



Tuesday 21 July 2020

Dear Families and Friends of Geelong Grammar School,

COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) – Update #40 as at 2.00pm on Tuesday 21 July

We continue to closely monitor the daily updates on the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Victoria and changes to public health advice in consultation with our Senior Medical Officer, Professor Fergus Cameron. As the complexity of the COVID-19 pandemic has continued to intensify, our risk mitigation measures have evolved proportionate to our unique context as Australia's largest coeducational boarding school with campuses in both metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria.

COVID-19 Testing at Corio – all results negative

As a proactive and preventative strategy within our high-risk boarding environment, 1,091 students and staff at Corio were tested for COVID-19 last Tuesday and Wednesday, July 14-15. I am very relieved and pleased to report that all those tests were negative. This successful baseline testing provides confirmation that all students and staff “at that point in time” are, as best as testing can determine, COVID-19 free. We are now planning for all Corio students to resume face-to-face classes from tomorrow, Wednesday 22 July.

We are grateful for the support of our GGS community as we evolve our risk mitigation measures, including the implementation of COVID-19 testing. This testing is one really important measure to allow our students and staff to return and remain at our Corio campus as collectively we actively manage the risk of COVID-19 infection. Currently, testing is the most effective tool available allowing us to identify any asymptomatic cases early and thus limit any potential spread. Our risk mitigation measures have served us well and test results will not lead to complacency; the pandemic moves hourly and all our efforts must and will continue.

COVID-19 Testing across all 4 campuses

Across our four campuses, testing will continue to be an important part of our detection and early intervention strategy in response to this “wildly infectious” virus. Since May, more than 150 COVID-19 tests have been conducted in response to symptoms, as well as over 350 tests for Timbertop to resume on-site learning and living. Any momentary discomfort for individuals is well worth the avoidance of partial and periodic campus closures for our school community. We thank families in advance for their support when students may require testing and subsequent quarantining off-campus.

Corio Leave Arrangements

With the cases of community transmission in Victoria, we continue to restrict weekend exeats/leave arrangements for our boarding students. Given the current context, there will be no exeats this weekend and boarding students will only be able to leave campus for urgent medical matters. As previously stated in [Update #38](#), there will be no weekend exeats to metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire for the first four weekends of Term 3 (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.

Face Masks

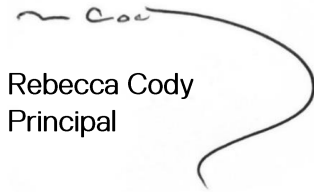
As outlined in [Update #36](#), face masks are to be worn in all classrooms, indoor common areas and shared spaces at Corio (excluding in boarding/day houses which will be treated as a “family” unit). This requirement is for all learners in Years 5 and above. The School will continue with the use of N95 masks for

all students and staff in student-facing roles as we finalise our investigations regarding the use of cloth masks as part of our two-week planning cycle, noting the use of masks other than N95 masks will require robust risk management protocols. The Department of Health and Human Services' (DHHS) continued advice is that there is an ample supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) in Victoria. We also note the recent comments by Australia's acting Chief Medical Officer, Professor Paul Kelly, regarding "proportionate" response to risk and the efficacy of using face masks for people in "close contact in high infection risk environments". This aligns with the recommendation of Victoria's Chief Health Officer, Professor Brett Sutton, regarding the use of face masks if/when it is difficult to keep 1.5 metres apart from others. Professor Sutton reiterates consistently that excellent hygiene practices and spatial distancing remain the best defence against COVID-19.

Thank you

Thank you to all who have participated in COVID-19 testing; most recently, the community spirit of our Corio students and staff participating in the COVID-19 testing was appreciated greatly. Thank you also to our excellent Kennedy Medical Centre team, the Medical Hub @ RMIT and Australian Clinical Laboratories (ACL). We were informed that the Corio testing represented the largest commercial COVID-19 testing programme undertaken in Australia; whilst the delay in receiving the results may have represented frustration for some, it is understandable given the logistical exercise and the Government's current processing priorities. Thank you for your patience, ongoing support and commitment to keeping our community well.

Yours sincerely,



Rebecca Cody
Principal