

1 December, 2019

Dear Parent/Carer

We write regarding tuition fees and levies for 2020. Each school year, the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle reviews student fees. By far the greater part of funding for our schools comes from state and commonwealth government contributions, nevertheless there is a gap. As such, we note with gratitude the commitment and continuing financial contribution of parents and parish communities that ensure our schools operate effectively.

The fees and levies enable us to create the strongest outcomes for your children and the other 20,000 young people across the 59 schools in the Diocese. We are mindful of maintaining our low fee-paying status.

This letter is to inform you of the fee arrangements for 2020. The Catholic Schools Office (CSO), Diocesan Finance Council (DFC) and the Trustees of the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle (the Trustees) have reviewed the following rates and discounts, and upon their advice Bishop Wright has approved them.

The school fees constitute three components:

1. Diocesan Tuition Fees
2. Individual School Resource and Service Fees
3. Diocesan Family School Building Levy (DFSBL).

1. Diocesan Tuition Fees 2020

A one-off contribution from the Catholic Schools Office to each school in the diocese enabled the Diocesan Tuition Fees for 2019 to remain at 2018 levels. The increase from 2018 to 2020 is approaching 3%, which is in line with the Australian Bureau of Statistics education index.

The increase, relative to 2018 (noting there was no increase in 2019) equates to:

Kinder to Year 6	\$1,275 — (\$0.81 per calendar week per student)	(\$42 increase from 2018)
Years 7 to 10	\$1,740 — (\$0.81 per calendar week per student)	(\$42 increase from 2018)
Years 11 to 12	\$2,640 — (\$1.56 per calendar week per student)	(\$81 increase from 2018)

In 2020, the family discount on Diocesan Tuition Fees, full rate, will be:

1 child family	0% — full rate to be applied
2 child family	10% — each child
3 child family	20% — each child
4 child family	40% — each child
5+ child family	50% — each child

2. Individual School Resource and Service Fees

Individual schools set these fees to cover a range of costs including the supply of resources such as texts, exercise books, subject levies, technology, and excursion costs. The cost and nature of the fees can vary between schools and they will be set out in the Parent Handbook provided by the school, and itemised in the school fee account.

3. Diocesan Family School Building Levy (DFSBL)

The DFSBL is charged to the oldest child for each family. The DFSBL is pooled to contribute towards past, present and future costs for building projects across all existing schools, and for the development of new Catholic schools within the Diocese.

This DFSBL contribution from families is spent on major refurbishment and capital works in existing schools, including classroom replacement, toilet facilities, specialist rooms, and playground areas. In new schools the DFSBL provides all capital works including administration block, general purpose learning areas, chapel, specialist rooms, toilet facilities, and non-teaching spaces including playground and oval spaces.

The Catholic Schools Office is committed to a robust building and development program across the school system that will truly enhance the physical facilities for students.

The DFSBL in 2020 will be \$1,250 per family. This equates to an additional \$5 per calendar week per family, when compared with the 2019 levy. The levy enables our Diocese to fund one of the strongest capital works program across Catholic schools in NSW and is delivering improved facilities for young people across all our 59 schools.

The contribution is reviewed, recommended and approved in the same fashion as mentioned earlier.

Upper Hunter Drought Support

The Upper Hunter is in the third year of devastating drought. As such, the Diocese wished to ensure there was no increase in the Building Levy for 2020 for all families in the Upper Hunter. We believe this is wholly appropriate support to families across this community and is provided in recognition that the Upper Hunter as a region is drought affected.

It may well be that for these families and others experiencing drought there is the capacity to provide additional relief. This will operate at the individual school level as detailed below.

5. Family Affordability and Support

To assist families with limited financial resources, Catholic schools in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle offer a lower tuition fee to means-tested low-income families such as Health Care and Pension Card holders. This rate is 50% of the Diocesan Tuition Fee full rate for each child. This discount applies only to the Diocesan Tuition Fee, not to the DFSBL or other resource and service fees schools charge individually.

Please note, however, it is our policy that financial hardship should not prevent a child from attending a Catholic school and no child will be denied a Catholic education because of a family's genuine inability to pay the required fees. This does not apply only to the eligible Health Care/Pension Card holders mentioned above. Any family experiencing financial difficulties is entitled to fee assistance and will be appropriately, sensitively and confidentially supported to manage what is affordable at a family level. The principal of the school can be contacted to discuss such situations.

Together with parents, clergy and school staff, we are committed to offering the children and young people in this Diocese schools in which their faith can be nurtured in outstanding learning environments. We seek to assist young people to realise their full human potential, spiritually, intellectually, physically and socially. We value the opportunity to work in partnership with you and to that end, we thank you for your continuing support of Catholic education.

6. Diocesan Pastoral Contribution

The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle consists of parishes, schools, CatholicCare Social Services Hunter-Manning, St Nicholas Early Education and the Curia offices. The diocesan offices exist to support the work of parishes and other pastoral ministries that are the responsibility of the Bishop and the diocesan community. There are about 160,000 Catholics residing in our diocese.

The voluntary diocesan pastoral contribution for 2020 will remain at \$300 per family (\$100 per term for three terms). These funds will support the ongoing pastoral works of the Diocese, which include, among many initiatives:

- the diocesan pastoral ministries office and the activities of its many advisory councils – the Diocesan Pastoral Council, the Adult Faith Formation Council, the Liturgy Council, the Ecumenical and Interfaith Council, the Social Justice Council and the Diocesan Council of Ministry with Young People
- the provision of chaplains ministering in the following areas – University of Newcastle, Newcastle Port, prisons, hospitals and CatholicCare Social Services Hunter-Manning
- Family Community Faith co-ordinators who reach out and connect families to their local parish and school
- pastoral co-ordinators who work in those parishes without a resident parish priest
- Dara van, Aboriginal Catholic Mission, Refugee Services, the Apostleship to Seafarers
- worship and prayer, sacramental programs, marriage and relationship education, family ministry co-ordinators, Caritas Australia and Catholic Mission.

In establishing the fees and levies for 2020, we want to ensure we develop the best possible learning environment for your children. At the same time, it is vital that you are fully aware that where affordability is a real issue, you are supported in your need.

With every thanks,

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W Wright', with a small cross symbol to the left.

Most Reverend William Wright
BISHOP OF MAITLAND-NEWCASTLE

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gerard Mowbray'.

Gerard Mowbray
DIRECTOR OF SCHOOLS (ACTING)