

SEPTEMBER 2 2021 - 12:00PM

SHOUT 2021: we are carrying on because what else can we do?

- Akaisha O'Keefe, Damascus College

Comment



Picture: Shutterstock

One thing I've learnt since being in this pandemic and having countless numbers of lockdowns (plus and a multitude of different reactions to it all) is that people have learnt really well to just carry on and deal with it all.

As Mr Dan Andrews held his 150,000th press conference of this pandemic, my family and I arrived in beautiful and sunny Ocean Grove to help our beloved family move to a new house. We sat in the car outside of their new house listening to Dan tell us that our seventh lockdown started at 1pm that day, on August 21, 2021.

We had a full day planned ahead of us: gardening, re-adjusting, some heavy-lifting and moving everything around into its new place, but that was all scrapped by the next twist from Mr Andrews and his health team.

So, at 11am we rushed and got our plans into action.

By 12pm our family made its booking at our favourite café- thankfully had space for us! When we arrived, I had expected mild panic to set in and a rush in town that would drive us all mad! But thankfully, the music was playing, and the smiles never ceased from customers and staff's faces.

Our server was very kind with us, and he joked around like it was any old Saturday. The lady who greeted us at the door was very kind, too, when we showed her our ID's... just to confirm that we weren't from the forbidden Melbourne!

We sat and enjoyed our meals for as long as we could, chatted and caught up about stories and life events, minor or major. When the adult chat became too much I went and played outside with my cousin in the garden.

With the sun gleaming down on us, we walked back to our cars, dreading our reality back home.

Our backs hot from the welcomed sun and our smiles slowly fading away. But the sun was helping us on our way, making it easier for us to say our goodbyes and do the right thing- the mantra of 2021.

The goodbye we shared on the pavement outside of the Bendigo Bank was different to any other we have had to do. As my grandma said to me, it is sad because we know that it will be the last time we can see each other for a long, long time. For just how long that time will be, we don't know either.

My aunty wasn't too fazed, her mind set was focused on cleaning up houses.

My mum needed to be the rock and was a calming influence on everyone.

My little cousin and grandma were just going along with the flow, and I was just hoping to be able to be in this beautiful town someday again soon. I can hang on until then.

As I sit here now, in the car driving on the long ride back to home sweet home, there is a lot of reminiscing going on. Of summer get togethers that we miss, holidays we wish we were on.

My family might feel a little shaken, but we keep carrying on, because what else could we do? As my grandmother's favourite saying goes "such is life" from the notorious Ned Kelly. I think it really captures exactly how we all feel and how we must just carry on and fight this thing all together because it's our life now and there is not much we can do about it.

- Akaisha O'Keefe is a Damascus College student who is writing for *The Courier's* youth platform **SHOUT**.
[Read SHOUT 2021 here.](#)

SEPTEMBER 2 2021 - 11:11AM

A love letter with thanks to all working parents from a student

- Kaitlyn Handreck, Damascus College year 10

Local News



The COVID-19 pandemic has no doubt affected everyone in some way.

Children have had to face a new way of schooling-remotely.

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Parents have had to learn how to best help school their kids.

Teachers have toiled tirelessly, balancing Microsoft Teams calls with marking, and then the supervision of their own children's learning.

Essential workers, nurses, and doctors, who have sweated all day and night trying to keep on top of regular inpatients plus the extra COVID patients.

People who live alone have felt more isolated.

Some people have lost jobs.

Everyone has been affected in some way.

But my heart would like to acknowledge one particular group- all of the parents who have needed to maintain the demands of their workload and at the same time help school their young children.

Juggling online meetings, book week costumes and mental health breaks, just so that their children have the best education they can. The hours they have had to put in, doing what feels like overtime because they do not have enough hours in the day.

A mum in a family I know of starts work at 6am, works for three hours before the school day starts. After school, she still does the normal household chores: cooking dinner, cleaning up the house, doing the washing - and to top it off after the kids were in bed, she worked late hours trying to keep up with her workload - some days she worked until about 1am.

This shows the extreme resilience of the parents to endure their long hours, schooling and home life.

While many parents lovingly do what they can to help their children, because they recognise the value of their child's education, they did not sign up for being part-time educator, full-time worker and full-time parent.



For parents, they have all needed to make sacrifices; some have cut back hours, used their long service leave, sick leave, carers leave - and all the while receiving very little thanks or understanding for doing this.

I'd like to take a moment to also think about the single-parent households - these parents in these situations would have found it extremely hard to help support their children. We probably do not realise this, but most would not have been able to cut down work hours because they are the sole provider and without their work, their household would not be receiving the sufficient income to maintain a normal lifestyle.

I am truly blessed to come from a household with two working parents - both of them had at least some leave they could use to help school us, one could work from home, and it all seemed to come along well. But unfortunately, my dad could not cut down on a lot of his hours as a previous injury meant that he needed to use up all of his long service leave and sick leave just to recover from his injury.

This is quite often forgotten.

Our parents are humans who need to take care of their health too - and so what worries me is the fact that my mum has used all of her leave on us during the lockdown, to be there for us. Somehow, my parents found a way to make sure that my siblings and I never went a day without their support.

The personal sacrifices that parents made so that we could all still get our adequate education was huge, and I know that so many families had it so much worse than mine.

I believe that a lot of the motivation from the parents was out of the love and care they had for their children and what they felt was best for them. This also is a beautiful value to live by, perseverance and never giving up, no matter what life throws your way.

I believe that even though lockdowns are tough on so many families, having everyone all together for every hour of the day has brought a special bond connecting us all! Yes, we have driven each other crazy, but we have also grown to love and respect each other so much more, really appreciating who we have in our lives. The endless games we played, baking challenges- that helped to fill the void of the friends and colleagues that we couldn't see in person due to restrictions.

I am truly grateful for all of the love and support my family have given me and my siblings. They truly have not been acknowledged enough.

I feel it is necessary to thank everyone who has enabled the support we needed during lockdown. So to the teachers, parents, politicians, friends, counselling services, and everyone who dealt with us students - you all deserve a big pat on the back for your constant perseverance through this time.

So, this is my love letter to all the parents and guardians out there. My letter reflects not only my gratitude but that of my peers also. We could not have made it without your love and support over the past 18 months.

WE LOVE YOU SO MUCH!

Love,

Kaitlyn Handreck

Damascus College, year 10

- *Kaitlyn Handreck writes for The Courier's youth platform SHOUT.*
[More from SHOUT 2021 here](#)

NEWS

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A love letter with thanks to all working parents from a student



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OPINION

'Such is life': we are carrying on because what else can we do?

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