

A message from the
**Vice-Chancellor
and President**
FEDERATION UNIVERSITY



Monday 23 March, 2020

Dear colleagues,

I would like to sincerely thank you all for your hard work and dedication during what are challenging times, unlike any we have seen before. While we are all frantically busy, please remember that your individual contributions are greatly appreciated and vital for the future success of our university.

The coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic is a rapidly changing situation and as a public education provider, we are continuing to follow the advice of government in our response.

As I emailed you last night, the Victorian Government has moved to close all non-essential services from tomorrow, Tuesday 24 March. This includes bringing forward the Easter holidays for Victorian schools, which will close from tomorrow.

The Premier has acknowledged the work universities are doing to move to online delivery and the advice from the Department of Education is that at this stage, it appears universities and TAFEs will either be exempt from closures entirely or can continue operating with some restrictions.

Given the position from government is not yet clear, we are taking a proactive decision to pause teaching activities from tomorrow, **Tuesday 24 March**.

TAFE

For TAFE, this means we are bringing forward the start of the Easter holiday break in line with the Victorian Government decision to do this for Victorian schools. This means all teaching activities will be cancelled for the rest of the week.

Unless the TAFE sector is directed by government to close campuses, we intend to resume classes after the Easter holiday break on Tuesday 15 April. Our student services and support will continue to be available to students during this time, via phone or online.

HIGHER EDUCATION

For the university, we will be pausing all on-campus teaching activity from tomorrow, Tuesday 24 March, for the rest of the week.

This means taught students should not come to campus and all teaching activities will be cancelled for the week. This includes lectures, tutorials, classes and practical sessions. Research activities will continue and we are in contact with our Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students about this.

Pausing our teaching activities will allow us to prepare for online delivery of higher education programs from **Monday 30 March** and to seek further clarification from the government on the new measures. Our student services and support will continue to be available to students during this time, via phone or online.

WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

Pausing our university teaching activities and bringing forward the start date for the TAFE Easter break means our students will not be on campus for the rest of the week. However, we still need our staff to be working during this time to ensure we are able to deliver online learning and be prepared for the resumption of TAFE after the Easter break.

The advice for our teaching staff during the pause period is:

- TAFE teaching staff can continue preparing learning materials either on-campus or working from home, if this has been pre-arranged with their supervisor.
- Academic staff should also continue working to ensure online teaching can be delivered. This can be on-campus or from home if this has been pre-arranged with their supervisor.

Professional and general staff across all university and TAFE campuses are also vital to ensuring we can continue to provide our students with a high quality teaching and learning experience. These staff should continue to come to campus adhering to social distancing requirement or work from home in accordance with the working remotely toolkit and with approval from their supervisor.

We understand many of our staff have caring responsibilities and will be impacted by the closure of Victorian schools tomorrow.

If this applies to you, please talk to your manager and explore work from home where possible, or you may access five days special leave to assist with this.

Information about this special leave provision and working from home arrangements are available in new toolkits for staff and students that are on our [website](#).

I know many of you are feeling anxious about the coronavirus pandemic and are concerned about what it means for you and your family. Please be assured that we are committed to supporting our staff through this difficult period, and finding new and flexible ways to work.

The work we do matters and it needs to continue even in these difficult times. In different ways, we are all contributing to the education of the next generation – our

nurses and health professionals, teachers, business leaders and researchers among many others.

We are working hard to find the right balance for our staff, our students and our community.

COMMUNICATIONS

We will continue to provide regular updates to our staff and students during the pause on teaching activities, including daily staff updates. Please continue to regularly check your email and our [website](#) for further updates.

May I remind you that our [employee assistance program](#) provides free and confidential counselling services, and I urge you to utilise this service if you are feeling anxious about the pandemic situation.

These are difficult times and the situation is changing rapidly. Please do not panic, continue to follow the advice of government and health authorities, and look out for each other. We are a community and we will get through this together, as a community.

Best regards
Professor Helen Bartlett
Vice-Chancellor and President

