATE THIS ADVICE TO YOUR STAFF AND SCHOOL COMMUNITIES**

Colleagues

To ensure the continued health and wellbeing of our students, staff and school communities, the following update is provided in relation to COVID-19 (previously referred to as Novel Coronavirus). This advice is identical to the advice provided by the NSW Department of Education to all government schools.

While only a small number of COVID-19 cases have been confirmed in New South Wales with no known community transmission, the Department continues to work closely with NSW Ministry of Health to monitor international developments.

With numbers of confirmed COVID-19 cases increasing overseas and community concerns about the possible development of an international pandemic, I can assure you that the Department has been operating in accordance with its pandemic plan. We will implement relevant actions, based on advice from the NSW Ministry of Health, which we will communicate to you as soon as possible.

CSNSW will pass on information as soon as it comes to hand to ensure you stay informed of developments.

### **Updated Advice**

Effective 1 March 2020 the Federal Government has issued a travel ban on foreigners coming to Australia from Iran. Only Australian citizens and permanent residents coming from Iran will be allowed entry to Australia and from 1 March they are required to self-isolate for a period of 14 days after departing Iran consistent with the restrictions for those entering from China. Additionally, Australians have been advised NOT to travel to Iran.

The updated advice from the NSW Government for parents and affected staff is:

- Any student or staff member who has been in, or transited through, mainland China (not just Hubei province) or has been in Iran is excluded from work, school or child care services for 14

days from the date they left mainland China or Iran (as the COVID-19 incubation period can be as long as two weeks).

- Any confirmed case of COVID-19 will be excluded until they are medically cleared to return.
- Close contacts of a confirmed case of COVID-19 will be excluded for 14 days since last contact with the confirmed case.
- Students and staff who have returned to Australia from mainland China or Iran more than 14 days ago and have shown no symptoms are able to return to school.

The NSW Ministry of Health has processes to identify any close contacts of cases confirmed in Australia. Advice about not attending school would be provided to these close contacts by the NSW Ministry of Health.

Schools should report any suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 to your Diocesan office (Systemic schools) or Catholic Schools NSW (RI and PJP schools) and contact the local Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055 to provide details so that the Public Health Unit can follow up as necessary.

Consistent with our current guidelines, staff and students unwell with respiratory illness should remain at home until symptoms resolve. If any student becomes unwell, we will implement our infection control guidelines and follow the advice provided by the NSW Ministry of Health as appropriate.

Further information on COVID-19 is also available from [NSW Health](#).

### **Overseas Travel/School Excursions**

Many schools have planned overseas travel or excursions to occur during the year. However, with the current COVID-19 situation, the safety of students and staff is paramount. The Department of Education has placed all overseas excursions on hold until further notice with any planned trips in Term 1 to be canceled. Dioceses and RI and PJP schools should evaluate proposed overseas travel and school excursions.

### **Travel Exemptions for Years 11 and 12 students**

On 22 February 2020 the Australian Government announced a strict framework to allow small numbers of Years 11 and 12 students who remain in China (but excluding Hubei Province) due to Australian travel restrictions to resume their studies in Australia in recognition of the importance of the final two years of school.

This week the Department has been working closely with the Australian Government and NSW Ministry of Health to put in place strict measures to assure the health and safety of our students, staff and school communities. The three school sectors have been establishing a clear process for NSW schools to manage the return of students in Years 11 and 12 from mainland China and further information will be provided to next week.

*The Australian Government has advised that the relaxation on travel exemptions for Year 11 and 12 students will not pose a risk to the community.*

Only students enrolled at NSW schools and granted approval to travel from the Australian Border Force Commissioner will be allowed entry to Australia. This approval will be on a case by case basis and must be granted *prior to* a student undertaking travel to Australia.

Students (and their accompanying guardian) must meet the following criteria:

- be a current international student visa holder, granted on or before 22 February 2020, and be enrolled in an eligible year 11 or 12 course;

- not currently be unwell;
- not travelling from, or via, Hubei province in China;
- have a stable residential address at their point of entry into Australia to enable self-isolation for 14 days; and
- be willing and able to meet the quarantine requirements set out by state or territory health authorities.

Students deemed exempt from the travel restriction arriving in Australia will be subject to the same enhanced border measures that apply for Australian citizens and permanent residents returning from China.

Every student will undertake a 14 day isolation period upon arrival, which will be assured by NSW Health. Students will also be given information about how to obtain medical attention if they experience symptoms whilst in self-isolation.

More information about this travel exemption is available from the [Australian Government's Department of Education, Skills and Employment](#).

**No student or families currently under Australian travel restrictions in China should make travel arrangements out of China, based on this process, until they get official approval from the Australian Government.**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your students and their families, please speak to your Diocesan office (Systemic schools) or Catholic Schools NSW (RI and PJP schools).

### **Practising Good Hygiene**

Maintaining good hygiene standards is an important way to reduce the risk of acquiring and spreading respiratory infections using infection control guidelines. The Department of Education has made their [infection control procedures](#) available and it provides a range of practical strategies for schools to prevent transmission of infectious diseases. Schools are reminded to provide appropriate handwashing soap as [hand washing](#) is the single most effective way to reduce the spread of germs that cause respiratory disease.

Schools are reminded to report any suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19

Please find attached an updated version of the Principal only FAQs. CSNSW will email you a draft parent letter including translated versions in Persian and Mandarin which you can use to support your communication with your communities once they become available.

CSNSW will continue to monitor the situation closely and keep our schools up to date on this matter.

**We ask that you communicate this advice to your staff and school communities as soon as practicable.**

If you have any questions or require clarification, please contact Gerard Delany from this office on 0412 151 953 or via email, [gerard.delany@csnsw.catholic.edu.au](mailto:gerard.delany@csnsw.catholic.edu.au).

Kind Regards



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