

Monday, 16 March 2020

This is to provide you an update on ABCN's response to the COVID-19 crisis.

Firstly, we want to acknowledge that this is a very difficult and worrying time that affects everyone in the community in many different ways.

ABCN businesses and schools, educators, students and mentors – our shared purpose is to work together to support our young people and bring joy to volunteers. The value of building linkages across different groups within Australian society is more important than ever during uncertain times. We are also aware that because our students come from low socio-economic communities, they and their families are likely to be disproportionately affected by this crisis.

We want to reassure all our partners that we at ABCN are meticulously following guidelines set by the Australian government, state education departments and member companies. These include:

- > All staff and contractors of ABCN are following government guidelines on travel and isolation
- > Social distancing in face-to-face programs
- > Practising good hygiene in all programs.

Since our last update (on 5 March 2020), **NSW and Victorian schools have cancelled all excursions**, which means there will be no workplace-based face-to-face programs in those states until further notice.

Other states' schools are proceeding with face-to-face programs at this stage. However, some companies have instituted working from home protocols and restrictions on gatherings, which has also forced us to postpone some programs. We are responding to the requirements of our companies and students where we can, and where it fits within our policies.

Where programs started but can no longer go ahead in their expected format, we are working with schools and companies on a case-by-case basis to conclude programs appropriately and meaningfully.

Meanwhile, we are reviewing our programs for Term 2 with a view to offering a number of digitally facilitated programs if schools are open and have the capacity to participate. While not a complete

substitute for face-to-face, digital mentoring is nevertheless an opportunity to keep the community connected during a period when many people – students and mentors alike – may be experiencing a sense of isolation.

As the situation evolves, our response will also evolve and we will be in touch to determine which approach suits you the best.

We wish you good health as we navigate these uncharted waters together. Please don't hesitate to reach out for any information if required or if you have suggestions about how we can support our schools and companies over this time.

For more information, please email info@abcn.com.au.