



CATHOLIC EDUCATION
COMMISSION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

24 March 2020

To Principals and Staff in Catholic Schools in Western Australia

Dear Principals and Staff

The more I have observed and learned about the extraordinary efforts of you all to respond to the demands being faced at present due to the coronavirus crisis, the more I have been deeply moved by what are in fact many practical demonstrations of love for students and other school community members, including fellow staff.

Currently, we are facing an extraordinary crisis. But I am proud to say that what you are all doing is a typical example of our Catholic schools at their finest.

The crisis is not of our choosing. However, we can choose how we are going to respond. The responses of you all have won my great admiration.

I know that I speak on behalf of my fellow members of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia (CECWA) when I express deep gratitude for the difficult but important work you are all doing for our school communities, and for our system at this time.

As the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures needed in school life to respond to it keep changing, you are providing much needed stability to students, many of whom I know from parents are frightened. I realise that this must be a stressful time for many of you personally as well.

As Catholic educators, it is important to keep reminding all that God always brings about goodness in every situation. The love and care you are showing are but one example.

There will be many other examples of God's influence over coming months as people begin to reassess their lives, values and priorities in our shared potentially life-changing current experience. As Catholic educators, we need to be people of hope.

As educators, you have an invaluable role too in reinforcing important public health messages. Many of you have opportunities to support young people in developing perspective and media literacy.

You also are providing pastoral care in a Catholic school setting; helping students to work through their concerns, ease their anxieties.

While no doubt you have concerns for your own health, as well as that of your family and loved ones, you also find yourselves at the centre of a public debate about whether or not keeping schools open is the right decision at this time. This cannot be easy, but quite unsettling.

As we continue to assess how schools can best support the response to COVID-19 in Australia, please rest assured that members of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, the Catholic Education Office of Western Australia Executive Team and their support staff will continue to ensure that our schools and staff receive as much assistance as possible, along with clear advice and updates.

As we consider our life now as a community of faith that is having to be physically distant, Pope Francis has invited “everyone to participate spiritually through the means of communication” by praying the Our Father on **Wednesday, 25 March, at noon (7pm our time)**. I encourage you all to do so.

I thank you again for your commitment to your students and your school community, and ask you to join me in continuing to pray for our State and Federal leaders in their decision making at this time, and for those across Australia and abroad who are being affected by COVID-19.

God bless you all

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Holohan".

Most Rev Gerard J Holohan
Bishop of Bunbury