



Tuesday 11 August 2020

Dear Families and Friends of Geelong Grammar School,

### COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) – Update #52 as at 1.00pm on Tuesday 11 August

It has been a dramatically changing environment since Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews' announcements on Sunday 2 August regarding the declaration of a State of Disaster across Victoria and changes to restrictions for [metropolitan Melbourne](#) and [regional Victoria](#).

#### Latest Advice

There was the initial elation early last week that our Corio and Timbertop campuses could remain open to provide “accommodation services”, securing the opportunity for our boarders to remain on site. This was followed by a written direction from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) that schools were legally required to move to remote learning, prompting our Bostock House and Corio campuses to transition to our Remote Learning@GGS 2.0 programme. In response to the DHHS directive, the School sought an exemption to the requirement to move to remote learning for Timbertop; this action was taken based on the unique determinedly non-digital programme and the strict risk mitigation strategies and measures adopted at the campus. Further, whilst Timbertop operated within Stage 3 restrictions and published COVID Safe requirements, by keeping students living and learning on campus, we sought to avoid the additional risk associated with the potential significant community movement of students and families both within the State and interstate.

At approximately 8.30pm last night, we received a response from the Department of Education (DET) noting in reliance upon the “the latest health advice” from DHHS, the DET position that all school boarding premises should “seek to minimise the number of students in attendance at their facility”. Specifically, DET stated:

**“It is strongly recommended that all students residing at school boarding premises who can safely and practically return to their family home should do so.**

DHHS, through its Deputy Public Health Commander (Strategy & Policy), has confirmed that the legislative framework that governs the current restrictions in regional Victoria, being the relevant Directions made under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* (Vic) does not encompass any ability for discretionary case-by-case exemptions to be requested or provided from the obligations imposed by the Directions.”

Accordingly, and following an extraordinary meeting of Council (GGS's governing body) this morning, we write to inform you that we are required to ask all boarding students that remain on site at Corio and Timbertop who can “safely and practically” do so, to please:

- return to their family home; or
- seek temporary accommodation with their guardian and/or COVID Emergency Contact.

Consequently, to provide staff and families with sufficient time to manage the complexity of this transition given the significant numbers of interstate students and various travel restrictions, we are planning structured travel arrangements in consultation with senior Government health officials to enable a safe and orderly departure from Corio and Timbertop on Friday 14 August.

## Closure of Timbertop and Provision of Accommodation Services (with Remote Learning) at Corio

As we “seek to minimise the number of students in attendance” at Corio and Timbertop, we will also continue to provide “accommodation services” for those students who are unable to “safely and practically” pursue the above options. Within this context, we must prioritise international, interstate and “vulnerable” students.

Our Timbertop campus will be closed from Friday 14 August and remaining students will move to Corio with a roster of Timbertop staff supporting their needs. This decision prioritises safety, wellbeing and learning; mitigating risk by centralising services to the location most appropriate to accommodate girls and boys in a suitable environment for their wellbeing and with the infrastructure to most effectively deliver our Remote Learning@GGS 2.0 programme.

To reiterate, if it is not safe and practical for students to return home, we are able and eager to provide accommodation and remote learning on site at Corio. We will work tirelessly to make the remaining weeks of Term 3 a meaningful and rewarding period in these extraordinary times.

For a full list of interstate travel restrictions and exemption requirements please [click here](#).

If your child requires “on site accommodation services” at Corio please complete the [registration form](#) by 4.00pm on Thursday 13 August.

### Remote Learning – Timbertop

Our Remote Learning@GGS 2.0 programme will commence for Timbertop students from Wednesday 19 August and conclude at the scheduled end of the reorganised 14-week Term 3, on Tuesday 8 September.

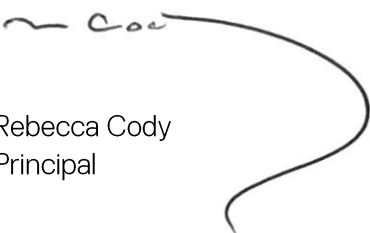
### Thank you

We acknowledge the frustrations of our students, staff and families as we have rapidly evolved our response to a volatile situation and fluid Government requirements. We also acknowledge the exceptional effort by our School community to provide a stable and uninterrupted education in a COVID-free environment for as long as we have, particularly given our unique context as Australia’s largest coeducational boarding school – we have kept Corio operational and infection-free for 9 weeks across Terms 2 and 3; and Timbertop for 11 weeks of a reorganised Term 3. Our comprehensive risk mitigation measures have served us well and the DET commended our “highly proactive approach” and “strong commitment to the education and safety” of our School community. We are tremendously grateful for the patience, cooperation and care of our students, staff and families; we should be proud of all we have achieved during this incredibly challenging “once in a century crisis”.

We will now turn our focus to providing an exceptional remote learning experience for all our students and commence planning for the start of Term 4, when we hope we will all be together again.

More information will follow in the next 24 hours. Thank you for working with us so positively to make the most of the challenges at hand.

Yours sincerely,



Rebecca Cody  
Principal