

# COVID-19 INSIGHTS:

The challenges for students and families in  
Australia's disadvantaged communities

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The Smith Family June 2020

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## ABOUT THE SMITH FAMILY

### OUR Mission:

To create opportunities for young Australians in need by  
providing long-term support for their participation in  
education

### OUR Work:

*The Learning for Life Program: Financial Assistance,  
Access to Programs and Supportive Relationships*

- **91** communities across Australia
- Reached more than **206, 863** in 2018/19
- In 2020 there are more than **54,000** *Learning for Life* students
- **10,691** students on sponsorship identify as being from Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander backgrounds

### OUR Students and Families :

- All low-income
- More than 50% are single parent families
- Around 40% of students and 50% of parents/ carers have a health or disability issue
- More than half of parents/ carers didn't finish Year 12
- More than 70% have a parent/carer not in paid employment
- 1 in 5 students have attended four or more schools
- 3 in 10 students live in families who don't have a computer or tablet connected to the internet

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## 8 KEY ISSUES HAVE EMERGED TO DATE...

1. Digital Divide
2. Vulnerabilities of Home Learning
3. Overarching risk of students disengaging from their education or changing pathways
4. Employment/ unemployment
5. Concerns over physical and mental health of families and students
6. Interactions with extended family
7. Food insecurity
8. Referrals to, and support from, other services



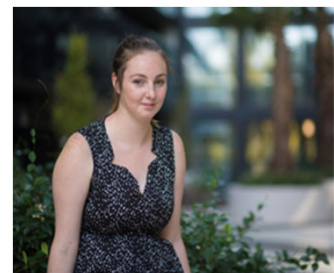
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## FOR TERTIARY STUDENTS

Tertiary students are experiencing some additional challenges:

- Disconnection
- Loss of stable accommodation and appropriate study environments
- Move to online learning and examination
- Loss of placements and impact on completion
- Career path questioning
- Uncertain employment prospects post- graduation



*Small percentage of students have deferred as a consequence of COVID-19 impacts*



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## IMPACTS ON ACCESS, PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT?

### What 'positives'?

#### In the public realm:

- Socio-economic fragility exposed;
- Digital divide laid bare;
- Increased recognition and understanding of the complexity of student circumstances;
- Enhanced recognition and valuing of education;
- Rethinking 'the domestic student' in higher education;
- Agility and innovation;
- Digital access assisting in overcoming geographic and cultural barriers to widening participation;
- Resilience and commitment of students and families

### What challenges arising?

- The vulnerable have become more so.
- Impact of education disruptions: academic achievement, student confidence and motivation;
- Increased risk aversion re higher education;
- Benefits of future study more closely interrogated;
- Increased expectation that higher education must produce positive student employment/ economic outcomes.

### For those already at Uni?

- Perceived treatment during this time may influence attitudes & behaviours

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## SO....WHAT MIGHT BE NEXT?



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### For Higher Education Providers?

- Greater focus on domestic students (recruitment, progression and completion)
- Student experience will become even more vital
- Increased emphasis on Work Integrated Learning and Career Support
- Increasing need for collaboration (internal and external) in order to provide better integrated pathways and more holistic support.

### For Community Organisations like TSF:

- Continuing to place benefit to students and families at the centre of all that we do
- Exploring new ways of building cultural and social capital for students over time
- Further enhancing our partnering scope and support capabilities through collaboration
- Enhanced emphasis on data to better understand and support the student journey
- Embedding innovation

*...within increasing financial / resource constraints*

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## SO WHAT CAN WE ALL DO?

*Equity and access issues will not disappear once the current crisis ends.*

- **APPLY** our enhanced understanding to all aspects of our **PRACTICE**
- **BE REASONABLE, but optimistic in our EXPECTATIONS:** there is likely to be pressures to rapidly recover and to demonstrate the value and impact of our work but this should not detract from the quality of that work nor undermine the inherent purpose of it.
- **CONTINUE to ADVOCATE** strongly for those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds
- **DELIVER** student engagement activities that are **MEANINGFUL** and **IMPACTFUL**
- **ENSURE** digital access for **ALL**
- **FOSTER COLLABORATION** (internal and external): none of us are able to deliver all that may be required at an individual level
- **GUIDE** students and families ethically and transparently to support their decision making concerning further education
- **HEAR and RESPOND** to the **VOICE OF STUDENTS** and **COMMUNITIES**

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**Thank you for Listening!  
Questions and Comments?**





# HEPPP Community Forum

## ‘Learning in the time of COVID-19’

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## COVID-19 Lockdown Impacts

- Financial hardship –food insecurity - overseas students unable to access Job seeker and Job keeper payments
- Increased reporting of racism incidents.
- Increased reporting of domestic violence

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## Financial hardship –food insecurity

- Harris Farm 100 bags project
- CoR approached Macquarie University created partnership with Red Frog and 5 other community organizations
- Red Frog provides volunteers to bag and distribute bags of fruit and veg to students
- Referral information to emergency relief providers

## Racism

- Council rates newsletter - raise awareness of racism and practical anti racism strategies
- City of Ryde Website – community safety
- Research partnership with CoR and Macquarie University –
- Report : International students experience of racism – MOSAIC Journal article- FECCA
- Developing multilingual anti racism resources for students

## Domestic Violence

Local frontline domestic violence support services report  
30% increase in demand for support services

- Translated Burwood DV Court information into (Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, Arabic, Farsi)
- DV support services and Counselling provided via Zoom and Skype

### Domestic Violence - Useful Information

If you feel unsafe or are concerned for someone's safety, please see the below list you can call to access help and support.

- call 000 or contact the police.
- NSW Domestic Violence Line –1800 65 64 63 for referrals to DV, legal and medical support and emergency accommodation
- 1800RESPECT –24/7 sexual, domestic and family violence telephone and online counselling
- Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services (WDVCAS) –1800 938 227
- Women's Legal Service –1800 801 501NSW Ageing and Disability Abuse Helpline –1800 628 221
- Immigrant Women's Speakout Service –(02) 9635 8022



## Domestic Violence- Useful Information (Cont')

- MensLine–1300 78 99 78
- Men's Referral Service –1300 766 491
- Legal Aid NSW Domestic Violence Unit –9219 6300

For online information about support services and what to do if you experience domestic violence you can also go to the below websites:

The NSW Domestic Violence helpline

<http://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/domestic-violence/helpline>

Where to get help NSW

<https://www.dvnsw.org.au/where-to-get-help-in-new-south-wales>

## Anti Racism – useful information and links

If you have experienced or witness these racist incidents against Asian community members you can:

- report it to the incident to the police .
- find out practical ways you can respond by going to Council's Racism it stops with me [link](#) .
- <https://www.ryde.nsw.gov.au/Community/Community-Safety/Safety-for-the-Community/Racism.-It-Stops-with-Me>

- Fill out a survey by the Asian Australian Alliance to capture instances of racism in the community in the times of Coronavirus. The survey link can be found here



[https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/AsianAustralian?fbclid=IwAR1kWldWNcy-E-NgLy6wY0yCqXn4KaKbUCAbreqtEF7Giol\\_pjfqZDzRBOW](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/AsianAustralian?fbclid=IwAR1kWldWNcy-E-NgLy6wY0yCqXn4KaKbUCAbreqtEF7Giol_pjfqZDzRBOW)

- Have a look at Legal Aid NSW's [video](#) on stopping public threats

<https://protect-au.mimecast.com/s/8A2FCWLJY1iMjngh6DZvo?domain=stoppublicthreats.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/>

## Emergency Relief and support

- Red Cross offices - call 1800 733 276 during business hours.
- Salvation Army - Salvos Assessment Line, please call 1300 371 288 between the hours of 9:00am - 5:00pm on Mondays – Fridays.
- North Ryde Community Aid & Information Centre - (02) 9888 3380
- North Ryde Christian Church - 0466 083 828
- Christian Community Aid - (02) 9858 3222
- The Northern Centre - (02) 9334 0111
- Sydney Community Services – (02) 9427 6425
- CatholicCare Naremburn Family Centre - (02) 8425 8700




## WELLNESS : OUR LEARNING COMMUNITY

DR BENJAMINE.L.WILKES

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR  
STUDENT WELLBEING  
MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY

#WPUMQU

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## COVID-19's impact on wellbeing

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***Fear of illness***

***Fear for future***

***Fear for wellbeing of others (feeling powerless)***

***Avoidance***

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## COVID-19's impact on students

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***Disrupted connections to others,  
places and activities***

***Broken routines (aspects of courses  
on hold)***

***New means of learning***

***Alternate avenues and processes  
for support***

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## The COVID-19 reality

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***Loss of cash-flow***

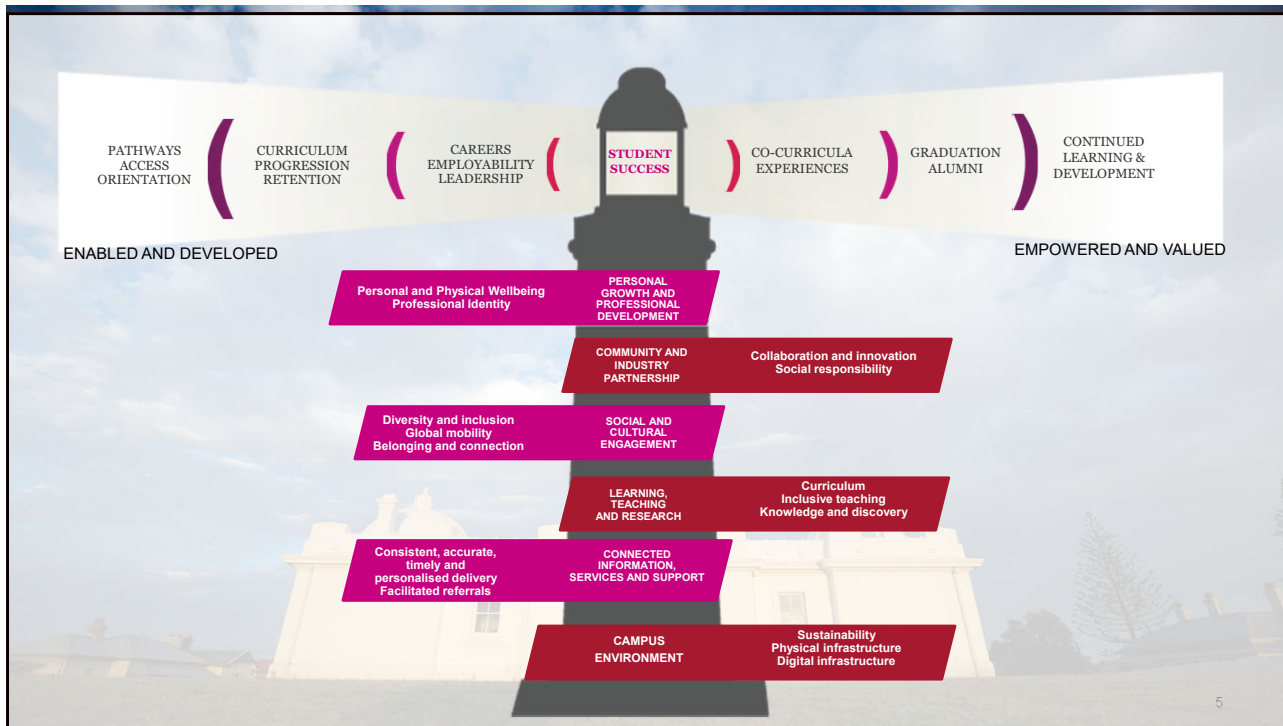
***No rent money and no money for basic items (food)***

***Changing daily responsibilities and tasks***


***Uncertainty***

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**MACQUARIE**  
University

## Careers & Employment

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# MyMQ Career Zone

[Click Here](#)

*Using digital technologies*

*New partnerships*

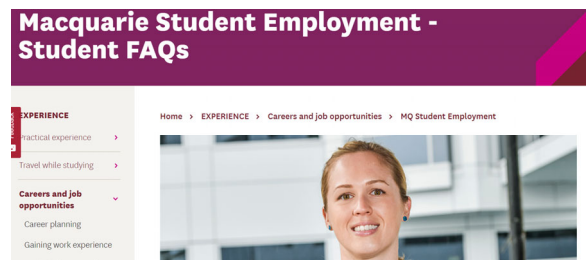


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## Careers & Employment



*Skills development via  
LinkedIn Learning and Coursera*

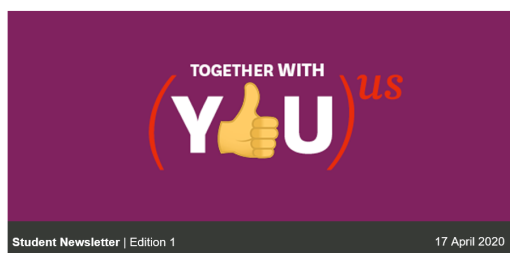


*Macquarie Student Employment Talent Pool*

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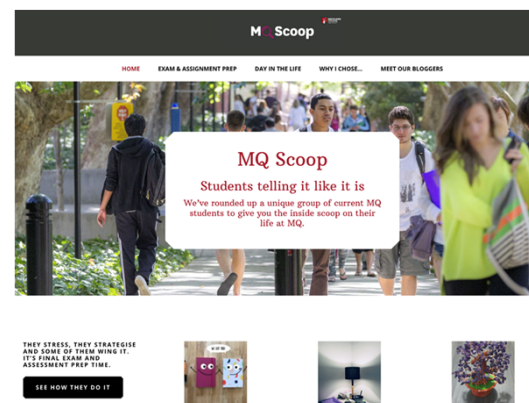
## Connection through communication



**Not another email ...**

*Let's face it. We send too many emails.*

*And a Current Student Web Project*



*Normalising the student experience and  
challenges*

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## Wellbeing supports



**MQ Wellbeing**

*Using digital technologies*

### Student care and reporting

#### SUPPORT

- Study >
- Wellbeing >
- Technology >
- Student care and reporting >**
- Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander students >

Home > SUPPORT

**Our student care and reporting network is here to assist you.**

The network is focused on student care, ensuring that students can access support when needed. Our network also responds to a range of concerns involving students.

#### What can you report?

Students, staff and members of the public can report the following:

[Wellbeing - Care MQ](#)

[Safety and behaviour](#)

[Feedback and](#)

*Student systems and process improvement*

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## Seeking feedback, highlighting support



**We checked your pulse. See what you said...**



Tell us how you're going this week or see what you said last week.

[Tell us](#) →

[See last week's feedback](#) →

**YOU** to the power of us

**Commitment to student feedback**

### Your O-zone

#### SUPPORT

- Study >
- Wellbeing >
- Technology >
- Student care and reporting >**

Home > SUPPORT

**Your learning has moved online and so have we.**

O-Zone (short for online-zone) is the space to keep up to date with what's happening online and stay connected with your MQ community.



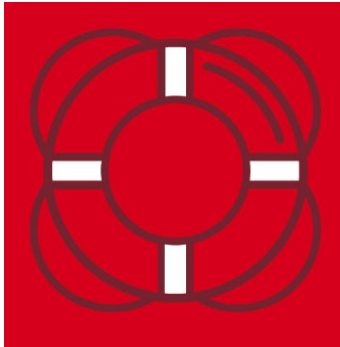
[Download the wellbeing app](#)

*Online support, resources and chat*

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## COVID-specific initiatives



***MQ Job Rescue***

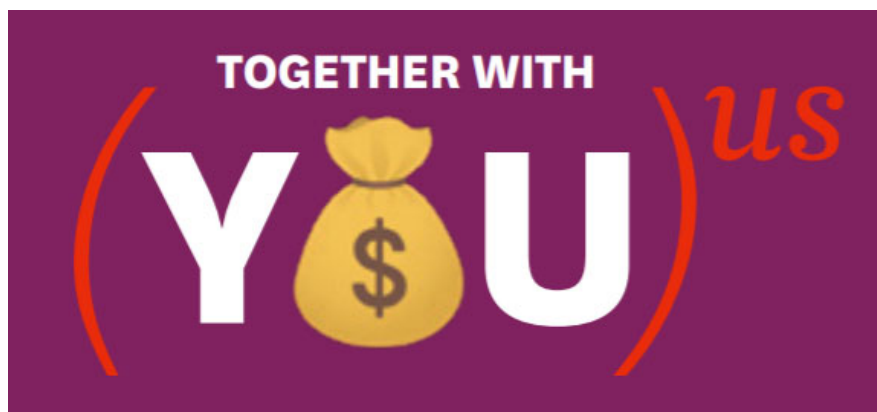


***Community support***

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## COVID-specific initiatives



***MQ Student Success Support Package***

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## Looking ahead – challenges and opportunities



*Online orientation*

*Virtual events (Careers Fair)*

*Ongoing demands for SSSP*

*Student employment programs*

*Focus on student retention*

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## BE PRESENT, LISTEN, REFLECT TOGETHER, ACTION, REVIEW



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**Thank You for your time 😊**

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***Questions?***

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