



17 March 2020

Dear parents and carers, and all in our Catholic school communities,

Update on coronavirus preparedness

I would like to provide this further update on how our schools are preparing for, and managing, the Covid-19 coronavirus pandemic. As you would appreciate the situation is changing daily but the overall intent of our actions is the same – to keep our schools and their communities safe, and that student learning should continue.

As families in our schools you can assist in a number of ways:

1. If your child shows symptoms of a cold or flu, keep them home. If those symptoms persist, and the symptoms are more than a 'cold', you should consider seeking medical advice.
2. If your child is well they should attend school. The pandemic will be with us for months, not weeks. State and Commonwealth health authorities will direct self-isolation when required but in the absence of a direction, school is the best place for your children.
3. Talk to your children about hygiene and model the recommended behaviour at home – hand washing and sneezing protocols in particular. Also talk to your children about social distancing at school – wherever possible being 1.5 metres or more from the nearest other person and avoiding person-to-person contact.
4. At school and at home we have to be ready to manage issues relating to student anxiety. Some [tips for coping with coronavirus anxiety](#) are provided on our coronavirus page but please talk to your school's Principal if your children need some assistance in managing anxiety levels – we have staff who can assist.
5. Please reassure your Year 12 students that there will be information forthcoming about senior assessments with the intention that students will not be disadvantaged by coronavirus adjustments.
6. Please reconsider any unnecessary overseas travel in the coming months. While we understand that in some cases this travel might be unavoidable for family circumstances, overseas travel for holiday purposes should be postponed. As you would be aware overseas travel arrivals now require two weeks mandatory self-isolation on return to Australia. And overseas destinations are adding similar requirements at their end. Two weeks self-isolation means a significant loss of learning opportunities for your children.
7. We will need your cooperation in the home if we introduce home based learning in the event of full or partial school closures or large numbers of student absenteeism. A range of delivery options is being planned. Do not expect a seamless 'School of Distance Education' delivery. Be assured that all our schools have the necessary technology and software in place, but we



haven't done this before, so we expect it might look a bit messy and lumpy in places – but we will be doing our very best to make this work. It is not a replacement for face to face teaching. We will also address equity and access issues for families without devices and internet connectivity. Our current advice from Queensland Health is that large scale school closures, similar to what has occurred in other countries, are often counterproductive. But our planning for learning at home involves considering a response to shorter term reactive closures to allow school cleaning and contact tracing in the event of a confirmed coronavirus case, and for possible large numbers of students at home as a result of isolation requirements.

8. To assist our planning for the continuity of student learning I have approved an additional pupil free day on the last day of term, although some schools may vary this and advise accordingly. We will provide limited supervision for students at schools on this day if parents have been unable to make alternative arrangements. Parents and carers working in the health industries are encouraged to access these arrangements.
9. We ask for your support for our schools and their staff during this difficult period. We are planning for the likelihood of up to 25 % of our staff absent through illness or self-isolation. This will place great stress on our school staff, particularly our teachers. Your support and understanding will be critical to their wellbeing.
10. We know many families, particularly those in the tourism, travel and hospitality industries, and those with casual employment are already seriously impacted by this pandemic. If your family is in financial stress as a result, please talk to your Principal. We have opportunities to provide fee relief and support – the very last thing we want to see happen is for our children's education to be affected.
11. Finally, if your employment or income is secure you may wish to assist initiatives by schools to assist those families doing it tough. This could be by way of donations in cash and kind for food hampers, frozen meals and so on. See your school or its parent body about ways you can assist.

We greatly appreciate the support and goodwill already shown by our parent community. Thankyou. If you have any further concerns or questions, please contact your teacher or Principal. They will access further advice if required and respond.

A reminder that our 'single point of truth' for Cairns Catholic Education responses to the coronavirus pandemic is the 'green button' on the landing pages of school and system websites and portal that will take you to the dedicated Coronavirus page on the [Cairns Catholic Education website](#) and [portal](#) where you will find the consolidated information, updates and resources. Also consider liking our dedicated [Emergency Communications Facebook](#) page to receive regular updates, tips and information.

Yours sincerely,



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