



CROMWELL COLLEGE

within The University of Queensland

16 March 2020

To the Cromwell College and Campus Lodge Communities

Thank you for your understanding, vigilance and patience as we navigate through uncharted times with the increasing spread of COVID-19.

As of this morning, I am advised that Cromwell College and Campus Lodge students have no reported cases of COVID-19, nor symptoms.

Staff wise, we have two Catering Attendants who last week, absented themselves from work as a precaution. Neither of these two staff are permitted to return to the Cromwell site until medical tests confirm that they are clear.

Cromwell is fully committed to following the advice of Queensland Health and more broadly, the Government. Advice that I have to hand, without sensationalising things, is that the spread of COVID-19 at the University and at the College is not a matter of if, but when.

In the letter I sent you on 9 March, I detailed Cromwell's control procedures around hygiene and infection protection, along with mandatory restrictions relating to travel and any presence of symptoms and reporting. These conditions remain in place with the additional requirement announced by the Prime Minister yesterday that anyone returning from any overseas country must self-isolate (away from Cromwell and Campus Lodge) for 14 days. We have briefed our cleaning contractor to increase the frequency of cleaning of common surfaces.

Today I detail some further measures at Cromwell in attempt to do my best with the information that I have at hand, to keep our community as safe as I can. If I do nothing and wait until we have positive COVID-19 cases, the College can be likened potentially to a cruise ship berthed at UQ. If I act too early I may be accused of an overreaction, but perhaps proven correct longer term. I am choosing the latter approach and I seek your support.

In all that we do and say here at Cromwell throughout this pandemic, please adopt the theme of "social distancing".

At this stage, Cromwell College and Campus Lodge will not close and no student will be forced to leave.

The University has last night announced that no on campus lectures will be held for one week starting today. During this time, university staff will prepare for the probability of more permanent online delivery until the pandemic passes.

I am asking you today that all Cromwell students who are healthy and are logistically and safely able to do so, should return to their homes as a matter of urgency until further notice. I especially make this request to students whose home is within a relatively short distance from here. This will

be a prudent way to better protect themselves in their home and reduce the likelihood of them and others at College and at home contracting the virus. If they delay this choice until they have symptoms or the virus, then authorities may place further restrictions on how and where they can travel, essentially anchoring them here.

Even without travel restrictions, an infected person should not enter the wider community and potentially expose themselves to more vulnerable people. Students electing to return home should secure their belongings either in the lockable cupboards in their room and / or in the main baggage storage room as they would for the normal mid-year break.

Students who elect to head home must advise the Principal in writing and in person in advance of them heading home so records can be accurate. A date to return from home to Cromwell would be negotiated between the student and the Principal in due course.

After discussion with the Chair of the Board of Governors this morning, an incentive to encourage students to return home if they can, and for ethical reasons, will be that Cromwell College will discuss with students who elect to return home under these uncertain circumstances an appropriate reimbursement of their college fees when the quantum of time away from the college is jointly determined by the student and the Principal in due course.

As you will know, Cromwell and Campus Lodge are fully enrolled (bar four small standard rooms). Our students by the authorities' definition of "close contact" encounter this frequently whenever they are at the College hourly or more, not daily or occasionally. Almost all of our students share bathrooms, dining facilities and other common rooms and social spaces. In short, with our full college it is virtually impossible to effectively "isolate" infected people from healthy people.

Students who remain here and not return home must continue to follow all mandatory requirements with hygiene, infection protection, symptom reporting and restrictions on travel. It is anticipated that as cases of COVID-19 may be reported at Cromwell, we may be better placed logistically to "isolate" infected students if our healthy students, especially those who live relatively close to Brisbane for whom it may be easier, are already safe at home.

The Prime Minister last weekend mandated restrictions on the size of public gatherings, effective today. For Cromwell as of today until further notice, given our unique and confined living arrangements and very compact campus, I am postponing all 'events' for Cromwell that would see groups of students in close contact in a confined space at any one time. This decision will be reviewed as the situation develops further, but for now it is effective as of today. These 'events' include but are not limited to:

1. Formal Dinners (270 people in the Dining Room at once in close static contact for an hour). *Our normal meal service times see a smaller number of students in the Dining Room for shorter periods over a longer time frame, however if this requires regulation, meal times will be staggered or times extended to allow for less people in the Dining Room at once, and increased cleaning of surfaces throughout the meal services.*
2. Remaining Students' Association Semester 1 events involving large groups of students. *The ICC has already postponed the ICC Ball scheduled for 2 April.*
3. ICC Choralfest will not be hosted at Cromwell on 8 April for all 10 colleges.
4. Corridor Dinners with Jenny and myself in our small home dining room.
5. Student Leadership Team weekly meetings with Resident Staff will now be held in the Chapel which is far less confined than my lounge room.

Academic tutorials in small groups in larger spaces are not impacted, nor are the short weekly corridor meetings, again if held in larger spaces. UQ Sport and the ICC are currently discussing the immediate future of scheduled sporting and cultural events.

Although it is difficult to mandate the movement of our students off campus, what happens off campus can be brought back to campus. In the strongest possible terms I ask that from today, our students refrain from gathering in public places where there are large numbers of people, especially in confined areas such as hotels and clubs.

In terms of the staff, I have decided in consultation that as of tomorrow, several key staff will either take paid leave or work from home until further notice. The selection of these staff has been deliberate so that we have key personnel both on campus and in reserve away from the College. The risk of staff contracting COVID-19 is then dispersed with some staff on campus and some not. It's not a perfect scenario as we do not know how events will unfold, but should some staff contract the virus then there is a greater chance of others in a different location being able to step into those roles for business continuity.

Working from home will be Michael Crome (Deputy Principal), Jason March (Business Manager), Robyn Slater (Office Staff), Matthew Thurecht (Executive Chef), Davin Harris (Maintenance).

Working on site will be Krishna Stanton (Dean of Students), Heather Ebertson (Assistant Business Manager), Neil Yarrow (Maintenance Manager), Tania Dempsey (Office Staff), David Forgan (Head Chef), Nicolas Hodges (Chef), Catering Attendants (who can be supplemented / interchanged with external agency staff if and when needed), and myself as Principal.

In a similar way to students, it is difficult to mandate the movement of our staff off campus, but what happens off campus can be brought back to campus. In the strongest possible terms I ask that from today, our staff refrain from gathering in public places where there are large numbers of people.

I thank you again for your understanding and support as we collectively work our way through a serious situation which is evolving daily. In all of my decisions about this, the safety and wellbeing of our students and staff is at the forefront of all decisions that I make. I am trying to be proactive and ahead of the wave that is coming, rather than be hesitate and wait, and have people then ask me why I didn't act sooner.

In all of this, I know that there will be students and staff who will feel various emotions with the uncertainty and gravity of the evolving situation. The College will provide support to students and staff who reach out for this. In addition, I am very aware of the tyranny of distance for many parents with their children here with us at Cromwell. Some parents are thousands of kilometres away. Please be assured that we are doing everything we can with the information that we have, and that changes will be communicated to you and to the whole Cromwell community by letters such as this one as information comes to hand.

Please do not hesitate to contact me 24/7 directly (0422 226 867) at any time of the day or night should you have any questions or concerns at all at any time.

Kind regards



Ross A. Switzer
PRINCIPAL