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Dear parents and carers

I hope that you have had the chance to enjoy time with your children during the school holiday period.

The COVID-19 pandemic is and will continue to be, a very worrying time for many parents and carers as we see the devastation caused by this virus around the world. Importantly, schools are a central part of a child's life. They provide stability, a sense of achievement and a rich learning environment for every child. This is especially important at a time when many children and young people are feeling stressed about COVID-19 and worried about what the future may hold.

We have been lucky in South Australia to now have very low numbers of positive cases in our state. This is the result of closing both the national and state borders, having effective quarantine processes, having many people in our community coming forward for testing and having every single one of you reducing your travel, practicing social distancing and good hygiene. Please keep it up, we have achieved a lot, but there is still a long way to go before we can say it is over. Thank you for all that you and your family are doing.

My job is to ensure that the South Australian community stays as healthy and disease free as possible. Together with the other Chief Health Officers in other States and Territories, I have weighed up the pros and cons of children attending school.

With the very low levels of COVID-19 in South Australia along with the wider public health strategies in South Australia, I strongly believe there is no need for school closures in this state, at this time. Even when we had higher rates of disease in South Australia, only 2% of cases were school students, all of whom had mild illness and have fully recovered. I encourage families to feel comfortable and safe about sending their children to school.

However, if your child has a chronic medical condition or a compromised immune system, you may wish to consult your GP or paediatrician when deciding if your child should return to school.

I have been working closely with the Department for Education, Catholic Education and the Association of Independent Schools to make schools as safe as possible for everyone. This includes increased cleaning, making sure there is soap, sanitiser and tissues for students and staff, having protocols in place to practice social distancing, not having large gatherings of the school community and teaching children, however young, to avoid passing on germs.

We have a clear protocol for a minimum 24-hour closure in the event of a case of COVID-19 in a school, to allow us to contact anyone at risk and to undertake a deep clean. These protocols have been used six times without fail.

If your child/children are well, I encourage you to send them back to school or preschool this term. If they have symptoms of a cold or have a fever, keep them at home until they are better plus get them tested for COVID-19.

I wish you and your child/children all the very best in health and education for term 2.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'N. Spurrer', written in a cursive style.

PROFESSOR NICOLA SPURRIER
Chief Public Health Officer
Health Regulation and Protection

22/04/2020