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Subject: Catholic Education Energy project

Responsible financial and environmental stewardship was the driving force behind the comprehensive energy mitigation project currently well underway by Catholic Education, Diocese of Rockhampton which will see a combined saving of over 70% on power bills for Catholic schools across the diocese.

Rockhampton Catholic Education Director, Leesa Jeffcoat said the five-year project maximised potential savings through extensive solar installations and upgrading to LED energy saving lighting in all 39 schools and colleges, and where possible the installation of battery storage solutions.

“It’s not just about saving power. There is an interconnectedness of social, economic and environmental justice and our commitment to the success of this project crosses all these spheres as we endeavour to live out our call to be responsible stewards of a sustainable future,” Miss Jeffcoat said.

“In looking to effectively and responsibly utilise our resources, both financial and environmental, we also undertake to find the best possible methods of operating that enables us to continue to deliver high-quality learning facilities and environments in all our schools,” Miss Jeffcoat said.

“We are three-quarters of the way through the rollout of this project and we are already seeing incredible savings coming through,” Miss Jeffcoat said.

Emmaus College Rockhampton (Yaamba Rd campus) is on track for an annual saving of well over \$95 000 after energy saving measures were commissioned in June 2018 including a 380kW solar system together with a 680kWh Tesla Powerpack battery and LED lighting upgrade.

Catholic Education Assistant Director Administration Mark Effeney said the energy mitigation system enabled a change in tariff amplifying savings further.

“Importantly, the reduction in power consumption has resulted in a reclassification of the college from a Large Business Tariff to a Small Business Tariff representing further significant dollar savings due to the costly fees associated with the Large Business Tariff,” Mr Effeney said.

Catholic Education partnered with Queensland-based company, GEM Energy to facilitate the project, which is the largest solar and battery storage rollout for a single organization in Australia. Forecast estimates for individual schools indicate an average of just seven years to fully pay off the energy systems through savings recouped from reduced power costs.

Mr Effeney said some of our smaller schools will only take one to three years to pay off their systems.

“St Patrick’s Catholic Primary School in Emerald has already fully recouped the cost of their system which went on line in 2016 and is now saving more than \$30 000 annually,” Mr Effeney said.

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In addition to significant cost savings the substantial drop in power usage from an environmental perspective was important for Catholic Education, according to Miss Jeffcoat.

“Our responsibility as sharers in the mission of the Catholic Church is to care for our earth, our common home. This is one of our key initiatives as part of our commitment to a clear and conscious effort to care for our surroundings, our local communities and our planet,” Miss Jeffcoat said.

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