



Catholic Regional College Sydenham

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Dear Families,

This week our Year 11 students will go on retreat in their Clusters with their Home Group Tutors and Cluster Coordinators. This is a wonderful opportunity for all students to connect with their peers, many of whom have been at different schools previously, and get to know their teachers in an environment where the focus is on the 2 year journey that they have commenced here at the College. While this retreat is a part of each students' transition to CRC Sydenham, it is also a part of understanding their Catholic Faith as a young adult who, with you, we are preparing to send out into the world as an adult at the end of Year 12. It is our hope that they will continue to grow in their relationship with God and when they leave will know they are never alone.

The recent weather conditions have caused many parents to contact the College to enquire about the safety of the locations we will be attending for retreat. Safety of every individual student and staff member is always my primary concern. The retreat venue location our College's attendance at each location have been logged onto the State Government school's camps and excursions portal. I have also been in contact with camp operators and the CFA.

Gilwell Park in Gembrook is owned and operated by Scouts Victoria. The Park is often used by CFA and is maintained with fire breaks with fire prevention and management strategies in place. Gembrook has been used as a staging location by CFA and used for landing helicopters including the water bombing fire fighting helicopters. The fire fighters will not operate out of a location where there is risk to their personnel nor where there is risk for the aerial fire fighting equipment. The main fire they have been fighting is on the other side of the Bunyip State Forrest, many kilometres away from Gembrook and the campsite. We continue to monitor all locations and will not proceed where there is a risk or we are advised by the emergency services that there is a heightened risk to our students or staff.

The weather forecast for the retreat period is favourable for the fire fighters to control the current fires on the other side of the State Park. These fires do not pose a threat to the any retreat location. The College continues to monitor the situation and will follow all instructions and advice from the emergency services. Gilwell Park is being used by 4 different schools including CRC Sydenham during the same period. Emergency services will not allow schools to proceed where there is increased risk or where they may be a need to evacuate a location.

At this stage, having assessed the risks at every retreat venue, logged each location with the State Government's camps and excursions online school portal and received advice from retreat venues as well as local emergency services, the retreats will proceed as planned. In the event that any advice changes the College will notify you immediately and retreats will not proceed. Families can be assured that every precaution will continue to be taken by the College and at no point will we place students or staff at risk.

I thank you for your patience and understanding. Should any family have questions in regards to a specific retreat please contact the relevant Cluster Coordinator in the first instance.

Yours faithfully,

Brendan J Watson OAM
Principal