



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Introduction

Southern Cross Catholic College promotes excellence in learning and believes every day counts. Students who attend school regularly achieve better and have a better chance in life. Students develop better communication, teamwork and resilience skills when they are attending regularly.

Rationale

Southern Cross Catholic College has established the following policy that provides clear guidelines and instructions for student attendance for teachers, students, parents and community members. It was written in line with the school's values and expectations.

Attendance at school is a legal requirement. Under the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 students are required to attend school until the end of Year 10 or 16 years of age and then continue further education or training until the end of Year 12 or 17 years of age or until a Certificate III course is completed. This Policy is guided by Townsville Catholic Education Handbook section 1100.60. Students may apply in writing for exemptions to compulsory schooling to enter a full time apprenticeship/ traineeship or the workforce.

Principles & Values

Southern Cross Catholic College strives to provide an education that is well planned and follows programmes based on the Australian Curriculum. It is recognised that regular attendance gives students the greatest opportunity to reach their academic potential. Hence, there needs to be clear guidelines for student attendance and absences at this college.

We are called to look to the values taught to us in scripture and the Christian tradition to guide us and in living out these Gospel values, we strive to develop the following:

- An inclusive approach including a non-judgemental and welcoming attitude towards all people
- An ability to understand the situation of others
- A cooperative attitude in working with others
- Open, positive and honest communication
- Trusting relationships
- Responsible actions

Policy Statement

In order to promote a shared understanding of the importance of attendance, Southern Cross Catholic College:

- is committed to promoting the key messages of Every Day Counts
- believes all children should be enrolled at the College and attend school all day, every school day
- monitors, communicates and implements strategies to improve regular school attendance
- believes truancing can place a student in unsafe situations and impact on their future employability and life choices
- believes attendance at the College is the responsibility of everyone in the community.

The College's attendance requirements are that students:

- Attend full time
- Be punctual for roll marking and classes
- Attend all classes and work productively in these
- Complete all assessment, on time and in full

The College asks of parents/guardians/caregivers that they:

- Support in words and actions the philosophy of Catholic Education
- Are committed to the key messages of Every Day Counts
- Work in partnership with the school for the common goal of achieving what is best for all
- Adhere to the College's policy on attendance
- Communicate to the appropriate school staff members as soon as they realise that their child will be absent from school for any period of time
- Provide a medical certificate of absence if possible

Southern Cross Catholic College considers the following absences to be appropriate:

- Genuine Illness:
 - Note from Parent/Guardian. A Doctor's certificate is required for three or more days absent. That is any three consecutive school days.
- Authorised absences including:
 - Students attending any function pertaining to the College e.g. excursions, camps, sporting representation.
- Personal or family situations:
 - Each application will be considered on its individual merits by the Principal.

Absences for the following reasons which will not be approved by the College include:

- Finishing assignments or completing school work at home
- Frivolous holidays and leaving on holidays prior to the end of term
- Leaving the College for outside work commitments which are not school based work placements, traineeships or apprenticeships
- Leave not condoned by a parent/guardian

Implementation / Procedure

Students (or their parents) are responsible for:

- providing the College with a note from their guardian or medical certificate via their class/form teacher or College office if they are absent or late
- ensuring that they obtain the College's approval for a scheduled leave of absence as soon as possible, either in advance or within a week of returning to school.

System:

- half and full day absences and late arrivals are added together to determine the number of days of unexplained absence in each term
- from the beginning of each year student absences will be monitored and when they reach a total of 3 unexplained days per term, or a pattern of absences is observed, students will receive follow-up via telephone, email or letter advising them that the College wishes to discuss this issue with the student and parent/guardian

- students who are finished year 10 or over 16 years of age may have their enrolment cancelled if their adherence to the attendance requirements listed above is unsatisfactory
- a sequence of responses and consequences are followed through: (see flow diagram on following page)

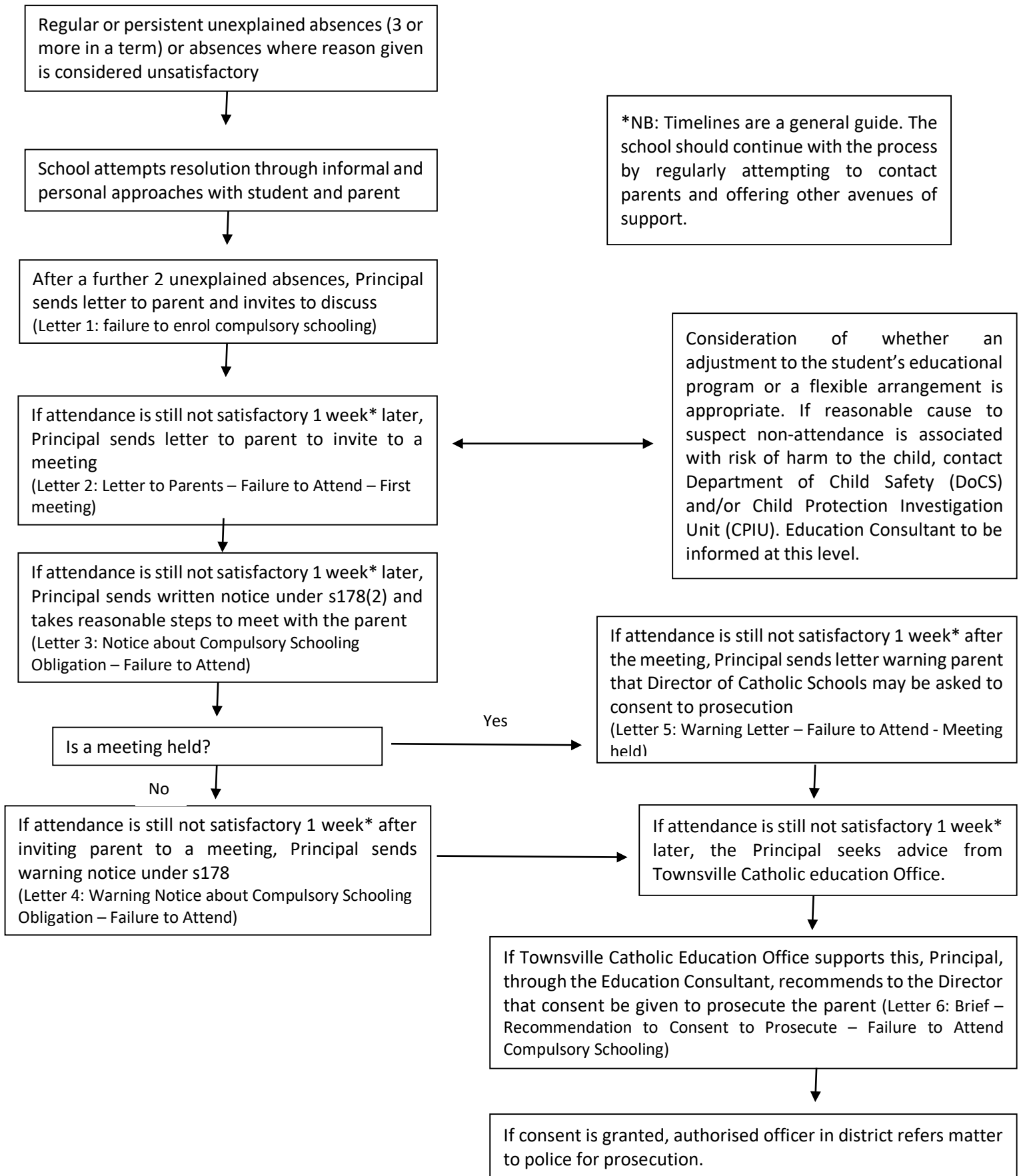
Process for Dealing with Absenteeism

The following flowchart and Form Letters have been copied and/or adapted from Education Queensland's website.

Scroll down this page until you find the dot points associated with Flowchart B

On the same page you can also find form letters that apply to cases for older students for whom alternatives for attendance at a school are available but the students are not involved in either appropriate activity. These form letters refer to the compulsory participation (TCP) rather than compulsory school (TCS).

Flowchart B: Process for Persistent Truancy or Absenteeism for Children of Compulsory School Age



{INSERT DATE}

{INSERT NAME OF PARENT/CARER}

{INSERT ADDRESS}

Dear {Insert name of parent/carer}

COMPULSORY SCHOOLING – ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

I am writing to inform you of my concern regarding {insert child's name}'s continued absences from school. In particular, {insert child's name} has failed to attend school on the following occasions in the past {week / month / term}:

{insert dates and times (if relevant) which the child has been absent}

Due to these absences, {insert child's name} has missed a substantial amount of school work. Consistent attendance at school is a significant factor in achieving better academic and social outcomes. New concepts and skills are taught and reinforced each day by the teachers. If {insert child's name} misses the introduction or the reinforcement of these concepts and skills {he/she} is likely to have gaps in {his/her} learning.

If there are circumstances that make it difficult for {insert child's name} to attend every day, please contact me so we can work together to ensure {insert child's name} attends when required or an alternative option can be put in place for your child, if appropriate.

You may be aware that in Queensland, the law requires parents to ensure their compulsory school aged child is enrolled at school, and attends school for the education program on every school day. Compulsory school age starts when a child is at least 6 years of age, and finishes when the child turns 16 years of age or completes year 10 whichever is sooner. I have attached a copy of the relevant provision of the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006* (s176).

As your child was born on {insert birth date} {and has not finished Year 10}, {he/she} is of compulsory school age.

Where your child of compulsory school age does not attend school, and you do not have a reasonable excuse for their non-attendance, you could be prosecuted for an offence and be liable to a fine of up to \$450 for the first offence, and up to \$900 for further offences.

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We will continue to monitor {insert child's name}'s attendance, and hope that by bringing this matter to your attention that together we can resolve this matter.

Please complete and return the tear-off section below to acknowledge your receipt of this letter.

Yours sincerely

Greg Cameron
College Principal

On _____ I received notification of {insert child's name}'s absences from school.

I would like to discuss this matter with school staff.

I can be contacted on telephone _____ to make an appointment.

Parent/carer signature

Date

Chapter 9

Compulsory schooling

Part 1

Compulsory schooling requirement

Division 1

Parent's obligations

176 Obligation of each parent

- (1) Each parent of a child who is of compulsory school age must –
- (a) ensure the child is enrolled at a State School or non-State school; and
 - (b) ensure the child attends the State School or non-State school, on every school day, for the education program in which the child is enrolled;
- unless the parent has a reasonable excuse.
- Maximum penalty –
- (a) for a first offence – 6 penalty units; or
 - (b) for a second or subsequent offence, whether or not relating to the same child of the parent – 12 penalty units.
- (2) Without limiting subsection (1), it is a reasonable excuse for a parent (the **relevant parent**) that-
- (a) the child lives with another parent and the relevant parent believes, on reasonable grounds, that the other parent is complying with subsection (1); or
 - (b) in all the circumstances, the relevant parent is not reasonable able to control the child's behaviour to the extent necessary to comply with subsection (1).
- (3) Subsection (1) applies subject to Parts 2 to 4.

Letter 2 – Letter to Parents – Failure to Attend – First Meeting

{INSERT DATE}

{INSERT NAME OF PARENT/CARER}

{INSERT ADDRESS}

Dear {Insert name of parent/carer}

This letter is a follow-up to my letter of {Insert date of first letter}. In that letter I requested that you arrange an interview to discuss your child {Insert child's name}, many absences from school. As you know I have not been contacted by you to discuss this matter.

If I have not met with you within seven days to discuss your child's attendance I will need to write to the Officer in Charge of our local Juvenile Aid Bureau to report {Insert child's name}'s significant absences from school. I need to report this matter as I have a duty of care to your child which includes ensuring {Insert child's name} is attending school on a regular basis as set out in Section 178 of the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006*.

As requested please do not hesitate to contact me regarding this matter.

Yours sincerely

Greg Cameron
College Principal

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Chapter 9

Compulsory schooling

Part 1

Compulsory schooling requirement

Division 1

Parent's obligations

178 Notice to, and meeting with, parent

- (1) This section applies if an authorised officer reasonably suspects –
 - (a) a child who is of compulsory school age –
 - (i) is not enrolled at a State school or non-State school; or
 - (ii) is not attending the State school or non-State school at which the child is enrolled, on every school day, for the educational program in which the child is enrolled; and
 - (b) parts 2 to 4 do not apply to the child.
- (2) The officer may give a parent of the child a notice in the approved form about the parent's obligation under section 176(1).
- (3) The officer may also meet with the parent to discuss the obligation.
- (4) If, despite the officer taking reasonable steps to meet with the parent under subsection (3), no meeting is held, the officer may give the parent a warning notice in the approved form.
- (5) For the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000, section 16, an authorised officer acting under this section is a public official performing a function authorised by this Act.
- (6) In this section –
authorised officer means the chief executive or an officer of the department authorised by the chief executive for this section.

Letter 3 – Notice about Compulsory Schooling Obligation – Failure to Attend

{INSERT DATE}

{INSERT NAME OF PARENT/CARER}

{INSERT ADDRESS}

Dear {Insert name of parent/carer}

**NOTICE ABOUT COMPULSORY SCHOOLING OBLIGATION – FAILURE TO ATTEND
Section 178(2) of the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006***

I refer to my letters dated {Insert date of first letter} and {Insert date of first letter} {and your subsequent discussions with [insert contact officer]}.

As you are now aware, s.176 of the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006* (the Act) provides that each parent of a child of compulsory school age has the dual obligation to:

1. ensure their child is enrolled at a school; and
2. ensure their child attends the school on every school day, for the educational program in which the child is enrolled.

“Compulsory school age” is defined by section 9 of the Act to start when a child is at least 6 years of age and finish when the child turns 16 years of age or completes Year 10, whichever is sooner. As your child was born on {insert date of birth} {and has not finished Year 10}, {he/she} is of compulsory school age.

Failure to comply with the obligations outlined in s.176, without a reasonable excuse, is an offence. If you are prosecuted for an offence, you are liable to a fine of up to \$450 for the first offence, and up to \$900 for further offences. I have attached a copy of sections 176 and 178 for your information.

Your child {insert child’s name} is still not attending school regularly as required by the law in Queensland. The school has, on a number of occasions, attempted to support you in ensuring {insert child’s name} attends school.

I am an officer authorised to take formal steps under s.178 of the Act which may lead to prosecution of parents in breach of their obligation. In my role as an authorised officer, I am issuing you with this written notice under section 178(2) of the Act.

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As an authorised officer, I am able to make a recommendation to the Director of Catholic Education that you be prosecuted should non-compliance continue. However, I want to support you to meet your obligations, as it is in {insert child's name}'s best interest to regularly attend school. To this end, I have scheduled another meeting at {insert place} on {insert date} at {insert time} which I would like you to attend. I have arranged that {insert participants} will attend the meeting with us. You are welcome to bring with you support persons, if you desire. If this time or place is unsuitable to you, please advise of a reasonable alternative time or place which will suit you.

The purpose of the meeting is to discuss with you the compulsory schooling obligation and the potential for you to be prosecuted for breaching it. In addition, I wish to offer support to help you to comply with your obligation. We can discuss the options open to you for your child, including whether any alterations to your child's educational program or flexible arrangement could be put in place for your child at this point in time.

I recommend that you contact {insert contact officer and phone number} should you wish to discuss the meeting, or seek further assistance with ensuring your child's attendance at school.

Yours sincerely

Greg Cameron
College Principal

Chapter 9 Compulsory schooling

Part 1 Compulsory schooling requirement

Division 1 Parent's obligations

176 Obligation of each parent

- (1) Each parent of a child who is of compulsory school age must –
- (a) ensure the child is enrolled at a State School or non-State school; and
 - (b) ensure the child attends the State School or non-State school, on every school day, for the education program in which the child is enrolled;
- unless the parent has a reasonable excuse.
- Maximum penalty –
- (a) for a first offence – 6 penalty units; or
 - (b) for a second or subsequent offence, whether or not relating to the same child of the parent – 12 penalty units.
- (2) Without limiting subsection (1), it is a reasonable excuse for a parent (the **relevant parent**) that-
- (a) the child lives with another parent and the relevant parent believes, on reasonable grounds, that the other parent is complying with subsection (1); or
 - (b) in all the circumstances, the relevant parent is not reasonable able to control the child's behaviour to the extent necessary to comply with subsection (1).
- (3) Subsection (1) applies subject to Parts 2 to 4.

Chapter 9 Compulsory schooling

Part 1 Compulsory schooling requirement

Division 1 Parent's obligations

178 Notice to, and meeting with, parent

- (4) This section applies if an authorised officer reasonably suspects –
- (c) a child who is of compulsory school age –
 - (i) is not enrolled at a State school or non-State school; or
 - (ii) is not attending the State school or non-State school at which the child is enrolled, on every school day, for the educational program in which the child is enrolled; and
 - (d) parts 2 to 4 do not apply to the child.
- (5) The officer may give a parent of the child a notice in the approved form about the parent's obligation under section 176(1).
- (6) The officer may also meet with the parent to discuss the obligation.
- (7) If, despite the officer taking reasonable steps to meet with the parent under subsection (3), no meeting is held, the officer may give the parent a warning notice in the approved form.
- (8) For the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000, section 16, an authorised officer acting under this section is a public official performing a function authorised by this Act.
- (9) In this section –
authorised officer means the chief executive or an officer of the department authorised by the chief executive for this section.

Letter 4 – Warning Notice about Compulsory Schooling Obligation – Failure to Attend

{INSERT DATE}

{INSERT NAME OF PARENT/CARER}

{INSERT ADDRESS}

Dear {Insert name of parent/carer}

WARNING NOTICE ABOUT COMPULSORY SCHOOLING OBLIGATION – FAILURE TO ATTEND

Section 178(4) of the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006*

I refer to my letters dated {Insert date of first letter}, {Insert date of second letter} and {Insert date of third letter} {and your subsequent discussions with [insert contact officer]}.

Despite making efforts to meet with you to discuss your legal obligation to ensure that your child attends school, you have not attended a meeting. In particular, the following attempts to set up a meeting were made:

{Insert chronological information about attempts to set up a meeting, including responses from the parent and alternatives provided}

Unfortunately, {insert child's name} is still not attending school regularly. Please see the attached record of {insert child's name}'s unexplained absences.

This letter serves as a warning notice to you pursuant to section 178 of the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006* (the Act) that I intend to recommend to the Director of Catholic Education, that a prosecution be commenced against you. Prosecution may result in a fine of up to \$450 for the first offence, and up to \$900 for further offences.

For your information I have attached from my records a summary of my attempts to support and help you to meet your obligation, which I will be providing to the Direction of Catholic Education.

I recommend that you contact {insert contact officer and phone number} if you wish to meet with me to discuss your obligation and how I might support you to meet your obligation, or if you wish to seek assistance with ensuring your child attends school.

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If I have not heard from you within 7 days, I will seek the Director of Catholic Education's consent to prosecute you. If approved, your case will be handed to the police who will take steps to prosecute.

Yours sincerely

Greg Cameron
College Principal

Chapter 9 Compulsory schooling

Part 1 Compulsory schooling requirement

Division 1 Parent's obligations

178 Notice to, and meeting with, parent

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- (6) In this section –
authorised officer means the chief executive or an officer of the department authorised by the chief executive for this section.

{INSERT DATE}

{INSERT NAME OF PARENT/CARER}

{INSERT ADDRESS}

Dear {Insert name of parent/carer}

WARNING NOTICE ABOUT COMPULSORY SCHOOLING OBLIGATION – FAILURE TO ATTEND

Section 178(4) of the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006*

I refer to my letters dated {Insert date of third letter} and {Insert date of fourth letter} and to our meeting on {insert date} at {insert place}.

Despite all reasonable efforts to help and support you to meet your legal obligation to ensure your child attends school, {insert child's name} is still not attending school and you continue to contravene this legal requirement. Please see the attached record of unauthorised absences.

This letter serves as a warning notice to you pursuant to section 176 of the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006* that I intend to recommend to the Director of Catholic Education, that a prosecution be commenced against you. For your information, I have attached a summary of my attempts to support and help you to meet your obligation., which I will provide to the Director of Catholic Education as part of my recommendation. Prosecution may result in a fine of up to \$450 for the first offence, and up to \$900 for further offences.

I recommend that you contact {insert contact officer and phone number} if you wish to meet with me to discuss your obligation and how I might support you to meet your obligation, or if you wish to seek assistance with ensuring your child attends school.

If I have not heard from you within 7 days, I will seek the Director of Catholic Education's consent to prosecute you. If approved, your case will be handed to the police who will take steps to prosecute.

Yours sincerely

Greg Cameron
College Principal

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Chapter 9

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Part 1

Compulsory schooling requirement

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- (3) Subsection (1) applies subject to Parts 2 to 4.

Chapter 9 Compulsory schooling

Part 1 Compulsory schooling requirement

Division 1 Parent's obligations

178 Notice to, and meeting with, parent

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 - (d) parts 2 to 4 do not apply to the child.
- (5) The officer may give a parent of the child a notice in the approved form about the parent's obligation under section 176(1).
- (6) The officer may also meet with the parent to discuss the obligation.
- (7) If, despite the officer taking reasonable steps to meet with the parent under subsection (3), no meeting is held, the officer may give the parent a warning notice in the approved form.
- (8) For the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000, section 16, an authorised officer acting under this section is a public official performing a function authorised by this Act.
- (9) In this section –
authorised officer means the chief executive or an officer of the department authorised by the chief executive for this section.

Noted / Approved / Not Approved

Director

Date / /

Date Action Required By:

**Townsville Catholic Education
GENERAL BRIEFING NOTE**

TO: THE DIRECTOR OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION

**SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATION THAT THE CONSENT TO PROSECUTION UNDER
SECTION 179 BE GRANTED**

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Direction of Catholic Education, pursuant to section 183 of the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006*, consent to prosecuting {insert parent/carer's name} for failure to ensure that {insert child's name} attend school regularly, in contravention of section 176 of the Act.

COMMENTS:

1. {insert child's name} (DOB {insert date of birth}) is enrolled at Southern Cross Catholic College. However, despite attempts by the school over the past {insert period} to ensure {insert child's name}'s regular attendance, {he/she} is regularly absent from school without satisfactory reason.
2. Attachment 1 provides a summary of {insert child's name}'s absences without a satisfactory reason over the past {insert period}.
3. Attachment 2 provides a summary of the school's interaction with {insert parent/carer's name} to encourage compliance.
4. Attachment 3 provides a summary of the district office's interaction with {insert parent/carer's name} to encourage compliance.

KEY ISSUES

5. Section 176 of the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006* (the Act) provides that each parent of a child of compulsory school age must ensure the child is enrolled with a school and that the child attends the school on every school day for the education program for which the child is enrolled. {insert child's name} is enrolled at Southern Cross Catholic College, by the parent has failed to ensure that the child attends regularly.

6. As far as is ascertainable, there is no evidence that there is a reasonable excuse as per s176 of the Act for the parent not ensuring the child attends as required.
7. Despite extensive attempts by the school, the student's attendance is still not satisfactory. It is proposed that, as a last resort, the Director of Catholic Education now consent to prosecution of the parent based on the parent's breach of the compulsory schooling obligation.
8. Under section 179 of the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006*, proceedings for an offence against section 176(1) may be brought against a parent –
 - (a) Only by the chief executive or with the chief executive's consent; and
 - (b) Only if the time when the parent is alleged to have committed the offence is after-
 - (i) The parent has been given a notice under section 178(2); and
 - (ii) At least 1 meeting has been held with the parent under section 178(3) or the parent has been given a warning notice under section 178(4).
9. Attachment 4 is a copy of the written notice served on {insert date}
10. Attachment 5 is {insert either "a copy of the minutes of the meeting held with the parent on {insert date}" or "a copy of the warning notice served on the parent on {insert date}"}
11. Under the procedure for prosecutions, the Director of Catholic Education will not consent to proceeding to prosecution unless the steps spelt out in the policy have been followed.
12. As authorised officer **I certify that the steps in the policy have been followed**, and that it is in the best interest of {insert student's name} that {insert parent/carer's name} be prosecuted. This is an action of last resort.
13. Townsville Catholic Education Office has been consulted and support the proposed course of action.
14. If the Director of Catholic Education consents to prosecution, the matter will be referred to Police for prosecution. Police will be provided with sufficient information held by the department, including confidential information, to enable the prosecution to take place. This disclosure will be made in accordance with section 430(3)(a) of the Act.
15. The school and district office will continue to attempt to offer support to the parent to help them comply, until the prosecution process is resolved.
16. It is proposed that the Director of Catholic Education consent to the prosecution of {insert parent/carers name} pursuant to section 179 of the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006*.

CONSULTATION:

{list relevant consultation, eg with the Department of Child Safety and the local Child Protection Investigation Unit or police office if no CPIU exists}.

Principal: Greg Cameron

Signature:	Date: / /
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Comments:

Note – Submission to be forwarded to the Chief Finance Officer for approval if resource implications are expected from approved Submission.

Education Consultant: {Name}

Signature:	Date: / /
Approved - <input type="checkbox"/>	Not Approved - <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable - <input type="checkbox"/>

Comments:

Director of Catholic Education: {Name}

Signature:	Date: / /
Recommended - <input type="checkbox"/>	Not Recommended - <input type="checkbox"/>

Comments: