



21 July 2021

Dear Colleagues

As I write this message to you, I am conscious that New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia are all now in lockdown. Across these three states we have 23 schools and 62% of our national EREA student cohort engaged in remote learning. Other states and territories have also put in place various restrictions that is impacting schooling.

I would like to offer my grateful thanks and appreciation to all staff in our schools as we continue to respond to the challenges, disappointments, frustrations, and pain that this pandemic presents to us. I know that each one of you has the wellbeing and the learning of our students at the forefront of all that you do in these difficult circumstances.

While I have no doubt that many of you have become adept at responding to snap lockdowns and to the pivot from face-to-face to remote learning, I appreciate the toll that this takes on you, and for many of our schools, the cumulative toll of having to do this many times over. When school does resume, there are often restrictions on activities and gatherings that ordinarily contribute to the soul and the heart of a school community, and the cancellation of so many events also have an effect on the wellbeing and morale of the staff as well as the students.

Thank you for the special care you are extending to our students and their families and to each other. Thank you for the tireless work you do in, and with, your school community to make this uncertain time as calm and reassuring as possible. Thank you for support you offer to your colleagues and the generosity and kindnesses which I know are many and varied and that you freely give each day.

Our personal and professional lives have been significantly affected by this pandemic. We have all had to make adjustments to learning and working from home, sometimes in less than ideal circumstances, and we have all had to adapt and compromise as new situations arise. I accept that many of you will have gained new skills, especially in the information technology area, and this is a boon, but ultimately, the prolonged nature of Covid has found its way into almost every aspect of our lives.

Ever the optimist though, we can take hope in the strength of our communities. If there is one place I know I would want to be right now it is right here – in a Catholic organisation, where compassion, care and love of God and neighbour are paramount. We stand in solidarity with one another, and we respond as Blessed Edmund did, selflessly and in favour of those who need help the most.

Please remember also to look after yourself at this time. Avoid being too critical or hard on yourself. And know that if you are experiencing difficulty there are people who are there to support you. If there is anything we at the National Office can do to assist, please pick up the phone or email us directly. Our job is to be of service to the people in our schools. We are here and ready to help in any way we can.

St Paul reminds us that our prayer life can provide us with peace. When we ask God to be with us in anxious times, God understands, provides comfort, and protects:

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“Don’t worry about anything; but in all your prayers ask God for what you need, always asking him with a thankful heart. And God’s peace, which is far beyond human understanding, will keep your hearts and minds safe in union with Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6-7)

I know you will continue to be unstinting with your work as a member of an Edmund Rice community. Please know that as a National Community we are with you.

Kind regards

**Dr Craig Wattam  
Executive Director  
Edmund Rice Education Australia**