



Friday 10 July 2020

Dear Families and Friends of Geelong Grammar School,

COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) – Update #38 as at 10.00pm on Friday 10 July

Recording 288 new COVID-19 cases in 24 hours, today represented further challenges and disappointments for Victoria; this is the largest daily increase of the pandemic so far.

The complexity of the Victorian outbreak intensifies at pace and demands an agile response to stay ahead of a rapidly evolving situation, particularly given our unique context as Australia's largest coeducational boarding school with campuses in both metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria. Our planning cycle remains within a two-week timeframe and we continue to adapt our scenario planning for the start of Term 3 as new information becomes available. We have reviewed our planning with reference to today's announcements by the Prime Minister, Premier and Victoria's Chief Health Officer, as well as ongoing consultation with our own Senior Medical Officer, Professor Fergus Cameron. Please note the following new information since yesterday's [Update #37](#).

Face Masks

As outlined in [Update #36](#), face masks are to be worn in all classrooms, indoor common areas and shared spaces (excluding in boarding/day houses which will be treated as a "family" unit), as well as on airplanes, trains and buses.

Earlier today Victoria's Chief Health Officer, Professor Sutton, [recommended that people in metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire should wear a face mask](#) if/when it is difficult to keep 1.5 metres apart from others (reiterating that excellent hygiene practices and spatial distancing are the best defence against COVID-19). Professor Sutton indicated that a cloth mask made of three layers of a mix of breathable fabrics was adequate protection. The School will review the use of face masks, the type of mask used and when/where they are worn as part of our two-week planning cycle.

COVID-19 Testing

All students returning to live and learn at Corio will be required to undertake a COVID-19 test. Our primary aim is to avoid a COVID-19 outbreak and this baseline testing allows confirmation that all students and staff "at that point in time" are, as best as testing can determine, COVID-19 free.

- As in any context, the sensitivity of the COVID test is not 100%; however, it is the most effective tool available allowing us to identify any asymptomatic cases early and thus limit any potential spread.
- Given the School's "high risk" setting, we cannot afford an initial return to School where there are students and staff within our community who are infected with the virus but asymptomatic. This is critical as in young people the research indicates that up to 40% of cases may be asymptomatic. Consequently, we cannot exclude any students on the Corio campus from the requirement for testing as this will not meet the rigorous planning we have put in place.
- Properly, the School must assume each student and staff member brings a risk of exposure and the School uses the most effective system available to detect those who might be unknowingly infected.
- Testing will be conducted on campus in screened environs for privacy. Campus wide testing of all students and staff at our Timbertop campus was successfully conducted at the commencement of

the revised Timbertop program for Term 3. This was a well-managed and professional process having regard to privacy and concerns about potential discomfort associated with testing. All testing at Corio will be undertaken by registered nurses who are trained and experienced in such testing.

Exeat Leave at Corio

As stated yesterday, we are implementing a range of risk-mitigation measures for the commencement of Term 3 at Corio. Given today's cases of community transmission, this will extend to further restrictions on weekend exeats for our boarding students. The first weekend of each Term is usually a closed weekend with restricted leave: given the current context there will be no weekend exeats for the first two weekends of Term 3 and there will be no weekend exeats to metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire for the first four weekends of Term (two cycles of our two-week planning timeframe). These measures reflect our School's high-risk setting, thereby requiring commitment to a proactive and rigorous response from all within our community.

Metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire

As a school community, we are proud of our inclusivity and ability to support each other. We have been advised that as "work" and "study" are two of the legitimate reasons for movement under the Victorian Government's [Stage 3 restrictions](#), staff and students who reside in metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire but work or study outside of that designated area can travel there to do so. Excluding students from the Corio campus based on postcodes is neither lawful nor ethical.

JobKeeper

Earlier today we [responded](#) to a media enquiry from the *Herald Sun* regarding the temporary JobKeeper Payment scheme for businesses significantly affected by coronavirus (COVID-19). Not-for-profits (including schools) are eligible for JobKeeper payment to help them pay their employees if they have faced a 30% fall in turnover (for an aggregated turnover of \$1 billion or less). As you are well aware, GGS is predominantly a boarding school – 78% of our secondary students are boarders – and was unable to charge Term 2 boarding fees, in addition to providing tuition fee deductions of up to 25% across Prep-Year 12. Consistent with many other enterprises, we would be negligent not to take all appropriate steps to support our employees.

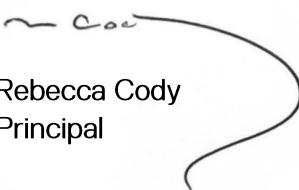
Communication and Planning – Geelong Area

Victoria's Chief Health Officer, Professor Brett Sutton, said the Geelong area was being reviewed on a daily basis. Although Geelong recorded no new cases today (5 active cases are reported currently), the neighbouring City of Wyndham now has 151 active COVID-19 cases.

We trust this Update supports you and your family, and appreciate your ongoing monitoring of our dedicated [COVID-19 page](#). This is the most accurate and timely source of information as staff work tirelessly to ensure all preparations for a safe and sustained return are achieved.

We're so looking forward to welcoming our Bostock House and Corio learners back to campus, and to seeing our Toorak students virtually. The news from Timbertop continues to be impressive too – our Year 9s are determined to make this a year like no other for all the very best reasons!

Yours sincerely,


Rebecca Cody
Principal