



Education is the key to a sustainable future, but education in partnership with community is the key to making a difference and being the difference today.

As an educator I often look at the challenges our young people face along with the temptations and media influences that blanket their lives and wonder how well I would have navigated my adolescent years in the current circumstances. I know my colleagues at Cornish College do this too, and I imagine you probably do the same. A number of members of the College's Executive Leadership Team are in the fortunate position to have student mentors (selected Year 12 students who are appointed to this role each year). This helps us to gain insight into the reality of adolescent challenges and use this, along with contemporary research and expertise from colleagues, to inform our school's approach to working with our students as challenges arise.

It is important that we view the challenges our young people face with understanding, compassion and sensitivity as we work toward promoting a safe and healthy culture in our schools and in society. At the same time, we must ensure we are providing good order and act with certainty when students' behaviours fall short of our expectations and potentially puts themselves or others at risk. This is all part of the education experience that our community entrusts us with at Cornish College.

Always with courage

Some of you are in the early years of your parenting journey, and others are preparing young adults for the world that awaits beyond Cornish College. Some of the wellbeing issues that we raise through this series will be confronting for both adults and children, but none of them are issues we should ignore. They are not necessarily issues that our school is facing directly, but we know education plays an important role in prevention and in the critical analysis of misinformation and disinformation. In this space, we apply our Cornish College values of respect, integrity, creativity and compassion...always with courage.

Wellbeing

Wellbeing is a key pathway in the *Cornish College Strategy Story - Toward 2030*.

Through the Wellbeing pathway we are recognising the critical role of wellbeing for the sustainability of a learning community and the inclusion of its people.

There will be various issues that members of the Cornish College leadership teams will raise with you throughout this year as we work toward the aspirations outlined in our strategy. Ultimately, our aim is to acknowledge the challenges our young people face and approach these as an informed and educated community, working together for a sustainable future.

We will commit time and resources to researching childhood and adolescent wellbeing and related matters and share our understandings with the community.

On behalf of all Cornish College staff, I invite you to engage with this series of communications and join us on a journey of community wellbeing. As parents, your role in these conversations with your children is vital to the learning partnership. We aim to provide you with information on what the school is doing to support our young people through various challenges along with resources you can connect with to support the conversations at home. Education is the key to a sustainable future, but *education in partnership with community* is the key to making a difference and being the difference today.

I hope you enjoy the written component of this Community Wellbeing Series and I look forward to working with you on a number of key wellbeing matters throughout this year and beyond.

Nicola Forrest
Principal

Welcome to the Director of Wellbeing



We are delighted to introduce Rose Lyons to the College in her role as Director of Wellbeing. With a wealth of experience and a passion for holistic education, Rose brings a dynamic energy and a deep commitment to the wellbeing of our students.

Rose's journey in education spans over 15 years, during which she has demonstrated a profound dedication to student-centred practices and personal empowerment.

Currently pursuing her PhD in Wellbeing and Mental Health Education, Rose is deeply engaged in exploring innovative strategies to enhance wellbeing in educational settings. Her research-driven approach and commitment to evidence-based practices align seamlessly with the College mission to cultivate a nurturing and supportive learning environment.

Rose will play a pivotal role in further supporting the development of our College Wellbeing Master Plan, ensuring that it reflects the unique needs of our students and incorporates the latest research and best practices. Her collaborative spirit and effective communication skills will be invaluable assets as we work together to foster a culture of growth, resilience, and compassion.

We are excited to embark on this journey together, as we continue to prioritise the holistic wellbeing of our entire College community.



Vaping

To commence the Community Wellbeing Series we share with you some information and resources about vaping. On a weekly basis we receive media reports about vaping along with communications from school principals seeking advice on how to collectively manage the rise of vaping in schools. More recently we have even been contacted by companies who install 'Vape Detectors' in schools and we are often advised of professional learning opportunities from the legal profession on how to deal with vaping in schools. In some schools, vaping amongst students has become so prevalent that these schools have begun locking the doors to the bathrooms, requiring students to report to staff for a key if they wish to use the toilets.

Whilst vaping has not become a major issue at Cornish College, we are certainly not immune to this and are working proactively with our students to ensure our school remains a safe and healthy place for all. When concerns have been raised about a small groups of students possibly vaping during break times we have approached this through an educative stance.

Below is an excerpt from a letter that was read aloud to some year levels to address this issue. I share this with you as an example of how we might approach some of the wellbeing challenges our young people deal with. I am very proud of the way our students responded to this letter, which was ultimately an appeal to their sense of belonging at Cornish College and a reminder of our school's values.

At Cornish College we've always based a large part of our success on the quality of relationships amongst our community and the high level of trust and respect in which we operate, together. In recent times, however, the rise of vaping has begun to challenge this. Cornish is a school where risk-taking behaviours that breach the school rules and policies have often been dealt with in a restorative way and with input from a range of stakeholders, always with the desired outcomes of repairing harm and educating. There is a mantra we have as teachers when a young person makes a poor choice that results in a breach of our agreement: "How do we repair the harm and what is our opportunity and responsibility to educate?"

However, there are also times when behaviours that fall short of the school's expectations require particular consequences. Simply, there are behaviours that are never appropriate and result in outcomes such as exclusion from school – suspension from school or from activities, and ultimately the termination of an enrolment.

I want to be clear with you that vaping, at Cornish College, is one of the behaviours that we will not accept and that will result in more serious consequences. Certainly, in the first instance, we will also look to appropriate ways to repair harm and educate, but the more serious outcomes will also apply for those found to be vaping at Cornish College. We've worked hard as a community to ensure Cornish College is a safe place for all. Vaping, in any area of our school or at any offsite school activities compromises this and that is simply not OK.

Rather than installing vape detectors and spending money on legal advisors presenting professional development on this issue, we are calling on our strong partnership with Cornish College parents to support us in ensuring vaping does not become an issue that harms others in our school or compromises the positive way in which this school operates.

We know that our students do not want to find themselves in a situation where they are given consequences and potentially excluded from school for doing the wrong thing. We know, particularly from the way they responded to the letter, that they have a sense of pride being at Cornish College and want to uphold the relationships with other students and our staff that help to create that very important adolescent sense of belonging.

The challenge for some is that they can find themselves addicted to vaping and while the consequences for their health are concerning, the consequences for their education if they vape at school are equally concerning. We will continue to educate our students about the risks associated with vaping and offer them a safe space to talk about their concerns and to seek help if they feel vaping is becoming an addiction.

There are often reasons behind a young person's choice to develop risk-taking behaviours and we must seek to understand these if we are to help them overcome and make safer choices. What you model at home is equally as important as how we educate at school.

A family conversation

Where age-appropriate, I encourage you to open up the conversation about risk-taking behaviours and in particular, vaping, over the coming weeks as we have done and will continue to do at school. Linked to this letter is an information page based on tutorials from the Lung Foundation Australia. You can access the latest research and information to engage in meaningful conversations with your children about the danger of vaping by signing up for the free resources at <https://lungfoundation.com.au/lung-health/protecting-your-lungs/e-cigarettes-and-vaping/>

You can also access some excellent advice and resources from the excellent website – *The Conversation*: <https://theconversation.com/how-can-i-help-my-teen-quit-vaping-201558>

The legalities

The first stage of Australia's new vaping reforms commenced on 1 January, 2024 with further protections to be implemented and strengthened over the course of the year. These reforms are aimed at protecting young people from the harms of vaping and nicotine dependence.

The importation of single use vapes is now banned in Australia. From 1 March 2024, further changes are expected to commence, including the:

- Cessation of the personal importation of vapes
- Ban on the importation of non-therapeutic vapes
- Requirement for therapeutic vape importers and manufacturers to notify the Therapeutic Goods Administration of their product's compliance with the relevant product standards
- Requirement for importers to obtain a licence and permit from the Australian Government's Office of Drug Control before the products are imported

Please see the following link for further information.

<https://www.health.gov.au/ministers/the-hon-mark-butler-mp/media/taking-on-big-tobacco-to-protect-our-kids-from-vapes?language=en>

We care about each and everyone one of our students and want to keep trust and respect strong at Cornish College. We understand the challenges adolescents face, so let's work together to ensure we maintain a positive school environment for all.

I hope you can make the time to talk with your child about vaping if you think it is relevant and age-appropriate. Letting your child know that you do so from a place of care and understanding can be a powerful way to truly open up the conversation and build trust.

I hope you find this information useful in creating a space to talk with your child or to simply educate yourself on this important wellbeing matter.

If you would like to share other resources with our community or provide a response to this matter, please email us at toward2030@cornishcollege.vic.edu.au

Nicola Forrest