



Dear Parents and Carers in Catholic kindergartens, schools and colleges in the Diocese of Rockhampton

I am writing to you regarding the evolving situation with the coronavirus (COVID-19). Earlier this week the Prime Minister made further announcements which outlined the requirements for all Australians to continue to observe both in the coming days and over the forthcoming Easter vacation period.

The Premier of Queensland, Anastacia Palaszczuk and the Queensland Education Minister Grace Grace, have just announced that **all** Queensland schools next week will have five (5) additional Pupil Free Days. I wish to advise that **all** Catholic kindergartens, primary schools and colleges in the Diocese of Rockhampton will remain open for children of essential workers, that is, those parents who are working and have no other option for the supervision of their children.

While students are not required to attend school next week, all Catholic schools in the Diocese of Rockhampton will continue to provide **supervision** for students where their parents are required to attend work and for vulnerable students (e.g. those living in out-of-home care). Students attending school next week will be required to wear normal uniform as per school requirements.

I also take this opportunity to remind parents/carers that the Premier and Prime Minister have asked us all to rethink what we might normally undertake by way of recreation activities and to see this forthcoming vacation period as an “at home” time. Parents/carers have been asked to keep your children at home as much as possible in the coming weeks in the interests of community health and safety. I also take this opportunity to remind all about the importance of e-safety matters especially related to online environments. We will be providing links to the e-Safety site on the Catholic Education website and through Catholic schools.

The change to the end of Term 1 arrangements is designed to practically support our staff and school communities prepare for the remote delivery of teaching and learning (learning from home) for periods of time during Term 2, if this is required.

I extend my sincere appreciation to our dedicated staff for their professionalism, support, and willingness to work collaboratively and cooperatively to minimise and effectively manage the COVID-19 event as it continues to unfold. Catholic Education’s highest priorities are the health, safety and wellbeing of our students, staff and families and we are closely working with the relevant authorities to make certain our response and advice is coordinated, timely and appropriate within the changing parameters.

Catholic Education has been working closely with school counsellors and school personnel to ensure that there are opportunities for support to be provided to vulnerable students and others requiring support in these uncertain times. This information will be provided through your Catholic school/kindergarten in the coming days.



I remind all parents of the Catholic Education [website](#) as well as your school's website and other official social media communications as the source of accurate information.

Term 2 Arrangements

As the Premier advised this morning, the precise arrangements for Week 1 of Term 2 will be advised closer to that time and will be guided by the advice of health authorities.

Consistent with the Premier and Prime Minister's recent announcements about the need to provide appropriate social distancing at schools, we anticipate that parents who can support learning at home will likely be asked to keep their children at home from Week 1 of Term 2.

It is also likely that schools will need to remain operational at the start of Term 2 for those parents who need to send their children due to work commitments (unless their child is sick) or because the student is vulnerable (such as those living out of home). Catholic Education is committed to supporting our essential workers at this challenging time.

Please be assured that, through your Catholic school's usual communication channels, we will confirm the specific arrangements for Term 2 as soon as we are able to. I also take this opportunity to remind all parents/carers to ensure that your school has your current contact information (email address, mobile phone number) as this will be of great assistance in terms of communication. I also once again remind all parents that information regarding Catholic schools is available on the Catholic Education [website](#).

To assist with our initial Term 2 planning, please advise your school/kindergarten by Wednesday 1 April if you anticipate that you will need to send your child/ren to school from Week 1 of Term 2. Catholic schools will provide details for you in terms of methods of communicating this information to your respective Catholic schools/kindergarten. This will assist your school/kindergarten to make appropriate arrangements to plan for learning spaces for students who may need to attend school.

We are in a position to transition to delivery of year-level and subject specific educational programs for all students in Term 2 to accommodate learning from home. Again, your school will provide more details regarding these arrangements and I thank all in Catholic Education for the plans that have been undertaken in the last few weeks to make provision for this necessity in the interests of doing all that we can to ensure continuity of teaching and learning, albeit, via different mediums.

For our Colleges, your school Principal will be communicating with you regarding specific arrangements that will be put in place to support students including those students in Year 12. Also, information regarding The Cathedral College Boarding arrangements for Term 2 will be communicated by The Cathedral College to its parent community.



Although we are likely to commence under new arrangements in Term 2, your school Principal/Kindergarten Director will continue to communicate with you through the normal communication channels whenever new information is available.

Tuition Fees

We acknowledge the difficult economic circumstances many families now find themselves in and we would encourage any family facing difficulty with tuition fees to discuss this with the school. In accordance with the mission, values and ethos of Catholic Education, we remain committed to providing an education to all students regardless of their financial circumstances. Through your school we will be providing additional information regarding our Fee Concession arrangements which are being reviewed in light of the unfortunate rapid escalation of the number of families who are now experiencing unemployment and financial distress. Please know that we in Catholic Education are here to support you at this time and if you have any concerns at all please make an appointment to speak with your Principal/Kindergarten Director. All such discussions are confidential. Please be assured of our understanding and support and prayers for you and your families at this challenging time.

This is an unprecedented time in our history. At this time, more than any other, it is timely for us to reflect on the values that underpin a Catholic education, namely, compassion, understanding, care for others including the most vulnerable, and being grateful for the selfless contributions of so many people in our communities. In particular, we are grateful for health and medical workers, those caring for the elderly, those at the supermarket checkouts and the truck drivers delivering stock, our teachers, support staff, cleaners and all working to keep us connected to everyday life. We pray that wisdom, integrity, goodwill and compassion will unite our efforts as we strive to overcome the enormous challenges we are facing.

Let us resolve to share who we are as members of a Catholic school community, with the wider community through gentle words of encouragement and thanks, a phone call, an email, a smile, a prayer – it will be received with gratitude.

I know this will be a difficult time for our whole community and I thank you in advance for your support for our students and staff and your understanding as we go forward.

May God continue to bless us all.

Yours sincerely

Leesa Jeffcoat AM
DIOCESAN DIRECTOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

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