



Monday 16 March 2020

Dear Families and Friends of Geelong Grammar School,

COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) – Update #12 as at 4.00pm on Monday 16 March

Information about COVID-19 continues to evolve swiftly. To reiterate, we will be notified by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) if we have a confirmed case or if someone who has been in close contact with an individual who is a confirmed case. At the time of writing, we have no confirmed case of COVID-19 within our learning community.

In light of [Update #10](#) on Saturday and [Update #11](#) yesterday, thank you for your acknowledgment that decision making is highly contextual. Indeed, the decision to bring an early close to face-to-face teaching in Term 1 was deemed necessary given the unique circumstances of our School and the properly held concerns regarding the rapidity of viral spread in a predominantly residential context. As Australia's largest coeducational boarding school, we are not a localised population. With a student composition inclusive of over 900 boarders, representing every state and territory, as well as 16 overseas countries, our context is unique. We also have high connectivity across our four campuses, whether through staff or siblings. As [travel restrictions](#) tighten, it was in the best interests of our community to be proactive and precautionary, giving families time to prepare calmly for the collection of their children.

It would not be expected that the distinctive characteristics of our School would be the subject of consideration for the purposes of the Australian and Victorian Chief Medical Officers' advice regarding school closures: rather, Council, and the Executive and Leadership Teams are tasked with the specific responsibility of acting in the best interests of Geelong Grammar's students and staff. There were multiple well-considered factors in our decision to cease student learning and activities on our sites from 5.00pm on Wednesday 18 March.

In addition to the obligations to the health, safety and wellbeing of our students, the School must also act to safeguard its staff. Our School is a significant enterprise with over 800 employees, including casual and contract staff. As our Timbertop families are now aware, at the time of the decision we were also experiencing an outbreak of viral gastroenteritis at that campus which made us a more vulnerable community; whilst we have exceptional staff and medical facilities, we are not a hospital. Yesterday afternoon's [Update #11](#) highlighted the complexity of infection risks which are already being managed at our campuses.

Contact with confirmed COVID-19 cases

The School continues to work closely with the DHHS to identify and manage notifiable disease reporting. The DHHS advises that as a part of its contact tracing processes for confirmed COVID-19 cases, it will contact families directly if they are deemed to be at high risk. The DHHS continues to advise that people who have indirect contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case are not high risk. The parent who attended the Timbertop Parents' Cocktail Party on 6 March 2020 has received confirmation from the DHHS that they were not contagious at that time.

APS Sport

The APS School Heads gathered this morning and collectively decided that all remaining Term 1 fixtures, including the APS Heads of the River Regatta and the APS Combined Swimming & Diving Finals, will not proceed. We recognise this decision will be disappointing for our students who were working towards certain activities and outcomes.

Student Learning and Wellbeing

We continue to make strong progress mapping the roll-out of remote learning platforms. Specifically:

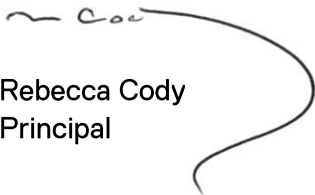
- Remote learning for Year 12 students will commence on Friday 20 March;
- Remote learning for Prep-Year 11 will commence on Monday 23 March;
- Our teachers will remain onsite until Friday 27 March;
- Students will have digital resources, interactive lessons facilitated by their class teacher, along with assigned prep; and
- Attendance and work will be recorded, monitored and feedback provided.

We remain very mindful that the commencement of 2020 has brought multiple challenges and intense uncertainty. This can be especially unsettling for young people in their formative years. Age-appropriate, transparent communication is recommended to support the needs of children and adolescents.

Resources to support families are available on [the School website](#).

Stay well and thank you for your ongoing understanding and support during unprecedented times. I remain immensely grateful for the Geelong Grammar community's commitment to proactive hopefulness and strength. Equally, we are indebted to the medical experts and leaders across the globe who are demonstrating their commitment to social responsibility.

Yours sincerely



Rebecca Cody
Principal

Principal's Study

50 Biddlecombe Avenue, Corio, Victoria, Australia 3214
T +61 3 5273 9247 E Principal@ggs.vic.edu.au

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CRICOS 00143G ABN 92 004 971 500 www.ggs.vic.edu.au