

Information for canteens regarding the Coronavirus (COVID-19)

On Thursday 26 March, the Western Australian Department of Education announced WA schools will cease teaching classes from Friday 3 April.

From Monday 6 to Thursday 9 April, schools will provide supervision only (no teaching) for parents who are unable to keep their children at home until the term concludes on Thursday 9 April.

Due to declining student numbers, some WA canteens have made the tough decision to close prior to the dates above. This is a school based decision and canteen staff should seek advice from their Principal and the parent body to make decisions based on the needs of your school community.

A word from WASCA,

Thank you for the amazing service you provide to WA schools. We have fielded many calls in the last two weeks and understand you are concerned. The most common requests are for advice about making a plan. We have collated questions and answers that we hope will help to alleviate some of the unknown, especially the quotes and testimonials from schools.

Remember, school closures will be temporary. To ensure you are in the best position possible when schools open, whenever that is, we encourage you to consider what needs to be completed in the short term as well as longer term planning.

Canteens should consider and plan for:

- How you will handle ordering (when closing and on return)
- How you will handle food wastage
- Food storage during periods of extended closure
- Bill payments
- Staff rostering.

For immediate action:

- It is not advisable to order any more stock, start winding down
- Offer special prices on products you have a lot of, or recipes you still have many ingredients for
- Ask staff and students to support the canteen by buying from you on the last day
- Use up ingredients by making family-sized portions of meals, and sell them to staff or the school community to take home
- Store/freeze items that preserve well; or sell any leftover produce /packaged items to staff or parents.

Please keep in contact with us for support and read our regular updates (like this document) on the WASCA website, Facebook page and enews (sent to all members) e.g. [School Support COVID-19, published 18.03.20](#).

Take care,
WASCA Executive Committee and Office Team.

Canteens and COVID-19 Frequently asked questions

Q. WA schools are open, is the canteen allowed to stay open?

A. Based on current advice and directives, school canteens may remain open until school's close, however, canteens should consider:

- Health and safety protocols to canteen staff and customers e.g. social distancing
- If it is financially viable for the canteen to continue to trade
- Best practice food safety and hygiene procedures are being followed including the use of tongs, gloves and sanitisers
- Staff within the canteen should be limited to paid employees only
- Availability and shortages of stock.

Q. Our sales have reduced dramatically, what can we do to minimise loss?

A. Regularly review the situation based on current advice, and:

- Communicate with the school community; let them know you are still open for business (posters around the school, social media, online ordering platform); provide daily updates regarding the menu and specials
- Promote online ordering as the best/only option
- Reduce the number of days the canteen is open
- Streamline and reduce the menu to only offer what you know you can easily supply; use what is already on hand or frozen.

“We are only making sandwiches in the canteen, including some we can freeze if we don't open later in the week”.

Q. We are still open but having difficulty sourcing products, what can we do?

A. Do what you can with what you have.

- If fresh ingredients are unavailable, consider replacing with pre-prepared meals; refer to the Star Choice Buyer's Guide
- Confirm if suppliers are expecting any supply issues and changes to delivery days/times
- Talk to other schools in the area and where appropriate, perhaps combine orders (arrange pick-up and be mindful of temperature control).

Q. I am a canteen supervisor, will I still get paid if the canteen closes early?

A. There is no one size fits all for this question. Our advice is to:

- review your contract to determine any entitlements, such as accrued annual leave
- consider provisions for professional development; may include fees and/or wages
- seek information from [Fairwork](#) and [Department of Commerce](#) (Wageline).
- talk to your employer about your concerns and potential access to the Government's COVID-19 stimulus package. Ensure you have the correct paperwork e.g. request a letter from your employer that states a reduction in hours. Simple steps on this are available on the [ABC News website](#)

Q, I'm calling on behalf of our P&C, do you know if we are eligible for any of the Government's COVID-19 stimulus package?

A. We encourage you to look into this as some Parent Bodies may be eligible to receive benefits that apply to non-for-profits that employ people. We encourage to:

- check your P&C's eligibility, visit the [Government website](#)
- additional information is available from [Institute of Public Accountants](#) and [CPA Australia](#).

Q. We need to close the canteen today/tomorrow; what do we need to do?

A. Communication is the key

- Advise the school community and suppliers, including online ordering companies (who can also advertise your closing date) as soon as possible
- Preserve products by freezing, for example:
 - Fruit and vegetables: wash, chop and freeze in containers or zip lock bags; produce that freezes well includes broccoli, capsicum, onion, corn, asparagus, spinach; grapes, pineapple, berries, banana, mango, kiwi fruit, stone fruit, oranges
 - Muffins, cake, bread: place in container or individually wrap and freeze
 - Flavoured milk and yoghurt: decant into ice cube trays or cups with a pop stick
 - Freeze plain milk in 250mL portions in zip lock bags (to be used in smoothies or baking)
 - Meals: most can be frozen and defrosted to be sold once the canteen re-opens. Bulk-cook main meals that incorporate the ingredients that you have, separate into portion controlled containers and freeze.
- Sell or giveaway items; create mixed hampers at a set price and call it a 'mystery box'
- Make a selection of simple sandwiches and give to the teachers to place in the freezer for students still attending school and perhaps do not bring lunch
- Contact another local school, and see if they want to buy your stock.

What does sudden school canteen closure really look like?

Dionisia Tsokos, Canteen Supervisor at St Andrews Grammar, made immediate plans for the canteen to close Monday morning, based on advice received on Sunday from the Principal and a family in the school receiving a positive COVID-19 result. Dionisia's advice includes:

- Stay calm; focus on one step at a time; treat it like the end of term (so logical)
- Make sure you have the contact details of all suppliers readily available (e.g. in your mobile) so you can make the appropriate calls as soon as possible
- If a delivery is coming early, meet drivers before they unload that way you don't have to receive the goods. Then call the business and advise the goods have been sent back with the driver and you would like a refund/credit
- Condense all freezer stock into one freezer
- We chose to give-away some perishable stock to parents "it was nice to be able to do this, families really appreciated it"
- If the closure is extended, with principal approval, arrange to pop into the canteen to check on stock and that equipment is still in good working order (no power supply issues).

More information:

- WACSSO advice, fact sheets and useful links - wacssso.wa.edu.au/latest-news/
- [Department of Education](#)
- [Department of Health](#)