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## **Catholic schools are adhering to Australian Government's advice to remain open**

National Catholic Education Commission Executive Director, Jacinta Collins, said Catholic schools will adhere to the Australian Government's advice to remain open and operational.

"While there is significant concern and debate regarding school closures in Australia to minimise the spread of COVID-19 (Coronavirus)," Ms Collins said, "It is our view that the government and public health authorities are in the best position to determine whether schools should remain open and we will adhere to this advice."

"The government and Australia's Chief Medical Officer are in agreement that this is the best course of action currently to protect those in the community who are more likely to experience serious impacts of the virus, including the elderly and those with underlying health conditions, and to ensure that health workers and other critical frontline staff can remain at work."

"I appreciate that, despite this advice some parents have chosen to keep their children at home, or have special circumstances to consider," she said. "However, Catholic schools will remain open and operational until we have been advised otherwise."

"The first priority for all Catholic schools is the health and safety of our students and staff, and as such, the Catholic sector is monitoring and responding quickly to the advice of federal, state and territory governments and medical authorities as the situation develops.

"Should it become necessary for schools to close in some states or territories, or across Australia, our school communities will follow this advice and seek to minimise the impact on student learning as much as possible.

"While this is an uncertain period for our communities, it is important that we remain calm and alert as we monitor this health risk, and for our families and staff to be well informed about the health advice and protocols to reduce this risk," said Ms Collins.

Nationally, Catholic schools educate more than 764,000 students – or one in five Australian students - in 1,746 schools, the vast majority of which are low-fee schools.