

A message from the

Vice-Chancellor and President

FEDERATION UNIVERSITY



Thursday 12 March, 2020

Dear colleagues

Overnight, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has declared the coronavirus COVID-19 a pandemic. I understand that declarations of this nature can cause anxiety for staff, students and the community more broadly, so I wanted to provide an update and reassurance about what this means at a practical level.

I would like to reassure you that in Australia, this declaration has limited impact, as our state and federal governments are already taking unprecedented measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The declaration of a pandemic signals the need for action by all countries.

The university is closely following the advice of Australian authorities and we are in regular contact with those at the highest levels of government. We will continue to follow their advice.

In line with government advice, public events will continue. This includes graduation ceremonies, conferences, seminars, staff forums and of course, classes and university business. If that advice changes, we will respond swiftly.

Extra precautions will be taken during graduation ceremonies and larger events. Hand sanitiser will be made available and staff and students will be advised to doff their trencher or nod instead of shaking hands on stage. These protocols will be communicated to staff and students by the Graduations Office ahead of the ceremonies.

You will also see more hand sanitiser stations installed around our campuses. As with any regular cold and flu season, I encourage you to stay home if you are sick and to follow good hand hygiene as standard practice.

Work is going on across the university to ensure that our business continuity planning specifically deals with the possibility of COVID-19 escalating in Victoria or Queensland. This plan looks at how we would deal with campus closures, staff work arrangements, arrangements for students and leave entitlements.

This business continuity planning is a precautionary measure and at the moment university business continues as usual. We will provide an update on the specific measures in the plan in the coming days.

One change we have made in relation to COVID-19, is the implementation of a ban on all international travel for university business. Staff can find detailed advice on this ban and how it works [via our website](#).

For further advice on travel bans and health advice, please [check our newsroom](#) regularly to read the latest FAQs or follow the links to government resources.

On a final note, I understand that there is a general sense of anxiety for some in the community and this is heightened due to the declaration of a pandemic by the WHO. Please be reassured that the risk of contracting COVID-19 in Australia currently remains low and we are well positioned to respond swiftly if the situation changes.

Best regards

Professor Helen Bartlett

Vice-Chancellor and President

