

25 July 2019

Be of
COURAGE



Dear College community member,

Ongoing survivor support and developments related to historical matters

We write to bring you up to date with some significant developments in relation to the College's response to matters of historical abuse, and to reassure you of the school's ongoing commitment to support survivors of harm.

At the most recent meeting of The Geelong College Council a decision was made for The Geelong College to participate in the National Redress Scheme. We are now engaged in the formal process required to enable our participation. This is an important step in providing an additional avenue for survivors to seek redress and will sit alongside our current approach of direct engagement and personalised interaction with survivors. Also, the engagement of the independent facilitator is continuing to provide immediate support for survivors. These two responses will continue, in addition to the National Redress Scheme involvement.

The current approach has been in place for nearly four years. Over this time, we have heard accounts of harm from a shameful period in our history. Two former teachers, Colin McPherson and Jeremy Longley from the 1960s and 1970s, have been prosecuted for abuse in other states. Through the process of disclosure by survivors we are now aware that they abused some of their students while employed at The Geelong College. Another man, David Whitcroft who was a rowing coach and later executive officer of the OGCA, is currently serving a prison term for abuse of our students in the 1980s. Unfortunately, there have been other teachers who caused harm to students of our school.

Today, we are committed to doing what we can to support survivors and to ensure such incidents do not happen again. As you know, we have written to the College community on a number of occasions throughout this period to raise awareness of this important issue, to apologise publicly to those who have been harmed, and to demonstrate a willingness to support survivors towards redress, in all its forms. This is a contemporary and appropriate response to historical abuse.

Some matters have not been resolved using this approach. This means we are expecting a small number of cases to escalate to the court system in the coming weeks and months.

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We would like to reassure you that The Geelong College is a very different place to the one where these incidents of abuse occurred. Today we are working constantly with staff and our community, as well as students, to ensure a Child Safe culture prevails. We have learned a great deal from the survivors who have had the courage to come forward to share their stories. Their accounts have shocked and saddened all who have heard them. The harm they experienced should not have happened. Today, it is our shared responsibility to ensure we have an appropriate culture so that these incidents are not repeated.

The school's participation in the National Redress Scheme is one response, among a number of responses to historical abuse, seeking to assist survivors. It is important the College community is aware of this development and its place in a wider sense of responsibility to care for our community.

We continue to encourage those affected to contact our independent facilitator, Pauline Ryan, on 1800 260 038. Alternatively, anyone with concerns is encouraged to communicate with the school through Dr Miller or with the Geelong Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Team (SOCIT) who can be contacted on (03) 5223 7200.

Yours Sincerely,



Dr Hugh Seward
Chairman of Council



Dr Peter Miller
Principal



Ms Thane Joske
President OGCA

*This correspondence was emailed on 27 July 2019. If you did not receive this email, please update your details with us at: communityrelations@geelongcollege.vic.edu.au.

