



Wednesday 29 July 2020

Dear Families and Friends of Geelong Grammar School,

COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) – Update #43 as at 4.00pm on Wednesday 29 July

Corio Leave Arrangements for Boarders

With the high number of cases of community transmission in Victoria, we continue to restrict weekend exeats/leave arrangements for our boarding students at Corio. We had previously stated in [Update #38](#) that there would 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) and that we were waiting for Victoria's Chief Health Officer (CHO) to review the Stage 3 'Stay at Home' orders in those areas. We also stated in [Update #41](#) that we were actively reviewing weekend exeats/leave arrangements for regional Victoria, monitoring the public health advice (including the extension of Victoria's State of Emergency until Sunday 16 August) in consultation with our Senior Medical Officer, Professor Fergus Cameron. Given there is now a significantly greater number of active COVID-19 cases in Victoria and an increased risk of community transmission than when Term 3 commenced, it would be irresponsible to relax weekend exeat/leave restrictions in the current context. We are particularly mindful that:

- Our comprehensive risk mitigation measures, campus-specific COVID-19 Action Plans and the proactive response from all within our community have served us well and enabled students and staff to continue On-campus Learning and Living at Corio for a month in Term 2 and thus far in Term 3;
- Boarding schools have been identified by both the State and Federal governments as “a high-risk setting” with an elevated possibility of community transmission – the risk of infection and the potential of reinfection cycles is heightened in a residential environment with shared facilities and prolonged exposure to others;
- The scale of our boarding student cohort is more significant than any other school in Australia and our risk mitigation strategies must therefore be focussed to reduce the associated increased inherent risk;
- The context for boarding and day/day boarding students is very different and our risk mitigation measures reflect these differences;
- The use of face masks in all classrooms, indoor common areas and shared spaces at Corio to enable face-to-face learning and the cross-over between Houses remain critical measures; and
- There is the provision and accompanying processes for students to leave campus for essential medical reasons.

Whilst we acknowledge that some students and their families may find the extension of these leave restrictions challenging, our decision-making must continue to prioritise safety, health and wellbeing. Our focus too is on providing a stable and uninterrupted education for all our students for as long as possible.

With the support of our community and the tireless and exceptional efforts of our staff, we continue to make positive and progressive steps, including the return of Saturday sport and the re-opening of the Handbury Centre gymnasium, John Court Café and Fisher Library. We will review weekend exeats/leave arrangements as the situation evolves.

Daily Health Questionnaire

Members of our School community have engaged with our [Daily COVID-19 Health Questionnaire](#) (DHQ) on over 40,000 occasions since it was first introduced on the GGS App and Portal. This is an outstanding rate of engagement and we acknowledge this important step undertaken each day by students, parents and staff.

In remaining adaptive to required risk mitigation and planning, the DHQ has now been amended with the consolidation of the questions relating to symptoms and the inclusion of a question relevant to COVID-19 testing. If a member of a student or staff member's household has been tested for COVID-19 and is not yet in receipt of a test result, we ask that students and staff not attend on campus until that test result has been received. We acknowledge this exceeds the baseline risk mitigation procedures published by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), but it is an appropriate measure for GGS; one we note and appreciate an increasing number of families and staff have been taking in any event. In the context of increased community transmission, this is a proportionate response for our School's complexity. Accordingly, when mindfully completing the DHQ each day, please be aware of these changes.

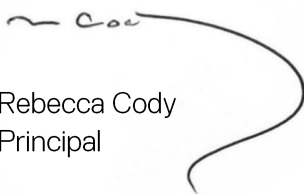
Interstate Travel – South Australia Border Restrictions

Further to [Update #41](#) and following the closure of the South Australian border, the School continues to communicate with both the South Australian Police COVID-19 Border Control Taskforce and the South Australian Deputy Chief Public Health Officer. We are informed by the Deputy Chief Public Health Officer that the South Australian government has been contacted by several Victorian schools with South Australian boarding students. A meeting is scheduled for this evening, where a South Australian Government Committee will review the exemption sought for these students to be classified as "essential travellers". To support this meeting's deliberations, the Deputy Chief Public Health Officer has been provided with the GGS's earlier correspondence detailing the significant risk mitigation measures we have implemented as part of our campus-specific COVID-19 Action Plans. The Deputy Chief Public Health Officer has indicated he will contact the School following the meeting. We will provide further information at that time and will continue to facilitate any correspondence required to support such freedom of movement.

I respect deeply and applaud the resilience of all our South Australian students who have decided to remain with us, despite the current uncertainty about travelling home for the September holiday period. This speaks volumes about their character. Please be assured that our efforts to secure the desired exemption will not tire.

We are proud of GGS's inclusivity and ability to support each other. Now is a time for unity; to work together for the community's benefit.

Yours sincerely,



Rebecca Cody
Principal