CATHOLIC EDUCATION
WESTERN AUSTRALIA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION

25 March 2022

Dear Parents and Carers

The COVID-19 situation in WA has been challenging in recent weeks, with rising numbers of positive cases in school communities, as well as rapid changes to isolation requirements, rules around close contacts and returning to school. Throughout this time, we have worked alongside WA Health as Western Australia has moved from High Caseload level 1, then level 2, and now to the Very High Caseload environment in a few short weeks.

I acknowledge that the changing circumstances for schools to operate have demanded a great deal from families and staff. At times, the bonds that hold our Catholic school communities together have been tested, and I commend all in our school communities for remaining steadfast in our shared response to COVID-19.

As prepared as our schools have been to respond to cases in their communities, it has taken exceptional and agile leadership to minimise disruption to teaching and learning while ensuring schools are compliant with complex and evolving health requirements.

From the onset of the pandemic, and especially as case numbers have escalated recently, Catholic schools have continued to align with WA Health and the State Government on COVID-19 measures.

CEWA acts as a channel to communicate guidance and updates to our schools. Our goal is to provide clear, concise information as quickly as is practicable, and at the same time ensure our schools are properly resourced to minimise disruption.

It has not always been simple, particularly as measures have changed quickly, sometimes with several iterations in the space of 24 hours. In addition, sometimes a difficult call has had to be made and we are all too aware of the disappointment and difficulties that have resulted. I wish to thank parents for their outstanding support in working with schools, and this note of thanks is wholeheartedly endorsed by the Catholic School Parents WA organisation.

As with every decision CEWA makes, children are at the centre. We take precautions to protect students and staff, and to give families confidence that our schools are determined to remain safe environments. At the same time, we try to limit disruption to our education programs.

Catholic schools have spent over $8 million in COVID-19 related expenses since the pandemic began. Some of these costs have been to create a healthy and safe learning environment, including:

- Air purifiers and CO2 monitors;
- Ventilation audits and remediation works;
- COVID-19 cleaning and hygiene practices in every school
- The State Government has contributed masks and Rapid Antigen Tests

Other measures are related to transitioning our teaching environments, including a rapid scaling up of the digital ecosystem. This ensured our schools and teachers were prepared for remote learning, and that the transition was as seamless as possible.

In addition to this, significant fee relief measures have been put in place to minimise the financial burden facing some families at this time.

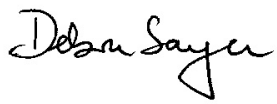
CEWA understands the ongoing mental strain that the pandemic has placed on students and the school community, which is why health and wellbeing initiatives are also a key part of our COVID-19 response.

The CEWA Psychology Team has been available to deliver virtual consults and webinars to build resilience, and every school was given access to the Visible Wellbeing e-program, delivering wellbeing practices and activities.

It has never been more important for our Catholic education community to support one another as we deal with the challenges that the pandemic presents.

CEWA will continue to focus on the partnerships with families that make our school communities strong, and I would encourage all families to remain active and engaged with their school to ensure we can continue to work together.

Yours sincerely



Dr Debra Sayce
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