

# MURWILLUMBAH HIGH SCHOOL

86 Riverview St, Murwillumbah, NSW 2484

Principal: Peter Howes

Deputy Principal: Luke Bristow & Julie Bush



INSPIRING EVERY STUDENT  
EVERY DAY

Dear Parents

Murwillumbah High School is writing to share the exciting news that our school will be a mobile phone-free space from the beginning of Term 1, 2020.

We understand that mobiles have great utility, but mobile phone use has increasingly become a source of distraction, antisocial behavior and conflict both at home and at school.

Murwillumbah High School believes in maintaining a safe and effective educational environment for all of its students. Research shows that the mere presence of mobiles in the classroom can be detrimental to student performance. According to a survey and report from Common Sense Media that involved 1,240 interviews with parents and their 12 to 18-year-old children, 50% of teens feel attached to their mobile devices, and 59% of their parents agree that their kids have a problem putting their devices down (U.S. News & World Report).

We are partnering with Yondr to help address mobile phone use in the school. Yondr is currently used across the world in hundreds of classrooms and schools, at concerts, comedy shows, weddings and special events of all kinds. The goal of these spaces is to encourage people to engage with each other and their surroundings.

The Yondr program employs a simple, easy-to-use case that stores a mobile and requires an unlocking base to open. When students enter school grounds they will place their phone in a Yondr case which is then locked. Students maintain possession of their phones but will not be able to use them until they are unlocked at the end of the day. During lessons that require or would be enriched by the use of mobile phones, unlocking stations would be provided for educational purposes.

We believe this will allow our students to be:

- Engaged in classroom activities and assignments
- Less dependent on electronics to do classwork
- Less likely to engage in conversations around bullying
- Less likely to be distracted and procrastinate on assignments in class

In an effort to best serve your child, we will need your full support in adoption of the Yondr program at our school. We want to assure our families that you can reach your student at the main office on 02 6672 1566. Accommodation may be made for students who legitimately require access to their phone.

It is important that the students do not feel like their phone is trapped but some students will still struggle during the transition period. Our wellbeing team will support them. We thank you for your continued support in ensuring a safe and healthy learning environment for our students. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the school directly.

Yours sincerely

Peter Howes  
Principal

Luke Bristow  
Deputy Principal

Julie Bush  
Deputy Principal

### **Some worthwhile reading**

*Phones reduce the amount of time students are bored. Whilst this sounds positive, research has tested and shown that boredom is a driver of creativity and productivity. Boredom allows the mind time to wander, consider complex ideas and form opinions and perspective. People exposed to small periods of boredom for example give more to charities, are kinder to others and actively become more involved in their physical and social environment. Reducing student screen time might increase some boredom but will improve their life.*

*Andrew Bastawrous, an ophthalmologist says, "There's definitely a myopia epidemic. Many more people are becoming short-sighted than they were a decade ago". This is thought to be a combination of mobile phone usage and a reducing in focusing outside on people and the environment (also affected by mobile phone usage). "The growth of the eye tends to slow down in your late teens and stop. But what's happening is that it isn't stopping. It seems to continue". The implications of this are not just that there are more people needing glasses, potentially severe visual impairment can result in glaucoma retinal detachment and another retinal problems.*

*According to recent research people tap, swipe, and click an average of 2,617 times per day. For the top 10 percent of users, this number doubled to 5,427 touches per day. Data collected from Apple and Google show that average users unlock their phones 110 times per day. That is equivalent to six to seven times per lesson regardless of if the phone is on the desk or on silent in their pocket or bag. This shows the 'old' strategy is not helping our students succeed.*

*In the second half of last year more than a quarter of incidents recorded by teachers relate to inappropriate use of mobile phones. Over the same time the phrase "mobile phone" was written 1224 times in relation to negative student behaviour. According to research, (conducted by Spears, Keeley, Bates, & Katz), one in five young people under 18 (20%) reported experiencing online bullying in any one year and of those incidents almost a fifth of victims are exclusively bullied through devices such as mobile phones.*

*The biggest lament of teachers in regard to mobile phones is that they lead to student distraction and off task behaviour. Texting a friend is a tempting diversion that many students select over being part of the lesson. Observations of student toilet usage during class time indicate that 1 in 10 toilet breaks appear to be coordinated between friends in different classes through the use of mobile phones. The amount of time students are spending out of the classroom to relieve themselves has doubled.*

*Teenagers who spend five or more hours a day on electronic devices are 71% more likely to have a risk factor for suicide than those who spend less than an hour a day. Young people who use screens this much are also 52% more likely to sleep less than seven hours a night – a significant amount of sleep deprivation with potential consequences for both physical and mental health. The more time young adults spend on social media, the more likely they are to be depressed or lonely. (The Guardian – 12 January 2018)*

## HOW IT WORKS



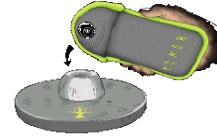
### CASE

As students enter the phone-free space, phones will be placed in a Yondr case.



### LOCK

Once inside, the case will lock. Students keep their phones throughout the day.



### UNLOCK

To unlock the case, tap it on any teacher or administrator's unlocking base.

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Has this happened in other similar schools?** Wauchope High School was the first school in Australia to trial Yondr and several other schools in NSW have subsequently followed suit. Locally, Lismore High School has seen a rapid improvement to student wellbeing since Yondr was implemented. This model has also been implemented in over 600 schools in America.

**Are Mobile Phones banned at Murwillumbah High School?** No. Mobiles can be a very useful educational tool inside the classroom. Teachers will bring unlocking stations to the classroom where appropriate, allowing technology enhanced learning to occur.

**What if I want to reach my student during the school day?** We want our students to be engaged in their learning. Please contact the main office at 02 6672 1566 to reach your student.

**What if there is an emergency?** In case of an emergency, we direct our students to safety first. School staff will be able to unlock a Yondr case in a matter of seconds for students once they are in a safe and secure location.

**Will my student's phone be safe?** Students are in possession of their phone in the Yondr case and should keep the case stored away in their backpacks. Students are responsible for the items they bring to school.

**What if the case gets damaged or lost?** The Yondr case is the property of Murwillumbah High School. The school will provide a replacement at the cost of \$10 to the student and/or have their phone placed in the school safe immediately.

**What if my child has additional learning needs and requires access to a phone?** Our learning support team will work in partnership with parents and students, reviewing the documented need for access to a phone. It will become a part of the students learning plan.

**What about excursions?** Access to phones on excursions will be at the discretion of the organising Teacher and Deputy Principal.

**What about special circumstances?** In the case of legitimate, extraordinary circumstances, approved by the Deputy Principal, students may be granted permission to access their phone for a short amount of time.

Tel: 02 6672 1566 Fax: 02 6672 5510

Email: [murwillumb-h.school@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:murwillumb-h.school@det.nsw.edu.au) Website: [www.murwillumb-h.schools.nsw.edu.au](http://www.murwillumb-h.schools.nsw.edu.au)