



CLUNES PUBLIC SCHOOL

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Dear staff, Parents and Carers and School Community members

As you are aware the World Health Organisation has declared COVID-19 a pandemic. The situation in regard to COVID-19 continues to evolve with an increasing number of countries having sustained community transmission. In Australia the majority of COVID-19 cases are returning travellers or close contacts of cases, but there is evidence of limited community transmission in some states including NSW.

Efforts are now focused on considered actions to slow the spread of COVID-19 in the community and protect those who are likely to experience more severe disease such as the elderly and those with underlying health conditions. These steps are also essential to reduce the demands on the health system so that it can function effectively.

The NSW Department of Education has been planning and operating in accordance with its pandemic plan to support the safety and wellbeing of staff and students.

This is part of the government-wide strategy to 'flatten the curve' of confirmed cases so that our health services can meet the needs of those who require care when they need it.

Below you will find comprehensive advice on the actions you can take to support that plan. **I urge you to read all of this advice thoroughly** and take the time to understand how it impacts on Clunes PS, our students and the school community.

The situation is evolving quickly and we will continue to respond to the advice from NSW Health as we receive it.

Three actions you can take to help manage the spread



1. **Wash your hands** regularly and thoroughly.
2. **Sneeze into your elbow** or a tissue, disposing of the tissue straight away and then washing your hands.
3. **Stay home if you are unwell** and in schools, send home staff or students who show signs of being unwell through the day.

Masks are not an effective measure in protecting staff or the community from the virus and therefore no member of staff should need to wear a mask in going about their normal duties.

In schools and in partnership with parents, carers and students, we have a vital role to play in reinforcing these messages.

Social distancing

A phased social distancing strategy will be implemented from today, Monday 16 March 2020, to support ongoing school and corporate operations. In the first phase of its social distancing strategy, the department will take a number of practical measures to support wider NSW Health containment strategies.

Clunes Public School has made some decisions and we hope you will support us to adopt these changes. We have (or have been notified by other DET departments) postponed /cancelled a number of events, these include:

1. **Cancelling our School Swimming Carnival on Friday 20th March**
2. **Postponing Student Led Conferences on Monday 23rd March and Tuesday 24th March 2020.** If you have any concerns, please email or contact the school as teachers are happy to discuss your child over the phone.
3. **Cancelling all Far North Coast, Regional, State and Primary Sporting Events.** (Cancelled beyond the school)
4. The Rivers Secondary School Roadshow for Year 5 students.
5. **Life Education lessons will go ahead in the library and not in the Life Education Van.**
6. Clunes Public School Cross Country will be completed in a different format and not with the whole school and parents attending.
7. **Cancelling School Assemblies**, however Kindergarten will continue to rehearse their item and we will attempt to send a film of the performance if we have media permission for all students. Students will still receive awards but through different procedures.

Further events may be cancelled or postponed as the term unfolds and the school community will be notified via Skoolbag, email and/or school website

These are sensible measures to protect our staff and communities while maintaining our essential services across early childhood, schools and further education. I know some have called for school closures and the matter is triggering significant public debate. This is not Clunes Public School's decision to make. This and other public health responses to COVID-19 are being considered daily in meetings between the Australia's chief health officers, drawing on advice from the national leaders in epidemic management and from the experience with this and previous pandemics.

NSW Education is in discussion with NSW Health throughout every day. At this point, case numbers and transmission of the virus in NSW remains low compared to other countries. Our strategy to date is working. If or when school closures become the best way to manage the spread of the virus in NSW, then we are ready to do so.

In the meantime, Clunes Public School provides an essential service that enable our healthcare and other essential workers to fulfil their roles.

As we all know, things are moving quickly. The department is working closely with NSW Health to ensure we have access to the latest advice on how to keep our staff, our students and community safe. We are following their guidance.

Operational guidelines for all staff and schools

Stay home if you are sick

The health and safety of our students and staff is paramount. If you are unwell with respiratory illness, you should remain at home until symptoms resolve and, where appropriate, seek advice from a medical practitioner (and call ahead first). Remember to also [clean your hands thoroughly](#) for at least

20-seconds with soap and water and cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze.

Support good hygiene in schools

We ask all staff and students to reinforce good hygiene throughout their school community. This starts with sending any member of staff or student who shows signs of being unwell, home.

Within the Clunes School community please make time to practice good hand hygiene. We recommend:

- Supervising hand sanitation, particularly for younger children
- Promoting cough and sneeze etiquette
- Gamifying hygiene rules e.g. to discourage touching face
- Bringing own water bottle to school
- Verbal praise and / or elbow pumping instead of handshakes.

Children with chronic medical conditions or immunosuppression may be at increased risk of disease. Please consider special arrangements for these children, such as home-based study where their learning can be done uncompromised. We suggest that a plan be developed in consultation with their healthcare provider.

This is a challenging time for all of us and we will work to continue to keep our learning community safe. Thank you for your continued support.

We will continue to support and nurture our students' wellbeing.

Please do not hesitate to contact us on 0266291278 if you have any questions or concerns.

Michelle Slee

Clunes Public School Principal