



'Lucere et Ardere'

16 March 2020

Dear Parents and Members of the Aquinas Family

Aquinas and COVID-19

Up until now, the spread of COVID-19 is something that we at Aquinas, probably like almost all of you, have observed from a distance. It has not affected us directly. That will inevitably change at some point soon, and we expect its impact to be with us for a good part of this year. We will need to live with that and manage it. I write to apprise you of what we are thinking and doing.

Since January, the College has been seeking and receiving information and advice on this new coronavirus. There has been plenty of that arriving on an almost-daily basis, sourced from various governmental and medical authorities, and from our affiliated tertiary institutions and peak bodies in the student accommodation sector. Allow me to assure you that we have heeded such advice, and we will continue to do so. As we explore and plan for possible scenarios that may develop, we will act in the best interests of the health and wellbeing of all who live here.

An important consideration for us to weigh into our planning is that, for our students and for the Brothers' Community, Aquinas College is different from a university, school, workplace, or sports competition, because this is where we live. It is not a place to which we go for some hours each day. If university classes were to be suspended, for example, and/or more online or at-home learning strategies put in place, then we would expect that most of our residents may wish to stay here and to continue to be supported by our tutorial and academic programmes. We hope that that could happen. We do not anticipate any temporary closure of the College.

As you would be well aware, the Commonwealth and State Governments are incrementally ramping up measures aimed at slowing the speed of mass infection from this virus. Already, students are experiencing restrictions to their external sporting, social and employment involvements, and these will increase. Each of the three universities in Adelaide, however, is continuing much as normal for the present moment, although in some courses more off-campus and on-line options are being made available.

We are told that, in time, a majority of people may contract the virus, albeit for most of them – and especially for healthy young adults – the symptoms are likely to be milder, even non-observable, and their recovery complete and relatively quick. At this stage, we are emphasising with students the key basic hygiene practices that need to be observed in any situation where people live together, things that you would also ensure happen in your own homes. We will be introducing some social-distancing protocols. We are also assisting students to be alert to what is happening, and to know what to do and what to avoid should they become possibly symptomatic or become aware of contact with a potentially infected person. At some stage, we may need to implement some isolation arrangements, although this would have to be managed on an unfolding basis.

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Affiliated with the University of Adelaide, Flinders University, and the University of South Australia

The mid-semester break is just three-and-a-half weeks away. Many students typically go home for at least part of this fortnight. One specific requirement we will have is that students would not be allowed to return to college if they have had any contact with an infected person during this time, or if they have travelled overseas. A standard two-week isolation away from the College would need to apply.

The fluidity of the situation makes it difficult to know precisely what lies ahead, so we will need to be flexible and agile. While we are not complacent, neither are we unsettled. What we can do is to be measured and use common sense as we consider possible scenarios and management options, and act in accordance with sound health advice. If you have any concerns or anything you feel we need to know, please do not hesitate to contact one of our staff team.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Michael Green', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Brother Michael Green FMS
RECTOR