



Saturday 14 March 2020

Dear Families and Friends of Geelong Grammar School,

COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) – Update #10 as at 2.45pm on Saturday 14 March

Since the World Health Organisation's global pandemic declaration on 11 March, School Council and our Executive and Leadership Teams have been scenario planning in light of COVID-19's rapidly evolving and escalating landscape. Yesterday this landscape shifted in Australia by the recommendation to take advanced measures regarding large gatherings, together with the growing evidence of community transmission.

Late last night, we took the decision to bring Term 1 to an early close. We deem this to be a timely judgment with a highly precautionary emphasis.

Given our unique, predominantly residential context as Australia's largest coeducational boarding school, with a student composition representing every state and territory, as well as 16 overseas countries, we are instigating an intentional and proactive staged unscheduled closure of our four campuses. A key consideration in the decision is the fact that we have more than 900 boarding students across two of our four campuses.

This approach will enable an orderly return of students into the care of their families and/or guardians and homestay providers. By 5.00pm on Wednesday 18 March all classrooms, grounds and boarding residences will close for student learning and activities until further notice. Given we currently remain an infection free site, this decision gives families time to prepare calmly for collection of their children.

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. Attendance and work will be recorded, monitored and feedback provided.

The assessment of our commencement timing for Term 2 will be ongoing, and as ever, we will endeavour to provide families with expedient advice. If the pandemic intensifies during the holiday period, online learning opportunities will be available from Wednesday 15 April.

Our decision-making has been contemplated deeply, and with due consideration of what is in the best interests of our community, especially given its distinctive characteristics. Whilst Bostock House and Toorak Campus do not have boarding students, we are a highly connected community that promotes a whole school approach.

The health, wellbeing and safety of students and staff remains paramount.

Further campus-specific details will be provided in the next 24 hours. In the first instance, please direct any queries about closure arrangements to:

Head of Bostock House, [Rachael Dewhurst](#);
Acting Head of Toorak Campus, [Chris McNamara](#);
Head of Middle School, [Michelle Phillips](#);
Head of Timbertop, [Tom Hall](#);
Head of Senior School, [Graham Hislop](#);
Head of Corio, [Steven Church](#).

We are mindful that the commencement of the year 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. We recognise that the decision to close Term 1 early may be disappointing for some of our students, who are working towards certain activities and outcomes. We also regret any inconvenience caused.

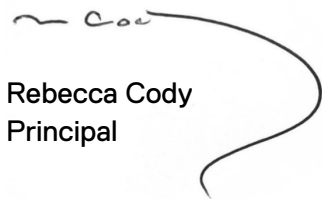
As ever, it is important to focus on what is within our control. We are all able to make strong health and hygiene choices. Whatever our age, the following steps are feasible:

- Meticulous hand washing;
- Avoiding touching the face;
- Eating nutritious foods; and
- Prioritising sleep.

By keeping all of us well, we will be able to manage during this period. This calls for parents, guardians and educators to be knowledgeable and measured in their conversations with young people. We can also reassure our students that the world has faced many viruses before, and may do so again, and we need to do what we can to make sure we all stay healthy. While it is probably not possible to shield children from media reports about the virus, it is prudent to encourage them to focus on other interests and not to consume too many news stories. Equally, it is also helpful to role model how we can live well and positively with uncertainty. Indeed, this is a time to harness the strength and leadership of our School community by living our values: specifically, courage, fortitude, compassion and hopefulness.

Stay well and thank you for your understanding and support as we navigate complex times.

Yours proactively and respectfully,


Rebecca Cody
Principal

Principal's Study

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