



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Health**

Our Ref: PAHDLOG20-390

Contact: Kristen Nowak; kristen.nowak@health.wa.gov.au

Ms Nicole Millis
Chief Executive Officer
Rare Voices Australia
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Via email: nicole.millis@rarevoices.com.au

Dear Ms Millis

RE: Minimising COVID-19 risk – flexible school attendance requirements needed for rare disease community.

Thank you for your letter dated 4 May 2020, regarding the need for flexible school attendance requirements for the rare disease community during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. The Western Australian Department of Health (WADOH) is working closely with the Western Australian Department of Education to ensure all necessary precautions are taken to protect the safety of school staff and students.

Based on health advice from the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee and the WADOH, Western Australian public schools are open for all parents and carers who choose to send their children to school. For students who learn at home, distance education packages and resources, including online resources where possible, will be provided so that all students can continue to learn.

Home learning therefore remains an option for Western Australian children living with rare diseases during the COVID-19 pandemic. I would encourage parents and carers of children living with rare diseases to discuss the possibility of school attendance with their general practitioner or paediatrician, as well as their school, to set up arrangements that best support their individual health needs while optimising their education outcomes.

It should be noted that in school staff and children are not at increased risk of COVID-19 by attending school. There have been no cases of student-to-student transmission or student-to-teacher transmission of COVID-19 in Western Australia, and there is no evidence of community spread in the state. Additionally, the Western Australian Government have committed \$43 million to ensure there is regular and frequent cleaning occurring throughout the school day. This includes cleaning and disinfecting all high-contact items every 1-2 hours, as well as regular cleaning of school play equipment. Schools are also required to increase their focus on promoting personal hygiene and social distancing measures.

The COVID-19 pandemic is rapidly evolving, and therefore current education arrangements in Western Australia will be reviewed before the start of Week 4 of Term 2, ensuring arrangements remain consistent with the latest health advice and COVID-19 trends.

Thanks again for bringing this matter to my attention. I appreciate your concerns and wish to assure you that the WADOH is working collaboratively with the state's Department of Education to ensure that all students can achieve good learning outcomes in a safe environment.

Yours sincerely



Dr Andrew Robertson
CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER

13 May 2020