

# COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

25 OCTOBER 2024 | Issue 2



**ECG**  
Secondary  
College

## PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE

Dear ECG Families and  
Community Members,

Having a regular platform to communicate with our community is essential for ensuring ongoing connections to information, opportunities and awareness of our collective achievements.

Promoting our school is important for creating a sense of pride and belonging and there is much to celebrate at ECG on a regular basis.

This school newsletter will be distributed in week 3 and week 8 of each term to ensure that you are kept up to date with the latest happenings, and spotlights on student achievements and remain informed about important dates, policies, procedures and opportunities at ECG.

We will also utilise this space as a pathway for generating opportunities for family and community voices as we enhance our partnerships as a learning community and actively seek feedback on policies and procedures to improve our service delivery with the goal being increased mutual benefit for all stakeholders of ECG College.

ECG College is not only unique in its offering of a flexible and individualised learning environment but also in the geographic locations in which we are situated. Our reach extends from the rolling hills of South Gippsland through to Dandenong with a rich tapestry of landscapes matched with a rich tapestry of cultures, backgrounds, experiences and individual stories. With this in mind, it is important that our interactions are mindful of acknowledging multiple perspectives, that we act with empathy and compassion and align with our organisation's values of collaboration, inclusion, integrity, quality and safety.



## KEY DATES TO REMEMBER

- MON 4 NOV** Student/Staff Free Day
- TUE 5 NOV** Public Holiday-Melbourne Cup
- TUE 12 NOV** Activity Day/Enchanted Gardens
- WED 13 NOV** All VDSS 2025 Orientation Day 1
- FRI 15 NOV** All VDSS 2025 Orientation Day 2
- THU 21 NOV** Warragul/Leo Student Celebration
- FRI 22 NOV** Pakenham/Dande Student Celebration
- FRI 22 NOV** Senior Students Last Day 2024
- WED 4 DEC** Curriculum Day - Student Free Day
- TUE 10 DEC** Curriculum Day - Student Free Day
- FRI 13 DEC** Y9/10 Last Day 2024  
Last day term 4 - finishes 2pm

Activating true student voice and agency is a long-held and valued tradition at ECG College and during term 3, students participated in attitudes to school survey, this data will drive a deeper dive into student-identified improvement areas for the college and through the process of student focus groups we will continue to identify actions that will improve student experiences and learning outcomes across the college.

As I finalise my offering for this edition of the newsletter, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to our dedicated staff, students, and families. Your hard work and commitment make our school a wonderful place to learn and grow.

As we continue this journey together, I welcome your feedback and ideas. Please feel free to reach out to me directly at [schooladmin@ecg.vic.edu.au](mailto:schooladmin@ecg.vic.edu.au) or 03 5622 6000.

Thank you for being an integral part of our school community. Together, we can achieve great things for our students!

Warm regards,  
Russel Praetz  
Principal, ECG College

# WELLBEING CORNER

We are incredibly fortunate at ECG to be able to provide our young people with onsite wellbeing support and expertise. Having access to youth workers and counsellors means that students can address concerns or issues that arise with reasonable immediacy and can maintain focus on learning and engagement in the classroom. Additionally, other staff members — teachers, administration staff and Learning Support Officers — are trained in Mental Health First Aid, trauma informed practice and inclusion strategies that support all students.

## THE ECG WELLBEING TEAM



Jenna,  
Youth Worker,  
Leongatha Campus



Tayla,  
Youth Worker  
Leongatha Campus



Tyler  
Youth Worker,  
Warragul Campus



Elodie,  
Counsellor  
Warragul/Pakenham



Kerrie,  
Youth Worker  
Leongatha Campus



Danielle  
Counsellor  
Leongatha/ Dandenong



Amelia  
Youth Worker  
Pakenham



Julie  
Youth Worker  
Pakenham/ Dandenong



Charlotte  
Youth Worker,  
Warragul Campus



Cass  
Youth Worker,  
Warragul Campus



Anna-Claire  
College Student  
Engagement &  
Support Coordinator



Tanja,  
College Assistant  
Principal  
Student Wellbeing

## OUR VALUES

At Community College Gippsland, the core values that guide our community are Collaboration, Inclusion, Integrity, Quality, and Safety. These principles not only shape our learning environment but also prepare us to be responsible, compassionate and well-rounded members of society.



### Collaboration

Together, we can achieve more! Collaboration encourages us to share ideas, listen to one another, and work as a team. Whether in our outside of the classroom, let's continue to support one another.



### Quality

Striving for quality in our work elevates our learning experience. Let's take pride in our work, in achieving our goals, and in our interactions. Quality is not just about meeting standards; it's about pushing ourselves to exceed them.



### Integrity

Integrity is doing the right thing, even when no one is watching. It's about being honest and standing up for what is right. We encourage our students to embody integrity in their actions and decisions, building trust within our community.



### Safety

A safe environment is crucial for learning and growth. We all share the responsibility to create a safe and supportive school. This includes being aware of our surroundings and looking out for one another. We foster a culture where everyone feels secure, allowing us to learn and thrive together.

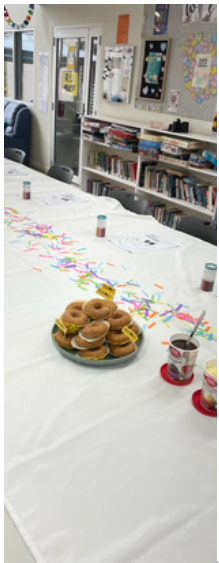


### Inclusion

At ECG, every voice matters. Inclusion means creating a space where everyone feels welcome and valued. We celebrate our differences and learn from each other's experiences.

As we navigate the term ahead, let these values guide our actions and interactions. Together, we can create a thriving community where everyone feels inspired and empowered.

# SPECIAL EVENTS

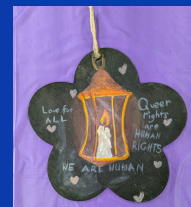


## RUOK DAY

Danielle, a senior student at ECG, went above and beyond to make R U OK? Day a special occasion. With the support of the wellbeing team, she organised a delicious sausage sizzle and a fun donut-decorating activity. Danielle also led a collaborative class project called "Sprinkle Your Kindness," encouraging students to spread positivity and support for one another. Additionally, she prepared thoughtful class packs tailored to each year level, fostering a sense of belonging and well-being among her peers. Danielle's efforts contributed to a meaningful and memorable R U OK? Day at ECG.

## WEAR IT PURPLE DAY

Wear It Purple Day at ECG was a vibrant celebration of diversity and inclusion. Students showed their support by decorating wooden flowers in unique and colourful ways. The flowers were then displayed for voting, with prizes awarded to the most creative designs from Years 9/10 and Seniors. Everyone wore their purple bracelets with pride and enjoyed delicious butterfly cupcakes with purple icing. It was a day filled with joy, creativity, and a commitment to fostering a safe and inclusive environment for all.





## MENTAL HEALTH FESTIVAL- LEONGATHA

The annual Leongatha Mental Health Festival brought together students and staff for a vibrant showcase of art, creativity, and community. Leongatha VPC and VM students were proud to display their arts and crafts projects, which they had worked on throughout the year as part of their studies. These beautiful creations not only highlighted the students' talents but also demonstrated the therapeutic benefits of art for mental health.

Festival attendees had the opportunity to engage in a range of interactive activities, including building terrariums, decorating donuts, and enjoy petting the baby farm animals like piglets, chooks, rabbits and young goats. The event was capped off with a delicious sausage sizzle lunch, prepared by fellow students.

ECG students from Warragul, Pakenham, and Dandenong campuses joined the celebration, adding to the sense of community and connection.

A special thanks to Animals on the Move, Headspace, and Lifeline for their engaging display and information stalls. Heartfelt appreciation also goes out to the Dandenong campus staff and students for making the long journey to Leongatha, as well as the entire Leongatha campus community for their hard work and dedication in making this festival a success.

The Leongatha Mental Health Festival was a joyful reminder of the power of creativity and connection in supporting mental well-being.

# PARENTS' GUIDE

## The Importance of Being a Good Listener for Parents of Teenagers

Navigating the teenage years can be challenging for both parents and teens. One of the most crucial skills you can develop as a parent during this time is the ability to listen effectively. Being a good listener fosters trust, strengthens your relationship, and helps your teenager feel valued — it also models a great skill for your young person.



## WHY LISTENING MATTERS

- **Builds Trust:**

When you actively listen, your teenager feels safe sharing their thoughts and feelings. This trust is essential for open communication, allowing them to confide in you about their struggles, achievements, and everything in between.

- **Validates Their Feelings:**

Teenagers often experience intense emotions. By listening without judgment, you validate their feelings, showing them that their emotions are important and worthy of attention. This helps them process their experiences more effectively.

- **Encourages Problem-Solving:**

When you listen carefully, you gain insights into your teenager's perspective. This understanding allows you to guide them in finding solutions to their challenges, empowering them to think critically and develop resilience.

## TIPS FOR BEING A BETTER LISTENER

- **Be Present:**

Put away distractions like your phone or computer. Show your teenager that you are fully engaged in the conversation.

- **Use Open-Ended Questions:**

Encourage deeper dialogue by asking questions that require more than a yes or no answer. For example, "How did that make you feel?" or "What do you think about that?"

- **Practice Empathy:**

Try to understand things from your teenager's viewpoint. Acknowledge their feelings and let them know it's okay to feel that way.

- **Avoid Immediate Solutions:**

Sometimes, your teen just wants to vent. Resist the urge to jump in with solutions; instead, let them express themselves fully.

- **Follow Up:**

Show that you care by revisiting conversations later. Ask how things are going or how they felt about a situation you discussed before.

Listening is a powerful tool that can transform your relationship with your teenager. By being an attentive listener, you help them navigate the complexities of adolescence with confidence. Remember, it's not just about hearing words—it's about understanding and connecting. The more you listen, the more you strengthen the bond that will support your teen through these formative years.



## WHERE TO GO IF YOU OR OTHERS NEED HELP:

- Your local GP
- LRH Mental Health Triage: 1300 363 322
- Casey Hospital Health Triage: 8768 1200
- [Your local Headspace Centre](#)
- [ehheadspace](#): 1800 650 890
- [Kids Helpline](#): 1800 551 800
- [Parentline](#): counselling and support for parents and carers, 13 22 89
- [Lifeline](#): 13 11 14
- [Qlife](#)
- [Beyond Blue](#): 1300 224 636
- [Head to Help](#): 1800 595 212
- [Suicide Call Back Service](#): 1300 659 467

## TIPS FOR BEING A BETTER LISTENER

[Family violence information and support services](#):

- 1800 015 188 (Safe Steps)
- [1800 RESPECT](#) (1800 737 732)
- [What's OK at home](#), Family violence support
- [Orange Door Inner Gippsland](#) 1800 319 345

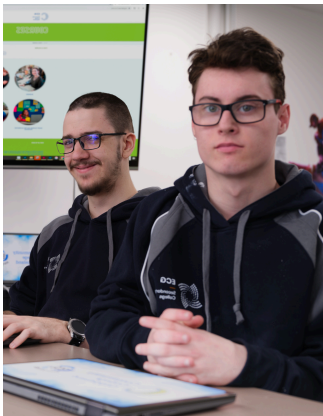
Self-harm & suicide prevention resources:

- [ReachOut](#) - Getting a mental health care plan,
- [Headspace](#) - What you need to know about self-harm,
- [SANE Australia](#) - How to help when someone is suicidal
- Contact 000 for urgent assistance



# SCHOOL POLICIES & UPDATES

## STUDENT DRESS CODE



Each day we become slightly more confident that summer is close.

With this in mind please be aware of our student dress code.

As stated in our parent/student handbook: We have no formal uniform.

We encourage all students to dress in a neat and tidy fashion as they would in a workplace.

To ensure students are protected and SunSmart during all school activities, we require that bare skin around the shoulders, chest, stomachs, and bottoms are all covered. We encourage hats during Term 1 and 4 and the use of sunscreen.

Footwear in the form of flat, comfortable shoes such as sneakers is required. High heels, UGG boots or thongs are not safe and therefore are not permitted. Safety boots may be needed for some activities.

We appreciate our student's right to wear the clothing that they feel comfortable in, however, student safety and the comfort of all staff and students is our priority.

In situations where a student's clothing choices do not align with our stated policy a compass chronicle will be raised and the student will be required to change into appropriate alternative clothing options that we have available to enable compliance with our college policy.



# EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

Severe weather events have impacted many of our campuses over the past 12 months. As we approach fire danger season we have reviewed our emergency management policies/planning and government guidance.

Please be aware that on days that are determined to have a catastrophic fire danger rating the Warragul campus will be closed. Communication confirming closures will occur via compass, email and SMS.

Please see guidance below.

## Your School's Bushfire Risk Category for 2024—25 (Monday 30 September 2024)

**This bushfire risk assessment is for: Community College Gippsland Ltd.**

Dear Principal,

I am writing to advise your school is assessed as Category 4 and is on the [Category 4 List](#). This means it's in an area considered to be at some risk of bushfire or grassfire.

As a Category 4 school, your school:

- is strongly recommended to close on days forecast as 'Catastrophic' by the Bureau of Meteorology in your designated fire district.
- should note that any co-located early childhood education service is required to close on days forecast as 'Catastrophic' in your fire district.
- communications templates you can use to share information with parents and carers through your school communication channels, as well as presentations and posters.

### Fire danger days

'Catastrophic' fire danger days will be issued by the Bureau of Meteorology using the [Australian Fire Danger Rating System](#). The fire danger ratings are the trigger for your pre-emptive action plans.

Catastrophic fire danger forecasts are publicly available, and the department or Independent Schools Victoria (ISV) will be in contact to support you to close on these days.

Three other important things to be aware of this bushfire season:

1. If your site is exposed to an immediate threat of bushfire, grassfire or other emergency, as the school leader you have the authority to immediately enact your EMP.
2. Ensure vegetation is managed and maintained, including trimming and thinning vegetation and clearing flammable material from school sites. For further information, refer to advice from the CFA about [how to prepare your property](#).
3. It is recommended that you nominate a building or buildings on your school site to be used as last resort, temporary shelter-in-place option during an emergency, including a bushfire. Maintenance of your [shelter-in-place buildings](#) should be included in ongoing facilities management.

The department's [Category 4 List](#) is published annually.

### Find out more

For more information, templates and guidance, refer to our Policy and Advisory Library:

- [Bushfire and Grassfire Preparedness](#)
- [Emergency and Critical Incident Management Planning](#).

To discuss your emergency management arrangements or for further enquiries, email:

- [emergency.management@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:emergency.management@education.vic.gov.au)  
or
- [Vrqa.schools@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:Vrqa.schools@education.vic.gov.au)

Thank you again for your commitment to keeping your students, staff and the wider school community safe.

Kind regards

Simon Milligan, Executive Director

Security and Emergency Management Division

## CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING AT ECG

ECG is committed to providing an environment where students are safe and feel safe. Our [child safety and wellbeing policy](https://ecg.vic.edu.au/documents/) (https://ecg.vic.edu.au/documents/) explains how we support and maintain child safety and wellbeing at ECG.

It includes our:

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Child Safety Reporting and Responding Obligations Procedures, and
- Child Safety Code of Conduct, which outlines acceptable and unacceptable behaviours for all staff and volunteers at our school.

Our students and families are important partners in providing a child safe environment. These regular newsletter reminders are one of the ways we ensure our school community is aware of:

- our commitment to child safety, and
- how to provide feedback or raise child safety concerns.

If you have any concerns about child safety at any time, please contact Russel Praetz, Principal on [schooladmin@ecg.vic.edu.au](mailto:schooladmin@ecg.vic.edu.au) or 03 5622 6000. Any child safety complaints or concerns are treated seriously. For more information about our school's complaints process, see our [Complaints Policy](#).

We also welcome your ideas on ways we can improve our approach to child safety and wellbeing. If you have any suggestions or comments please contact:

Russel Praetz  
Principal  
[schooladmin@ecg.vic.edu.au](mailto:schooladmin@ecg.vic.edu.au)  
03 5622 6000.



# CONNECT WITH US



## IF YOUR STUDENT IS ABSENT

Notify the school via the following options:

- Through the Parent Portal on COMPASS
- Call 5622 6000 (option 6) and leave a message with your students name, campus, date of absence and reason for absence.

## JOIN US

We look forward to sharing our students' successes and keeping you in the loop with upcoming opportunities.

Stay informed about all the exciting student events, activities, and important school updates by connecting with us on our social media platforms!

Follow us for new opportunities, event reminders, and a glimpse into the amazing things happening at our school.

**03 5622 6000**

**WWW.ECG.VIC.EDU.AU**

