



BLAXLAND HIGH SCHOOL

3-9 Coughlan Rd Blaxland NSW 2774 T: 02 4739 4655 F: 02 4739 8237

E: blaxland-h.school@det.nsw.edu.au

W: <https://blaxland-h.schools.nsw.gov.au>

Dear Students, Parents and Caregivers,

Firstly, on behalf of all staff at Blaxland High School, I would like to thank you for your trust, respect and patience and your support of our work. We know this is a very stressful time for everyone trying to decipher the rapidly changing messages we are all receiving whilst trying to make the best decisions to keep our families safe.

This letter will attempt to provide some certainty around school operations so that you can make the best decision for your family.

Schools remain open

Yesterday the NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian announced that public schools would remain open, but encouraged parents to keep their children home where possible. This was reinforced by Mark Scott, Secretary of the NSW Department of Education in an afternoon address to Principals across NSW.

In essence, schools will remain open to support parents who fall into the essential services category or can't provide supervision for their children and for HSC students to continue working on major works.

Supporting continuity of learning for all students

The Secretary stated that schools are required to prepare for a single body of work which can be completed at home or at school. Online learning lessons will be provided to students for the remainder of Term 1. These lessons will be the same for students who are at home and at school.

In the next few days you will receive further advice about units of work available, how to access Google Classroom and practical advice to parents and carers on how to create and support a productive learning environment at home (please see the Department of Education's website: Learning from Home). Please bear with us in our early efforts in this world of online learning - we are not yet experts at this stage in this learning environment or in the mass production of online materials at such short notice. However we will get better at it!

A roster system of staff to a) supervise and assist students in learning spaces at school with social distancing guidelines implemented and b) prepare, upload the online work and provide feedback to students in this learning environment is being prepared. If working from home, you will receive advice as to who to contact and times.

- Access to Learning

Many of our students have access to their own devices to access online learning platforms. However, for a variety of reasons we are aware that some students may not have a device or the internet. We did a survey of Year 11 and 12 yesterday to ascertain access to the internet and availability of devices at home. We are looking into solutions.

If there is some barrier to online learning can you please contact the school via email at blaxland-h.school@det.nsw.edu.au or phone 47394655 briefly outlining the issue and a contact number to allow our staff to follow up with possible solutions.

- Assessment

We are currently preparing advice on "Changes in Assessment Details" and are awaiting advice from NESA (who are meeting today) before we release it. It will contain details of the assessment tasks that have changed, the details of the changes and who to contact with questions or concerns. We will issue, in the first instance as a matter of priority, the document for Years 11 and 12 changes which will be sent to student emails and students are asked to acknowledge receipt of this email. We will then issue the changes for Years 7-10.

Canteen Services

I was advised late last night that all school canteens must be closed effective immediately. Whilst my staff were able to make sandwiches for today for students who did not have any lunch with them this is not sustainable. Please ensure if you are sending your child to school they have food with them.



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Attendance

We are aware there is some angst and we have received many questions in regards to how attendance is being recorded for students whose parents are choosing to keep them home. I have received at 1pm today an update from the Department on current advice. It states "From 24 March where parents follow advice from the Premier and choose to keep their children at home, they should be marked absent using the L (Leave) mark." We are adjusting our rolls to reflect this advice up to the end of Term 1.

Counselling Services

We are aware and quite concerned for some of our students who are experiencing quite a deal of anxiety, stress and distress. As adults we are struggling to make sense of the current situation, let alone our young people making sense of it. Our young people have been exposed to information/pictures of drought, fires and now COVID-19 over a relative short time. Their families may be experiencing economic hardships as well.

Our school counsellors are working to provide information of how students can access the service from home. As the school will remain open, students can continue to arrange a face to face booking with the team. In the next few days we will provide information about accessing the counsellors via a dedicated phone number.

In the meantime if you or family are struggling, the following numbers may be useful:

Kids Helpline – 1800 551 800

Headspace Penrith – 4720 8800

Youth Beyond Blue – 1300 224 636

Life Line – 131 114

eheadspace – online

Further information and resources will be provided by our counselling team in the coming days.

The NSW Department of Education will continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation and provide parents and caregivers with updated information about the virus and its impact on schools. I will provide further updates regarding events for students of Blaxland High School as the current situation progresses. Please be aware that some decisions and advice is guided by being part of a large public organisation.

We welcome constructive feedback on information you feel we are not providing our community that you believe would be beneficial. We all look at issues differently and if there is information we are not providing to assist you to make the best decisions possible we would like to address this in future communication. Please feel free to email us with any feedback or concerns.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my SASS staff who have been answering inquiries, our Technical Support Officer, my Student Services Support Team and my teaching staff, who have risen to the challenge of continuing to provide an education to your children in very uncertain times.

On behalf of the staff of Blaxland High School, I wish you all good health and extend our good wishes to your extended family.

Yours sincerely,

Nikki Tunica
Principal
Blaxland High School
24 March, 2020