

18th March 2020

To Our Silkwood Community,

RE: UPDATE on COVID-19

Every day the Silkwood Leadership Team are meeting to keep abreast of our responsibilities to keep our school community safe and well- informed in line with our Government's plan to keep our nation safe and stable. We will be providing you with ongoing information as the school makes changes or has a need to clarify our response to the Government's plan.

This is our second official communication in response to COVID-19. It includes some updates from the Federal Governments and changes to our school plan. It should be read alongside the information already provided on Monday about the COVID-19 Coronavirus, how to keep yourself safe and the school's plan for everyone's safety.

School Closure

Today our Prime Minister addressed the nation. Specifically, for our school community, the message was very clear. The government advised, to successfully manage this virus it is *essential* to keep our schools open at this time and for people to continue to bring their children to school.

In our correspondence on Monday, we outlined our commitment to follow the government's directives and keep Silkwood open. Following on from this today we have not wavered from this commitment. Silkwood School will continue to remain open until:

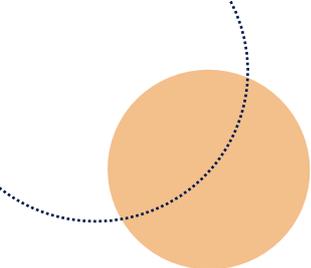
- The government has directed us to do something different; or
- We have a confirmed case of COVID-19, in which we close the school and follow the health directives given to us

In either case, we will inform the school community immediately of any changes.

Additional Week Holiday

As we said in our Monday correspondence we have decided to add an additional week to the April school holidays for our students so that our Team has additional non-contact time to work on developing a home-based learning approach to support our personalised program.

For other schools taking this online is a relatively easy approach. Moving to a home-based learning approach is straight-forward as traditional schools have standardised subject-based programs. To take a personalised program that uses a wide range of active learning styles is more complex. For this reason, we need time to work as a team to decide how best we can offer a modified learning program to ensure continuity for students who may need to be isolated and also be prepared should we need to close the school.



Home-Based Program

A home-based approach will be a modified version of The Silkwood Way. To develop this into a full home-based learning program would naturally take more than a week.

This home-based program will be available in Term 2 to those students who are required to self-isolate for the following reasons:

- are experiencing symptoms
- are in a high-risk category
- have family who they live with who are at high risk of a serious outcome from this virus (see the communication sent on Monday for more detail on this)
- have returned from overseas
- have been in contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19

All other student's learning programs will be delivered on the school campus as per normal practice, supporting the directives of the government.

Should the school be required to close, this home-based program will be delivered to all students.

Student Absences

If your child is unwell they **must stay home and isolate**. It puts our community at risk to bring an unwell child to school. Please DO NOT send your child to school to have our team make the call. We have clearly outlined in our plan (sent on Monday), our expectations around this so please re-read.

Although these are very unnormal times, we kindly ask you to follow our normal absenteeism procedures by emailing attendance@silkwood.qld.edu.au or calling our school office 07 56550300. Today (Wed) we had 60 students absent without any notification as to why. This was unhelpful and challenging for our Team and wasted a lot of their valuable time following up. **Please be considerate and notify us should your child be absent.**

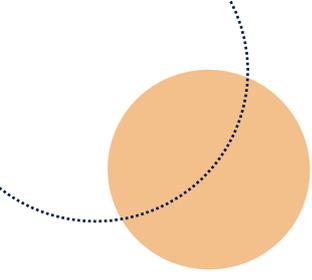
Whilst we respect you can and will make personal decisions about your child's attendance, there are specific reasons why schools remain open and children, who are healthy, should be attending. This is an important part of a successful strategy in slowing down this virus. (see the Prime Ministers full address today). Due to the seriousness of this matter, we are actively seeking our school community to work in partnership with our Government's advice for the greater good of all.

For this reason, families whose children **are not sick** and **do not need to be home** because of high-risk reasons are expected to attend school as normal when the school is open.

If, as a parent or caregiver, you choose to act unilaterally against the collective advice of the government, please notify us of your decision to do this so we can mark your child's absence accordingly.

Confirmed Cases

We would like to state, as of this date (18 March 2020) Silkwood School currently has **no confirmed cases of COVID - 19**. Rest assured the school would be closed immediately if we had, and we would be following the strict directions of the Department of Health.



Should we have a confirmed case you will be notified immediately.

Where staff or students have been in close contact with a person who has been confirmed to have COVID-19, we ask that they follow Government guidelines, specifically, self-isolation to be taken to ensure the continued health and well-being of our school community.

School Bubblers

As an added preventative measure, we are asking all students to bring in their own water bottles as of tomorrow. We have decided to close the school bubblers – too many mouths – too much risk!

Should a child forget their water bottle we will have a limited number of clean, sanitised ones for their use during the day.

Hand Sanitiser

Hand Sanitiser is provided in every learning space and all students will be expected to use this when leaving and entering shared spaces unless a child is allergic to or has a reaction to our hand sanitiser. If this is the case, we will find an alternative handwashing option so the student can remain at school.

Should this be the case with your child, please advise our Community Relations Team in writing, by email: reception@silkwood.qld.edu.au or through the portal to your child's Advisor.

A child not using hand sanitiser puts our community at risk, for this reason, we are not flexible on this being an option for our students. Should you not be comfortable with this school procedure you will need to keep your child at home.

Our hand sanitiser meets government guidelines as a product able to combat the spread of this virus and is safe for use. Unfortunately, we will not be able to attend to using people's personal preferences for hand sanitisers for their children. Our Team does not have the time to research these sanitisers to ensure they are appropriate for combating this virus. Given our serious responsibility in working with our community to minimise the spread of this virus, we are not willing to take people's personal assurance that their product meets government requirements.

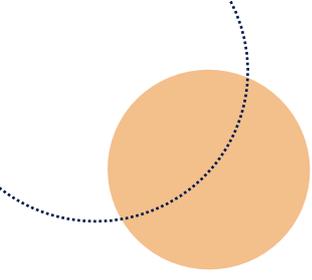
Financial Support

There are people in our community already suffering who have lost their income due to COVID-19. The Leadership Team are meeting to put together a bursary directly for people who meet this category.

We want to make sure that every family affected by loss of income from COVID-19 can remain at the school. These are uncertain times and young children do not need any other added stress of having to move schools due to the unexpected outcomes from COVID-19. We will have an application available soon to cover Term 2 fees for families in this situation. We will assess this situation for Term 3 and continue to offer support if it is needed.

Closing

In closing, we have received many lovely notes of support – thank you. Times are uncertain, dealing with a pandemic is unprecedented and the landscape is changing daily, as a community our ability to work together with our government to keep our country safe and stable is important.



My school Team has been wonderful in coming together to work through this and embracing our value of working in partnership. We are in this together and setting aside our individual needs for the greater good of all is going to be required at times.

The sight of the empty shelves in our supermarkets is heart-breaking. The government has made it very clear hoarding or bulk buying is unnecessary, essential food supplies will only become scarce if people continue to behave in this way. During these times we need to keep ourselves safe by following good hygiene, social distancing and making considered decisions. We also have to think of others, only take what we need and share the load of helping each other.

We are here to help where we can, and we are committed to continuing to keep you updated.

Stay safe, we are thinking of you all.

Kindest regards
Valerie Campbell-Hogg
CEO