



## Coronavirus Update – 27 March 2020

Dear Oac families,

I am writing to provide you with further detail regarding what we are doing to manage this incredibly difficult, unfolding COVID-19 situation for our families and team members.

As you will be aware, further government announcements were made this week to strengthen social distancing measures. In addition, the federal and state governments reiterated their stance on continuing to keep early childhood education services open.

We are pleased to confirm that at this stage, all Oac campuses remain open and operating for the families and teams who rely on us.

With government advice and mandates changing so frequently, we unfortunately are unsure what the immediate future looks like.

I recognise the hardship this evolving crisis creates for everyone, and whilst I am confident we will get through this, it is evident that we still have a way to go.

### **What does this mean for the Early Learning Sector?**

Overnight, the Early Learning and Care Council of Australia (ELACCA), of which Oac is a member, released a statement urging the Australian government for further funding and support to ensure services can remain open and our workforce can remain supported.

ELACCA CEO, Elizabeth Death said that if centers are to close, many parents will be forced to put their children into care with older relatives and people who are deemed vulnerable to COVID-19, which completely counteracts the consistent message by Government to keep attending early learning as a safe place for children and families.

We will continue to engage the Government on the urgent need for support.

### **What does this mean for Oac?**

While our campus teams continue to do an incredible job providing care and safety for attending children, my leadership team are focusing on how we ensure Oac can support families both now, and into the future.

Like others in the sector, we have seen a significant drop in attendance with many families having to reduce or end enrolments. Unfortunately, this has a direct impact on our workforce.

We have already offered any team members who are older or have health vulnerabilities to access any available leave or change their working arrangements.

Also, with great regret that I confirm we have significantly reduced shifts available to our casual team members.

There will unfortunately be further, unavoidable impacts to our broader Oac team in the coming days and weeks.



## **What are families' options for enrolment and fees?**

As we continue to operate whilst monitoring government advice and further sector changes, we are wanting to support our families with a range of enrolment options related to the current circumstances.

We have worked through two options for families who are looking to reduce or suspend their enrolled days during this period, but still ensure their place is secured for the future:

1. Drop the enrolment to one day. This will provide the flexibility to access casual days and change days if required.
2. Contact us to enter into a period of non-attendance, utilising allowable absence days as extended by the government. You will not be out of pocket under this option, however you will not be able to access care at your campus until you re-start your enrolment, or move to option 1, above.

Your Campus Director or our Family Support Team can help you work through the above approaches.

In addition, please note that due to the increase in family queries, there will be a delay in families receiving their weekly statement for this week only. These will be sent over the weekend.

## **Thank you**

Importantly, I want to say a big thank you to each of you. I acknowledge that this is an unsettling time for everyone, but the acts of kindness, care and compassion I have seen have been absolutely heartwarming.

To the educators who have continued to provide the highest quality of care, the families who have sent messages of gratitude and support, and the children who continue to bring smiles to our faces each day, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

There are still challenges ahead, but we will get through this.

## **Questions and support**

As always, our Campus Directors and Family Support Team are here to help you.

Given the significant increase in call and email volumes it may take longer than usual for our team to get back to you, but please rest assured we have increased our resourcing and are working on resolving every request as soon as possible. Your patience and support is greatly appreciated.

Our Family Support Team can be contacted on 138 622 (option 1) or [familysupport@oac.edu.au](mailto:familysupport@oac.edu.au).

Kind Regards,

Anna Learmonth  
CEO – Only About Children