



Friday 9 August 2019

Dear Families and Friends of Geelong Grammar School,

It has been just over 12 months since I wrote to you about the opportunity for Geelong Grammar School to set an example and lead in our approach to child safety. As I wrote then, I remain steadfast that the School must acknowledge and learn from the hurt inflicted upon innocent children in the past. We can only move forward if we recognise the devastating effects of childhood sexual abuse, keep sight of the learnings as to how such depravity was enabled, and by doing all we can to prevent such trauma ever being repeated.

[Much has been achieved in the past 12 months](#), and there remains so much more to be done to help our community heal. Across the year, there have been Court cases which have been distressing and difficult to navigate for many members of our School family.

Last week, *The Age* initially misreported that a perpetrator had been employed by the School in recent years. Regardless that it has been 22 years since his employment at the School and that the child was not a student of our School, we are terribly sorry for their pain. I have also heard from GGS survivors who were shaken to read that a former GGS teacher, who testified during the 2015 Royal Commission, has now been convicted of child sexual abuse.

There are more cases ahead where former Geelong Grammar School staff will face trial. I have come to understand that the impact of trials on the victims of such crimes can represent further torment and traumatising. Fundamental to this torment is the shocking betrayal of trust: surely our world cannot only depend upon yet demand that educators safeguard those who are most vulnerable.

As your Principal, I continue to meet with survivors of abuse. I feel a profound sorrow for their suffering. I am also inspired by their strength to speak about experiences at GGS. It is through their fortitude that we are united – that they are with us, as a vital part of our community which we wish to and must support. Tragically, we will never hear the stories of the victims who are no longer with us; whose lives have been cut short. We must not forget them and the lessons from losing them.

One of the reasons it is so upsetting to hear of the abuse which was perpetrated against GGS students in the past is that it is so far removed from the experiences of our students today. Having said that, a measure of the quality and maturity of a community is how it responds to its dark and difficult chapters – today and into the future. Just this past week I addressed our Year 10 and 11 students to reiterate that at our School, everyone should have the right to feel safe all the time. Correspondingly, at our School, and within a community that aspires to be exceptional, everyone has a responsibility to enable the safety of others.

As a staff, we want our learners to know that there is nothing so terrible that they cannot come forward and share it with us. GGS learners at each of our four campuses have the gift of an education that enables their voice to be heard. We actively encourage and support them to use their voices to keep themselves and others safe. We know the capacity to do so is deeply connected to the unearthing of courage and compassion within.

It is vitally important that our culture will stand up for what is right: we will not be silent when something is wrong, even if in the moment it feels as though we are standing alone. I ask our community to be strengthened by knowing that the courage to stand up is a fraction of the courage it must take people who experienced childhood sexual abuse to step forward every day with hope and healing in their hearts.

Whilst we cannot undo the failures of the past, together we can recognise the pain caused, and together, we can support and enable a culture which fortifies against such devastating harms and places child safety at its core. Together, we can make a positive difference towards shaping a better world.

Yours purposefully and prayerfully

**Rebecca Cody**  
Principal

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**Principal's Study**

50 Biddlecombe Avenue, Corio, Victoria, Australia 3214  
T +61 3 5273 9247 E [Principal@ggs.vic.edu.au](mailto:Principal@ggs.vic.edu.au)

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