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# Access for All

## *A Community Commitment to Equity in Education*

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School



# Access for All

## Catholic Education Belongs to Every Child

For nearly 140 years, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School has stood as a pillar of faith, learning, and cultural connection in the Torres Strait. From our beginnings as a mission school and orphanage, we have remained committed to serving the needs of this diverse and vibrant community, especially our First Nations families.

Now, in the spirit of inclusion and welcome, we are proud to announce a significant step forward:

**Tuition (School) fees will be removed for all families.**

### Why “Access for All”?

This initiative reflects our deep belief that every child should be able to access a Catholic education in a setting that respects their culture, supports their growth, and nurtures their spirit.

Here’s why this matters:



#### Equity & Dignity

We remove any financial barrier that could stand in the way of a family choosing Catholic education.



#### Welcome & Belonging

Every family can engage confidently and fully in our community, knowing they are valued and supported.



#### Cultural Strength

Greater First Nations enrolment deepens our identity as a school grounded in Zenadth Kes culture and community.



#### Living the Mission

We remain steadfast in our commitment to honour the Church’s call to serve, uplift, and walk with families from all walks of life.

### A Smart, Sustainable Choice.

You may wonder: *How can the school afford this?*

The truth is, most of our funding already comes from the State and Federal Governments. While fees make up only a small part of our income, they could sometimes create uncertainty for families.

By removing this barrier:

- We prioritise people over process, and community over cost.
- We welcome more students who might otherwise hesitate to join our community.
- More enrolments lead to increased government support.

Of course, the school will continue to welcome any financial contributions that families may like to make.



### A Message from the Principal

At Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, we believe that education is not a privilege for the few but a sacred right for all. Our decision to remove school tuition fees is more than a policy change, it’s a reflection of our Catholic identity and our commitment to shared dignity.

In a world that often asks, “*What can you pay?*”, we ask instead, “*How can we walk with you?*”

This initiative is shaped by faith in the power of education and hope for a future where every child is known, valued, and celebrated. By opening our doors wider, we affirm our mission and invest in the collective strength of this remarkable community. Thank you for walking this journey with us. Your support builds not just classrooms, it builds communion.

**David Graham**  
Principal

### A Message from Our Parish Priest

At the heart of our parish and school is the conviction that every child is a precious gift from God, deserving of love, dignity, and opportunity. Guided by the spirit of the Sacred Heart, we remain committed to nurturing faith, learning, and community for all families.

This initiative reflects the Gospel call to welcome, to include, and to serve, especially those who may feel burdened or left out. By removing school fees, we take a step forward together in living the mission of Jesus, who reminds us to “let the little children come to me.”

May Our Lady of the Sacred Heart inspire us to continue walking with every family in compassion, hope, and joy.

**Fr Michael Szymanski**  
Parish Priest

### A Message from our Bishop Joe Caddy

The Catholic Church first came to these islands in the 1880s and from the very beginning, we have been committed to working with families in the education of the children of the Torres Strait. A number of religious orders have contributed to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart church and school over that period. We remain committed to providing high quality Catholic Education in that same tradition of a “Spirituality of the Heart” which invites us to open our hearts to one another and to God in a personal and profound way. Central to that commitment is our belief that Catholic education should be available to all, regardless of economic circumstances or other considerations. I’m excited that this Access for All initiative will be a very practical way to enact our mission of service and ongoing connection to the people of the islands.

**Bishop Joe Caddy AM**

### A Message from the Executive Director

On behalf of Catholic Education Diocese of Cairns, I wholeheartedly commend Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Waiben and Kirriri for their outstanding ‘Access For All’ initiative.

As the oldest school in our Diocese, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart has consistently exemplified innovation, inclusion, and community engagement. The ‘Access For All’ initiative proudly continues this tradition, breaking down barriers and creating opportunities for families seeking a Catholic education.

I extend my sincere gratitude to Principal Mr David Graham, the dedicated teachers, and staff for their unwavering commitment to partnering with families in the education of young people in their community.

**Durm O’Riordan**  
Executive Director