



*A letter to Parents and Carers in the Diocese of Broken Bay*

Monday 27 April 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Greetings of peace to you and your families.

As our schools prepare for the start of the second term, I write to you today, to update you on the significant work underway within our schools in our Diocese, that is of particular importance.

At the outset, I wish to again assure each of you of my prayers and support in these challenging times, and that I continue to be particularly mindful of you, as parents and carers. It is important we in the Diocese of Broken Bay have a spirit of service and that we provide support to parents during these challenging times. The safety of your children is paramount to everything we are doing. You have entrusted them to the care of our Catholic schools, and I wish to continue to assure you that every consideration is being given to their protection.

Additionally, I am enormously grateful for the dedication and hard work of our teachers and staff who work in our schools, as well as the Catholic Schools Office.

In all aspects, our response to the challenges presented by COVID-19 needs to be informed and consistent with the values and teachings that underpin Catholic education. In service to our students and parents, and despite the uncertainty, I am mindful that it is essential we respond to these needs and concerns, promptly and with clarity.

In our Diocese, we support an early, safe and orderly return to school. This is critical for our students and is understandably a high priority for you, as parents. The key elements that will guide the return of students to school are:

- Ensuring a safe environment for our staff and students;
- Maximising learning outcomes and recovering, to the extent possible, any lost learning, with special priority to Year 12, early years and vulnerable students;
- Providing support for our principals, teachers and all school staff;
- Responding to the needs of parents, especially those under financial stress; and
- Capturing learnings so we can enhance what we do post COVID-19.

**MOST REVEREND ANTHONY RANDAZZO BISHOP OF BROKEN BAY**

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## **Term 2 arrangements for families**

Our Catholic schools are preparing for a phased approach to students returning to school during Term 2. Our aim is to return to normal operations with all student learning at school as soon as possible from Week 3. At all times, the safety of students and staff will be a major consideration, including extra levels of hygiene and cleaning.

From Monday 11 May, all students will have an opportunity each week for some face-to-face learning, increasing over the early weeks of the term. Principals will be mindful of the needs of individual groups of students, including HSC students in our secondary schools, and young learners in our primary schools.

As students return to the school environment, they will benefit from the opportunity to socialise within a safe environment and re-engage with the faith community of their school and parish in a hope filled way.

## **Fee Relief**

A Fee Relief package is also an essential element for those families who need assistance due to COVID-19.

While our schools rely upon the support of our families, I have asked that at this time, we do all we can to support those suffering immediate financial hardship. It is with this in mind, I have approved new initiatives that will be implemented immediately, and are targeted specifically to families in greatest need, as a result of financial stress.

In short, the Fee Relief program provides:

1. A full reduction on fees, building levies and school-based charges for Terms 2 and 3 for any family in receipt of the JobSeeker payment.
2. A partial reduction of at least 50% on fees, building levies and school-based charges for any family where one parent member is in receipt of the JobKeeper payment.
3. Deferment of payment of any fees until January 2021 for any family who, under COVID-19 related financial stress, requests additional time to pay outstanding fees.

The approach will be implemented by Mr Danny Casey, Interim Director of Schools and his staff in the Catholic Schools Office, in close collaboration with our principals, and will require minimal paperwork, recognising the unique circumstances we are experiencing. The need to extend the support beyond Term 3 will continue to be assessed, with an update to be provided to all families prior to the end of the Term 3.

Thank you again for your support of our schools and our staff who are working to serve and support you during these difficult times. Please be assured we stand with you as we work through the challenges.



I continue to hold you, your children and your families daily in my prayer.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Anthony Randazzo

Most Rev Anthony Randazzo DD JCL  
Bishop of Broken Bay