



March 24<sup>th</sup> 2020

## **WHC Engagement and Wellbeing – Preparing for the term break and update and planning on potential move to online learning.**

The **Engagement and Wellbeing Team** at Western Heights College are aware that this is a challenging time for all students and families with the unknown of COVID-19. While there is a lot that is unknown, we know that it is important that we respond to the advice that we are receiving as to how to best address the virus and minimize the impact on communities locally and globally. WHC has implemented a communication strategy, shared through Compass, and we will continue to communicate with you as we work through this. We thank you for your trust and feedback and, ongoing communication with the college.

At Western Heights College we have been working to support students and families as the virus reaches our immediate communities. College staff have been emphasizing the importance of social distancing and hand hygiene and will continue to do so.

The intent of this communication is to advise you of ongoing supports available through the Wellbeing team as we move into an early commencement of the term break and the potential of school closure and online learning in Term 2.

In the event of school closures and a move to online learning, WHC is keen to reassure students and families that both existing and new supports are in place to support students and families at this time. Students and families currently connected with Wellbeing have communications in place with relevant staff members that will enable this to continue. This includes connections with our broad range of external support providers including The Geelong Project team. In our move to potential online learning, we also offer counselling and support via the phone, email and/or Webex (please refer to previous communications or contact if you require support with this).

We will continue to provide support to existing students that we see and acknowledge there may be other students who have not previously accessed wellbeing who may require support now. Families and students can request support in the event of a school closure by emailing [info@whc.vic.edu.au](mailto:info@whc.vic.edu.au)

The Wellbeing Team will continue their practice of discussing referrals to triage and address within and beyond the immediate team. Please find following a list of the members of the team for your reference; team members other than Emma are able to be contacted through Compass (please refer any requests for contact with Emma to Jenny Eastwood or myself). You are also welcome to contact any team member directly including Learning Mentors who work closely with Learning Community Leaders.

- **Tami O'Hare** – Assistant Principal - Engagement and Wellbeing
- **Susan Harrington** – Year 12 Learning Community Leader
- **Brett Bullock** – Year 11 Learning Community Leader
- **Roger Conron** – Years 9 & 10 Learning Community Leader

- **Marli McCarthy** – Years 7 & 8 Learning Community Leader
- **Jenny Eastwood** – Chaplain (Mon, Tues, Thurs and Fri)
- **Sonia Gibson** – Mental Health Practitioner (Monday and Thursday)
- **Lisa Cooper** – Adolescent Health Promotions Nurse (Mon, Wed)
- **Emma Cvitak** – School Lawyer – Barwon Community Legal Service (Mon, Fri)

### **WHC: Ways to support good mental health at home**

We recognize as we move into the challenges of COVID-19 virus in our community that there will be impacts on our health both physically and mentally. Members of the Wellbeing Team have worked together to provide the following information, advice and supports. We also encourage you to access and use DET and government websites.

For some families extra time together, limited social activities and financial implications of COVID-19 may create considerable stress. Now is a really important time to ensure there is still a routine at home and that we are all practicing things to support good mental health. This includes getting enough sleep, eating a healthy diet and exercise. We stress that you be mindful of exposure to information through stories, traditional and social media. It can be helpful to take a break from the 24-hour news cycle.

We have compiled a list of apps, links and ideas that may support you all.

- VCAA (VCAL and VCE Study Guides)  
<https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/Pages/Index.aspx>
- The Orange Door – Barwon 1800 312 820
- The Geelong Project -
- Lifeline: 13 11 14 or [lifeline.org.au](http://lifeline.org.au)
- Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467 or [suicidecallbackservice.org.au](http://suicidecallbackservice.org.au)
- beyondblue: 1300 224 636 or [beyondblue.org.au](http://beyondblue.org.au)
- eheadspace: visit [eheadspace.org.au](http://eheadspace.org.au) or call on 1800 650 890 to speak to a youth mental health clinician
- Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800 or [kidshelpline.com.au](http://kidshelpline.com.au)
- ReachOut: [reachout.com.au](http://reachout.com.au)
- SANE Australia: 1800 187 263 or [sane.org](http://sane.org)
- headspace Geelong – 5222 6690
- [www.downdogapp.com](http://www.downdogapp.com) - a variety of yoga and home workouts now on offer for free to students with an edu email address until 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020
- <https://www.youtube.com/user/yogawithadriene> - multiple free yoga videos
- Many home workout programs offer free trials including <https://centr.com/>  
<https://www.lesmills.com/ondemand/> <https://emilyskyefit.com/> or a simple google search of free home workouts provides a variety of options.
- Mind, Insight timer, Headspace, Calm, Take a Break – are all free apps that offer guided meditation
- Gratitude: Happiness Journal and Grateful: A gratitude journal – both free apps that allow you to track the small things in life to be grateful for
- You could listen to Podcasts, Ted Talks or complete activities like journaling, puzzles, family board game night, creating a Happiness Jar or a Dream Board.
- If you ever feel unable to cope because you are feeling overwhelmed or having any thoughts of harming yourself please seek help immediately. National lines like Lifeline are available 24/7

## Fact sheets

- Talking to Children About COVID-19 Parent Resource  
[https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-\(coronavirus\)-a-parent-resource](https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-(coronavirus)-a-parent-resource)
- Tips of how to cope with stress related to COVID  
<https://headspace.org.au/young-people/how-to-cope-with-stress-related-to-covid-19/>  
<https://www.psychology.org.au/COVID-19-Australians>  
<https://media.naavi.com/inl/originals/im-09effcaa-3229-4386-afca-046a381f9953.pdf?deg=auto>

We urge that while managing online learning should we move to this, that you are mindful of the mental and physical health of all members of your family. Do this by enjoying the term break – students have worked hard during Term 1 and there are achievements to share through the Term 1 reports.

It is also important that you take the time to connect as a family while accessing online learning should we move to this. Online learning provides a real opportunity for students and families to engage in their learning as formative assessment. There is a real opportunity for your child to share with you what they are doing and for you to offer feedback.

While students and staff will be working in their online learning classes, remember that there are also other forms of learning that your child can engage in at this time. Continuing our emphasis on reading through 'Western Heights Reads' encourage your child to read widely and reflect on their reading. It is also important to encourage your child to access content and learning across all disciplines and to reflect critically and creatively. I know that each staff member would welcome communication from the student around any learning. VCAL and VCE students are reminded that the relevant study guides on the VCAA website are a useful tool.

It is also important at this time as we work through challenges of COVID-19 that you do the simple things such as sharing with a family – watch a movie, discuss our environment and what is going on in the world as this will build the citizenship of our college students. Encourage your child to reflect on what is happening in their local and global communities and to consider how they may support those close to them and other vulnerable community members. Each of our college values of community, courage and integrity resonate at this time.

In conclusion, we trust that families take the time to share the extended break together and stay safe through implementing the recommendations to reduce the impact of COVID-19. We also remind you that members of the wellbeing team will be available should you require supports. Most importantly, we thank you for your support and engagement to date as we have moved into managing the learning needs of young people in a challenging health circumstance.

As always, please do not hesitate to contact any member of the college or the Wellbeing team should you want to discuss this further.

*Tami O'Hare*

On behalf of College Leadership and the Wellbeing Team