

2 June 2020

Dear Geelong Parents

Re: Responding to Recent Deaths by Suicide of Young People in Geelong

As you know Geelong schools and the broader Geelong community have been profoundly saddened by a number of suicide deaths since the commencement of 2020. My heartfelt thoughts and sympathy extend to the bereaved families and friends.

To experience the death of a student, for any reason, is one of the most difficult and complex moments a school community will ever have to manage.

I am writing to convey a number of important messages:

- Schools in Geelong have always been committed to promoting and improving the mental health and wellbeing of students and we have the privilege of working across all schools in Geelong and closely with the education sectors supporting your schools.
- The recent impact has been profound for the entire Geelong region and has affected multiple schools, thousands of families, educators, and young people.
- Every layer of government, local, state, and commonwealth are aware of the impact in Geelong and are supporting the Victorian and national experts to not only work in partnership with the schools and the education sectors, but to ensure health services, mental health services, education sectors, police, hospitals, local council, and other critical agencies are activated, proactive, and addressing the needs of Geelong families and young people.
- Please know that every agency and sector is working behind the scenes to monitor risk, reduce risk, promote help seeking, connect people to services, and communicate helpful information.
- Key regional mental health providers will also look to address the accessibility and priority of referrals to services for children, family, and young people.
- It is important that we all work together as parents/carers, families, and friends to play a pivotal role in building resilience, promoting help seeking, and connecting with each other.

At headspace we have a national team of experts who immediately connect and work directly with Australian schools and agencies when there is a student death by suicide. This intensive approach will continue over the coming months together with education sector specialists enabling your school with access to strategies and ongoing supports.

Again, this is a very difficult and complex time, with all agencies and schools working together to support the Geelong region. I also invite you to reach out to our online services at www.headspace.org.au or make contact with headspace Geelong on 5222 6690 or headspacegeelong@bcyf.org.au. Your school will also provide you with a number of other local mental health supports.

Yours sincerely

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