



## 24 MARCH

# A MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

Dear Yoga Australia Community,

Yesterday we received a number of phone calls asking how we can continue to teach yoga safely and within government guidelines. Can we teach outdoors? Can we continue Yoga therapy in a one on one setting?

The YA team is doing their best to communicate with the government and working to get clear answers to those questions, but with policies changing rapidly and a government in crisis mode, these answers are taking time. Which means that, for now, we need to make good and wise decisions based on the information that we have.

The number one guiding principle that underpins yoga across all lineages and styles is ahimsa – non harming. We as yoga teachers and leaders in our communities have always used this as our guide in all that we do. Now more than ever, in these unprecedented times, we are to use this as our number one principal. Each of us are leaders in our communities and that gives us a responsibility to our students. To do the right thing and not harm, so we can protect the vulnerable.

- To support ourselves in this time of decision making we have some Coronavirus facts that we currently know:
- This is a deadly virus.
- Cases are rising rapidly across Australia.
- A large portion of people do not show symptoms, but they will still be contagious.
- Social isolation is the only proven method of slowing it down.
- There is no vaccine or cure yet.

Given our principles and the above facts, the best guidance is that we should not continue to teach face to face classes. While it's theoretically possible to teach an outdoor class without compromising social distancing, we are not confident it's within the government guidelines. Even more critically – we can't ensure the safety of participants. Just one attendee violating social distance could put our students and our communities at risk.

That said, yoga is more important now than ever before. For many, social distance means isolation, mental health issues, loss of self esteem and other challenges. We have a role to play as leaders in this moment, but we will need to adapt to rise to it.

As I write this, I know a number of our members are in the process of running their very first online class. Others are setting up phone groups and using social media to maintain connections to their communities and to provide much needed support to each other during this time. These are wonderful signs of agility and creativity. We as Australian yoga teachers have incredibly diverse skills and knowledge that we can all share, the opportunities to connect with each other is many – chanting, philosophy, business skills, meditations, and education and much more.

The team at Yoga Australia are dedicated to creating forums and community space to support each other. Please share with the Yoga Australia team if you would like to contribute to keep us connected and supported.

Let's continue to support each other with compassion and empathy whilst understanding that many of our community are facing hardships, loss and uncertainty. Most importantly, let's ensure we are being kind to ourselves, remembering self-care and personal practice to stay healthy, so we can support and serve all that we hold dear, through the wisdom of yoga.

We will continue to work to get clarity on what the new policies and rules mean for us all, what it formally allows and doesn't, and share that information with you immediately.

Namaste

Kym McDonald  
President Yoga Australia