



24 March 2020

To: All Families
Catholic Education Tasmania

Dear Families

Dealing With The Unexpected

As the COVID-19 pandemic reaches into our personal lives in unexpected ways, many people in our school communities feel growing anxiety about the world that we seem to be leaving behind, and some may experience deep uncertainty about what might be coming next.

At a personal level I want you to know how much I appreciate the work that schools are doing to provide a safe and caring workplace for our students and for the broader school community during this very difficult time in our lives.

Preventative Health Measures

Catholic Education Leadership has put in place a comprehensive regime of WHS measures across all schools and offices which focuses on mitigating the risk to staff and student health.

These preventative health measures include:

- Curtailing all non-essential activities;
- Minimising non-CET personnel entering schools;
- Restrictions on CET staff movements between schools and offices;
- Restrictions on group gatherings;
- Exclusion from schools of persons likely to be infected with COVID-19;
- Rigorous cleaning and hygiene practices; and
- Strict controls regarding cold and influenza management.

I trust that you will be reassured by the strong commitment shown by CET and, in particular, principals in their ongoing application of the above measures in all CET workplaces and schools.

Staying In Contact With Every School

We are in daily contact to support school principals and leadership teams. Tomorrow we will hold our third state-wide video conference meeting where we connect with every principal in every school and college to discuss our collective educational responses to the pandemic and its effects on the life of school communities.

Meetings Of All Education Sectors With Minister Jeremy Rockliff MP

We are meeting on a regular basis by teleconference with the Education Minister, Hon Jeremy Rockliff MP, and the sector heads, Tony Crehan (Independent Schools Tasmania) and Tim Bullard (Department of Education).

The Minister stresses his desire to keep the lines of communication open and to provide an opportunity for mutual support. All Tasmanian education sectors remain committed to keeping schools open for as long as possible, in line with up to date Public Health advice.

Yesterday I met via teleconference with fellow commissioners of the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC). The NCEC Executive Director, Jacinta Collins, is working closely with Federal authorities and is keeping all dioceses informed about developments.

Minister Rockliff indicated that site closures may occur at some time in the future, but agreed that the best of medical advice confirmed that keeping schools open was the best option for public health.

Each sector endorsed the need to dispel anxiety within school communities and to share resources however and whenever possible. The Minister has agreed to continue meeting with this group on a regular basis for the foreseeable future.

Preparing for Learning at Home

The Formation and Learning Team have been tasked with supporting each school with its provision of "Learning at Home."

The Formation and Learning Team comprises all of the education teams: Catholic Identity and Evangelisation (CIE), Curriculum, Assessment and Pedagogical Practice (CAPP), Student Support, Programs (Aboriginal Education, English as An Additional Language and Dialect, Humanitarian Entrants, Extension (Gifted) Education), Learning Technologies and Innovation, our Data Analyst and Pastoral Care. They are all working in a coordinated way to support the great work already being undertaken our schools.

You can expect to see the framework and resources they have developed towards the end of this week.

A Suggested Approach To Our At-Home Messaging about COVID-19 To Students

We are all aware that repeated references to the COVID-19 virus and the risk of infection can become counter-productive by increasing student anxiety.

Whilst we remain vigilant about the required levels of sanitation and personal and social distancing at home – at the same time – we should try to frame it as something that is required of us in our present circumstances. This sends the message of increased attention to hygiene without requiring constant reference to fear and risk.

I hope that you can join me in finding small ways of reducing unnecessary concern wherever possible.

Our Prayer Intentions

Let us follow the lead of His Grace, Archbishop Julian Porteous, as he calls us to reunite with our families and find new ways of observing the Sunday Sabbath, a much-needed time of rest and tranquillity in our busy week-day lives. Please join us in prayer each day for those people worldwide and among us who are suffering as a result of the pandemic. Let us turn in faith to Jesus Christ our Saviour in time of need.

Yours in Christ



Gerard Gaskin
Executive Director