



15 April 2020

**Dear parents and carers**

### **Term 2 COVID-19 Update**

Hopefully you have managed to have a safe and restful break, even if only for the Easter weekend, during this very different Easter period.

With Term 2 due to start this coming Monday I would like to provide an update on our responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. The core messages from Government remain of maintaining elevated hygiene practices, avoiding social contact and unnecessary travel, staying at home, and looking out for each other.

I thank you for your understanding and support as we work together in these extraordinary times that are placing incredible demands on everyone.

#### **Term 2**

As indicated in our previous communication, we are responding to the directions of the Commonwealth and State health authorities. The Queensland Government has announced that from the start of Term 2 until 22 May 2020 inclusive, all students will be learning from home, except for students in the following categories:

- a) Children of Essential Workers
- b) Vulnerable children
- c) Children in designated Indigenous communities

The government will review this decision mid-May and a further decision will be made regarding the second half of Term 2.

During this five-week period that is the first half of Term 2, all students who can be supervised and learn from home are to stay home, except for those mentioned above.

Essential worker means any worker who must continue to attend their workplace for essential business during this time. Children of essential workers may attend school on days when they are not able to be supervised at home and no other arrangements can be made.

Vulnerable children include children identified by schools, or who are currently receiving services from Child Safety, including children who are subject to a child protection order and/or are subject to a youth justice order.

We are understanding of the reality that compliance with these directives may cause extreme difficulties for some parents, particularly in the case of students with special needs. If you find yourself in extenuating circumstances, please discuss your situation directly with your Principal.



### **On-site supervision**

Our schools will provide on-site supervision (not by their regular classroom teacher) for those children who are attending the school, while they participate in the same learning programs that have been set by their regular classroom teacher and is being delivered by that teacher at the same time to students who are learning at home. We will not be requiring teachers to perform the very difficult task of delivering to students in a classroom and to students who are learning at home at the same time.

Remote learning requires a large amount of additional preparation time of teachers and their day will be fully occupied with delivering to students and preparing for the following day's and week's activities. Please remember that this is the first time that our teachers have had to operate under these conditions also.

### **Continuity of learning**

As advised previously, our schools will provide services for the continuation of learning at home and the type of delivery will vary from school to school using a variety of learning apps and physical resources. Adjustments will be provided for families with limited connectivity and home devices.

Your school will have already contacted you about how delivery and communication will be managed. Communication between you and your school is especially important in these times so if you do have difficulties, do not hesitate to contact your school for assistance.

A reminder that you are not expected to be your children's teachers and that our schools' role is to support you and your child. Naturally older children may require less supervision and early primary children will require more regular and active supervision, as will children with additional needs. We acknowledge and thank parents for their contribution to the vital role of their children's continued education.

### **Wellbeing**

Regardless of your child's age, they may feel upset or have other strong emotions in response to changes in their routine such as not being at school. Some children react immediately, while others may show signs of difficulty much later. How a child reacts, and the common signs of distress can vary according to the child's age, previous experiences, and how the child typically copes with stress.

Children react, in part, on what they see from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers deal with any situation calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children. Parents can be more reassuring to others around them, especially children, if they are better prepared. Please see the resources regarding wellbeing on our [website](#).

### **Easing the transition**

Ways to make the transition to home-based learning easier for you and your child include:

- Treat the first week as an orientation type of week. Not everything will go to plan, and it might take a while to work out how to find and use the right resources and understand what's best for you and your child. The 'how to' will come first, and then the learning.
- Remember that your child's teacher usually divides their attention between up to 28 students who all work at different paces and need different levels of support. Try to keep children engaged and stimulated without becoming overwhelmed. At home, two to three hours of learning each day as a minimum may suffice in the younger years.



- Routines and consistency can be a source of comfort for parents and children alike, but keep in mind that your routine doesn't have to be the same as a school routine. If you use a timetable at home, make sure it's manageable for everyone and flexible enough that you can adapt it as you learn what works.
- Students should be required to use the school Student Portal as the starting point for their work-from-home each day. This will provide them with quick and secure access to the online environments which they are accustomed to using at school.
- Home-based learning presents an opportunity for students to find out more about themselves as learners and to become more confident in self-directing their learning. Encourage your child to take responsibility for not only learning but also for staying in touch with their teacher, their class and their friends and community.
- If your child is finding a task difficult, make suggestions and answer questions, but try to let them figure things out for themselves as much as possible. Give them opportunities, where appropriate, to take control of their own learning. Contact your child's teacher if needed.
- Remember this is new for teachers, too. You can help them succeed by letting them know if you're unsure about something and using the preferred contact time and method that your child's teacher has advised.

Schools will provide information around supporting your child, maintaining healthy learning routines and setting up a learning space at home. Additional information can be found on the [Cairns Catholic Education website](#) and [Emergency Communications Facebook page](#).

### **Technical Support**

To provide IT Support for Remote Learners at all schools, IT Services has established a website [Cairns IT Support](#) which will allow students and/or families to centrally request IT Support in relation to apps and programs used for learning. The request will then be referred to the appropriate school technician, who will make contact with the student via Google Meet and diagnose and support using available digital tools. As noted on this site, an adult will need to be present when contact is made, this is to comply with our student protection obligations.

### **Boarding schools**

Our residential boarding facilities remain closed. In consultation with principals, students who have returned from boarding schools to designated Indigenous communities may attend the local school to continue their learning where possible and if staffing is available.

The student's learning program will be provided by the school at which the student is enrolled.

The local school will provide (where possible) appropriate staff to provide supervision as determined by the principal, internet access and resources such as pens, paper, and printed materials as required.

Other boarding facility operations will only operate where current health authority advice allows them to do so and with the strictest cleaning and hygiene measures.

### **Assessments**

Assessment and reporting for Term 2 and Semester 1 will be adjusted by teachers to



reflect the nature of learning over this time. The Queensland government has indicated that there will be further advice about this next week. The [QCAA website](#) has information regarding assessment for Year 11 and 12 students.

### **Outside School Hours Care**

Outside school hours care (OSHC) services will continue to operate before and after school care where there is demand, particularly for vulnerable children or children of essential workers. This will include on-site OSHC or other services off site that cater for school age children, such as long day care or family day care. Please check with your local service.

### **Fees**

Please refer to my previous letter on [26 March](#) regarding our fee relief measures for those experiencing financial difficulty and our request that families whose incomes have not been affected by the COVID-19 responses, keep paying their fees so that we can continue to provide quality schooling while supporting those in need.

I would like to address a question that has been raised around why some parents should continue to pay fees while their children are learning from home. Unlike childcare centers, the government has not made non-government schools fee-free. Governments fund approximately 80% of the costs of a Catholic school, compared with 100% of the costs of a state school. Fees in Catholic schools cover the other 20% of costs. Our schools still have the full range of costs and our staff, as essential workers, are all still employed. Providing fee relief to those in financial distress has placed further pressure on that 20% source of income which makes it all the more important that those who can afford to pay their fees continue to do so, to help ensure the continued strength and viability of our schools.

### **Updates and information**

Links and updates are continually being provided on the [Cairns Catholic Education Coronavirus COVID-19](#) website page and through our [Emergency Communications Facebook page](#). There you find videos that were produced at the start of the school break outlining our COVID-19 responses. This advice remains valid following the government's Term 2 announcement

School websites and portals link to Cairns Catholic Education's updates via the green COVID-19 button – please check regularly.

I thank you sincerely for your continued support and commitment to Catholic Education, our teachers and school officers are working hard to ensure that we can continue to provide the best learning opportunities possible for your children. The professionalism of our staff at this time is to be commended, and I know that with your support we can greatly minimise any potential negative impact that this unprecedented period of time could have on the wellbeing and learning progression of your children.

Yours sincerely,



Bill Dixon  
Executive Director

