



19 March 2020

Dear parents and caregivers,

I would like to firstly take this opportunity to thank you all for the manner in which you are handling the current situation with COVID-19. It is important that, as a school community, we maintain a calm and methodical approach during a time when many are panicked.

As you are no doubt aware, this matter is evolving rapidly and I would like to ensure you all that we are keeping up to date with the latest advice.

Current advice

- There are to be no gatherings of 100 people or more in indoor venues
- There are to be no gatherings of 500 people or more in outdoor venues
- **It is important to note that the mass gatherings directive does not extend to schools or universities. The Australian Government maintains its position to avoid mass school closures as this can ultimately have a negative impact on the spread of the virus.**
- DFAT advises all Australians not to travel overseas.

This advice is being updated regularly. At his press conference on Wednesday, Prime Minister Scott Morrison anticipated that social distancing measures will be in place for at least six months.

There continues to be lots of rumour and speculation within our school communities. I can again confirm that there are currently **no confirmed cases** within our Diocese. The cases reported as being confirmed in the Hunter New England area have been in Newcastle and the Hunter Valley. A small number of students and staff have chosen to self-isolate following medical advice

Preparing for a school site closure

We are, and continue to be, guided by advice from the Australian Government in relation to school site closures. **At present, it is not anticipated that there will be any change to the currently published term dates.**

Catholic Schools within the Armidale Diocese continue to deliver quality face-to-face learning experiences for students each day. In the background, we are preparing online or 'hard copy' resources to ensure continuity of learning in the event that a directive is received from the Australian Government to move to

remote learning. Part of this process is to identify students who have difficulties with accessing reliable internet and computers and develop processes to support this.

Operational guidelines

The CSO and principals are in regular contact to discuss matters in relation to COVID-19 and are continuing to implement practices that encourage social distancing. Cleaning schedules have been reviewed in our schools and increased where necessary. There is an increased focus on cleaning items that are frequently touched such as door handles and handrails.

Stay home if you are unwell

This point is critical. If your child is unwell with respiratory illness, they are to remain at home until symptoms resolve and, where appropriate, seek advice from a medical practitioner (and call ahead first).

Medical certificates

Students may be required to self-isolate as they meet the criteria that the Australian Health Department determines are risk criteria. If, after the 14 day, self-isolation period students are not showing any symptoms, they are permitted to return to school. **There is no requirement for a medical clearance.**

Students who do not meet the Australian Health Department risk criteria, and wish to self-isolate due to personal health concerns, are required to discuss this with a medical professional.

Thank you for your support in these unique and challenging times. Please continue to support management practices and look out for each other.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Gary Burdett', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Gary Burdett
Deputy Director