



11 June 2020

Dear Parents and Caregivers

I send you the warmest of greetings from Edmund Rice Education Australia.

At the beginning of the pandemic, I wrote to thank you for choosing your Edmund Rice school and expressed our commitment to standing with our families during these worrying times and potential financial stress. Reports from our schools have spoken of the wonderful ways in which this commitment has been enacted through sincerity, goodwill and cooperative relationships. Please know that this commitment to you will remain constant.

Now, at the end of the first week in a long time when all of our students across Australia have been in regular classes, I write to thank and congratulate you on the magnificent contribution that you have made to the education of your sons and daughters during the many weeks of school closures.

I know that for most it has not been an easy time. Juggling the needs of your children's education with your own work pressures, coupled with concerns for the wellbeing of your families, has been incredibly stressful and required great courage and resilience. Your efforts during this difficult period, and the incredible efforts of your children, are to be celebrated and should be the source of much pride.

On your behalf, I have thanked and congratulated the leaders and staff of our schools on their amazing commitment and resourcefulness. With little notice and minimal preparation time, they, with your support, have contributed to unprecedented adaptation and innovation in the process of education. I have no doubt that reflection on what has been achieved in recent weeks will result in a transformation of education practice for generations to come. It has been the most extraordinary partnership between home and school that we have probably ever seen. Be very proud of your part in this.

I hope that as things return to something that resembles normal, we can be more grateful for the gift of education. We have done the best that we could, but know that as good as this has been, something has been missing. Screens and technology can never replace the human relationships which are so important for the education process. This is clearly evidenced in the sheer joy experienced by most of our students as they return to classrooms and reunite with their friends and teachers. We now realise more than ever the privilege of schooling, where shared humanity makes all the difference in the formation of the young.

Finally, I ask that you spare a thought and prayers for our Edmund Rice schools in other parts of the world who are nowhere near returning to normal classes. Your school is part of a worldwide network of 300 schools in 24 countries who offer Catholic education in the Edmund Rice tradition. Many of these schools, especially those in the poorest areas of our world, have had little or no technology to assist learning during school closures and are in countries where very strict lockdowns and curfews continue to be in place. Our Australian schools have been leading a global taskforce which has shared expertise and expressed solidarity with our brothers and sisters who are really struggling for direction and hope. You would be very proud of the support that our schools are offering our global community in their time of need.

I conclude where I began: to our families and our staff, thank you, well done and congratulations!

With much admiration and best wishes.

**Wayne Tinsey**

**On behalf of Edmund Rice Education Australia**

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