



# CROMWELL COLLEGE

within The University of Queensland

9 May 2020

To Cromwell College Students and Staff

I sincerely hope that everyone is healthy and that you and your family are managing as best you can in these strange and uncertain times.

A month has now passed since I paused residential accommodation for our students. Leading up to this time, most students elected to return home, and I had already implemented a model for staff where most were working from home.

I am very proud that through the COVID-19 issue to date, nobody has contracted the virus, and I have not had to stand down any employees. We have a very small and loyal staff team here at Cromwell. I made this decision early, however the subsequent Job Keeper stimulus package now implemented by the Prime Minister has greatly assisted the College in this regard.

Another early decision I made was to fully refund fees to students and their families, given that I could not offer students anywhere close to the full Cromwell experience. Our loyalty to and respect for our families, including a hundred or so new ones who had only been with us for a few weeks, was more important to us than any short term financial gain by hanging onto fees while not delivering the full experience. Our Business Manager (Jason) tells me that all families have now either been fully refunded, or at their request had their fees credited to second semester instead.

The ten colleges here at UQ have all handled the COVID-19 issue in their own different ways, and some of you will no doubt be aware of the variances in approach.

I would now like to provide you with an update as best I can relative to Cromwell, given that the goal posts move frequently with this issue. What I say today are my feelings now, and I know that you will understand that these may change as further information comes to hand in the coming months.

My current position is based upon information contained in the document *"Roadmap to a COVID Safe Australia – A 3 Step Pathway for Easing Restrictions"* released by the Federal Government yesterday (8 May). "Step 3" under "Education and Child Care" refers to "consider reopening residential colleges".

It is therefore currently my intention to resume residential accommodation at Cromwell and have all staff working on site from the commencement of second semester.

The various universities have different semester dates and modes of delivery, so the following would be my current thinking regarding Cromwell resuming:

1. Staff could return to work on site from mid-July in preparation for our students returning.



2. Our 73 students who study at QUT, Griffith University, ACU, CQU and TAFE could move in from 4pm on Sunday 19 July.
3. Our 174 University of Queensland students could move in from 4pm on Friday 31 July.

The University of Queensland currently has Sunday 2 August scheduled as its Open Day. Cromwell Open Day as well would occur on that day.

If students do return as I've outlined above, there may still need to be some restrictions in place at Cromwell dependent upon the advice of health and government authorities at that time.

Discussions are currently under way amongst the ten UQ Heads of Colleges and associated organisations regarding how the ICC sporting and cultural competitions might recommence from second semester. Regarding social activities, the Cromwell Students' Association Executive has been asked to consider how College social events might operate in second semester should some restrictions still be in place.

In short, my team and I am planning for a semester two recommencement at Cromwell and I know that you will all be very happy to hear that. Jenny and I and the whole team have really missed you all, and I know that you have missed being here at Cromwell.

So in our planning, I will continue to take advice from the relevant authorities, and I sincerely hope that the curve continues to flatten, and that eased restrictions over the coming months do not evoke a spike in cases causing the reimposition of restrictions, thereby compromising our second semester recommencement at Cromwell.

In the meantime, for the students, we are approaching the final few online university teaching weeks before swot vac begins. Please (especially our first year students) reach out for assistance if you need it.

Our Deputy Principal (Michael) has been overseeing 45 weekly online tutorials for Cromwell students who have requested them. Our RA's have been encouraged to hold regular zoom meetings with their corridors. In addition, I know that our Dean of Students (Krishna) has tried to make pastoral contact with each student per year level in the College, and our Counsellor (Vicky) has been holding appointments by zoom.

On a lighter note, a weekly zoom fitness class has even been held each week (I should have been there!) with an average attendance of 25 students. Jenny hosted a Corridor Dinner recently which was the smallest one held in our ten years! One student came from the two we have staying here in Lockley / House, but I'm sure he enjoyed the meal!

Please stay positive and reach out for help if and when you need it. As the media messages say, *"We are in this together, this is not forever, and we will get through this."*

I am really looking forward to (hopefully) having Cromwell back together again in a couple of months' time. I will update you again when I have new information to share. Until then, please contact me at any time if you need to.

Kind regards



**Ross A. Switzer**  
**PRINCIPAL**