

Catholic Schools Office *Diocese of Armidale*

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Dear parents and carers,

Supporting our families through COVID-19 with regard to School Fees

COVID-19 has reshaped how our world looks for the foreseeable future. As a result, with the support of the Catholic Schools Office Diocese of Armidale, each school has introduced new support for our families during this time.

Throughout the recent bushfire season and the ongoing drought, some families from our diocese have been more affected than others. This is also likely to be the case in relation to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, **so we need to ensure that the right support and assistance is directed to where it is most needed.** If families are affected by job losses, business closures or other impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, we urge you to speak to your school principal as soon as possible, so that we can quickly determine the level of assistance required and provide that relief immediately. We appreciate how difficult it is for parents/caregivers to come forward with financial concerns, but we assure you that our schools will ensure that each case is managed with respect and absolute confidentiality.

The following initiatives have already been adopted:

1. No reminders for school fee payments will be sent out to parents/caregivers prior to 30 June 2020.
2. Families receiving the Coronavirus supplement from Centrelink will not receive a bill for term 2 2020 school fees. Please inform your school principal as soon as possible if you are receiving this supplement.
3. Families not receiving the Coronavirus supplement from Centrelink will be able to apply individually for assistance with school fees. Please discuss this with your school principal as soon as possible.
4. Drought relief school fee subsidies are still available as in 2018 and 2019. We encourage all families who suffered—and may still be struggling—with financial difficulty due to the ongoing drought to contact their school principal to discuss fee relief.
5. Excursion fees and sports levies already paid will be applied against future school fees.

We want to assure you that, in line with our long-held principle, no child who meets enrolment criteria will be refused a Catholic education or be disadvantaged because of a family's financial circumstances. Therefore, we can also assure you that all currently enrolled students are assured of their continuing enrolment in our Catholic schools.

If you require a Direct Debit, Centrepay or similar authority to be cancelled, please contact your school. Staff will ensure the payment is cancelled as soon as possible.

We will continue to monitor the situation and provide further information about school fees as the future becomes clearer.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Smyth', with a small dot at the end.

Chris Smyth
Director of Schools