



2 September 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

2020 Fee Assistance Adjustments

Over the past week or so, we have noticed a shift in the tenor of the feedback that we are receiving from families around their financial situation. Until last week, we had fewer than 3% of families requesting assistance with their College fees and in just the last week that has risen to 5%. Certainly, the sustained period of restrictions has impacted families in many different ways and we appreciate that those who felt they were managing ok in the past, may now be feeling less confident and even overwhelmed by their current financial situation.

Our approach

As a Catholic community, we always try to prioritise our most vulnerable. The College bursaries for families who require assistance has been successful in supporting those families in the greatest need. However, it has become clear that this process now requires an additional level of support to help those families currently experiencing more trying circumstances. While many have been able to manage with a deferment of their fees, the extended restrictions have added an additional level of uncertainty and loss.

It is our privilege to support those who for any number of reasons, require assistance, and there is a wonderful safety net for all our families in knowing that should they experience hardship, the community has the capacity to lift them up. In this way, the provisioning of support for those experiencing hardship is a collective responsibility. Like you, we are keenly aware that for some families, this is the first time that they have found themselves in a position to require assistance. It is also evident that for most, the required assistance is likely temporary - a small degree of assistance until restrictions end and normal workplace situations resume.

With Marist Schools Australia, we have therefore adjusted the threshold for assistance and would like to re-encourage families to reach out for some support with their 2020 school fees.

I have attached to this letter a new application form for a special COVID fee assistance program. The threshold for this assistance will be lower than our usual bursary practices. In this way, we hope that families who are finding their financial responsibilities difficult at the moment will receive a degree of relief. If families continue to experience financial difficulties as a result of COVID into 2021, further consideration could be made through our usual bursary program.

The assessment of the provision of this special assistance will be made by myself, with advice from the Business Manager. As with the usual bursary process, de-identified information will also be provided to our Finance Committee of the Advisory Council for approval. The one-off adjustment will seek to offer some degree of relief to families in hardship. As always, we can only respond when we know there is a need, so if you become aware of someone who could use some additional support, please encourage them to reach out.

Frequently Asked Questions

Has the school made savings from the move to offsite learning?

While there have been some cost savings due to offsite learning, COVID has provided other significant financial challenges that will impact on the budget this year. A few examples include fixed contracts (where services are not currently in use, but contractual obligations remain, such as those related to the bussing program) and significant COVID related costs. Our College Finance Council and Marist Schools Australia continue to monitor with us the COVID implications and our annual budget. While we are not expecting the surplus we had anticipated, we are confident that strong financial management means that the College can be assured of its financial position across 2020 and 2021. Provisioning for the future is of particular importance, especially given the unknowns around COVID.

Will there be a refund for activities that haven't gone ahead?

Our annual fees reflect the full cost of a student's six year journey at Assumption College and activities are therefore not charged on a case by case basis. One of the benefits of this way of establishing our fees is that families do not need to make decisions on their child's education or interests based on the cost of each program - in effect, we all, collectively, support every student to access and achieve at their best. We aim to keep the annual increase in fees as modest as possible, knowing that our families expect sound and prudent management.

How much could I expect to receive in financial assistance?

This one-off fee assistance for those experiencing COVID-related hardship will be assessed on an individual family basis and will range between \$200 and \$1000. This assistance will be provided as a credit adjustment applied to your family school fee account.

Some other matters...

Year 9 Camp

The City Camp is a valuable experience that we don't want to lose from the suite of student experiences. As such, we will move the 2020 Year 9 City Experience into 2021 (although it will likely be a slightly different experience to previous years). As we come to understand the implications of MyMAP and the power of independent learning, our hunch is that this experience will likely move permanently into the Year 10 program.

Year 12 Graduation

While we wait to hear the level of restrictions we can expect over the coming months, we continue to make plans for a final celebration of school life of our Year 12 students. We share their deep sadness that this year has not panned out as we all might have hoped for them. In the past, families have contributed to the graduation events (through the ticketing of the Graduation Dinner). Since the Year 12s did not get to experience their Retreat, there will be no cost to families this year.



Kate Fogarty
Principal

