

## MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Thursday, 7 May 2020

### ACT CATHOLIC SCHOOLS PLAN FULL RETURN TO SCHOOL

All ACT systemic Catholic schools are preparing students to return to school, based on the advice of government and health authorities, from Monday, 18 May.

I thank all teachers and staff in Catholic schools who have kept all Catholic schools open in Term 1 and 2 and provided learning programs in new forms to all students and families. I thank all students and families for their patience and cooperation to continue learning remotely.

All Catholic schools will return to school with face to face learning for all students attending as soon as practicable and safe. Advice from health and government authorities now confirms that it is safe to do so and will begin on Monday, 18 May.

Further detailed health advice will be distributed to staff and school communities shortly. Schools will need to maintain social distancing of adults and take additional hygiene measures. Otherwise, schools will largely operate as normal with some adjustments in line with health advice where this is required. The return to school is being carefully planned by Principals accounting for the needs of each school while ensuring students, teachers and staff are safe and student learning continues.

Some Catholic schools will immediately return to school from Monday, 18 May, while others need to plan a staged return over two or more weeks. These variations will reflect student and staff needs. Priority is being given to those students who will benefit most from returning to school. The needs of Kindergarten, Years 1,2,7 and Years 11 and 12 alongside all other grades and year levels will be considered by Principals. Schools are making provisions for vulnerable students and staff with personal medical conditions or family reasons why they need to remain away from school.

Principals are working with their school communities to determine the return to school that will suit their particular school. All Catholic schools aim to achieve a full return as soon as possible. It is likely that all Catholic schools in the ACT will achieve a full return to school by Tuesday, 2 June at the latest, following the Reconciliation Day Public Holiday. Principals will advise school communities of these specific details shortly.

Social distancing will remain in place for all adults, and good hygiene and environment cleaning will continue to be prioritised. All parents, staff and students are asked to stay home, away from the school, if they are unwell.

Teachers, Principals and school staff have done a great job to deliver a remote learning program for students. I thank all staff for these efforts. It remains true that face to face teaching offers the best learning experience for students, academically and pastorally. I also thank parents and carers for their collaboration, patience and understanding over the past months. We hope that the need for a remote learning program for most students will soon be behind us.

If the community health advice changes, schools may need to review their plans for return to school. If this occurs, we will immediately inform parents and adapt our plans to respond to the new information. The patience and understanding of parents and carers in these circumstances is very much appreciated.

Ross Fox

Director of Catholic Education.

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