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SA-Vic border closure forces family to make heartbreaking call

A Victorian farming family has given up the legal guardianship of their daughter to “protect her wellbeing” as South Australia’s hard border closure tears apart communities.

KATE DOWLER

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Bodhi, 17, and Holli Carberry, 15, (above) have been separated from their Apsley parents Scott Carberry and Paula Gust (below) due to the hard border between SA and Victoria. Picture: Supplied

AN APSLEY family has been forced to sign over the legal guardianship of their Victorian daughter to family members in South Australia, as the hard border between the two states rips apart what were strong [cross-](#)

[border communities](#), families and businesses.

The family, who run a successful mixed farming property near Apsley with a fence “literally on the SA border”, made the difficult decision to send their daughter to boarding school in Adelaide mid-term for her “wellbeing”.

But to ensure there was a legal guardian in SA, in case of a medical or other emergency, Paula Gust and her husband Scott Carberry made the heartbreaking call to sign over guardianship to his Adelaide brother and sister-in-law Matthew and Jenni Carberry.



Scott Carberry and Paula Gust. Picture: Supplied

The couple signed a declaration with SA Health giving the relatives legal Temporary Guardianship until December 31.

“My phone facial recognition technology won’t even recognise my face, I’ve been crying so much over this,” Ms Gust said of the “gut-wrenching” decision.

Their 15-year-old daughter Holli had attended school in Naracoorte, SA, but SA Premier Stephen Marshall’s decision to bring in the [hard border](#) last week would have forced her to be homeschooled, while her peers continued with their year nine studies and lives.

Ms Gust said she and her husband feared for Holli’s wellbeing if she remained excluded off from her school, peers and “life as she knows it”.

“It was difficult enough with the bus at the border (under previous restrictions), the checkpoint where she

had to get on and off at the border, give her identification number,” she said.

“It was too much crazy stuff to deal with already, but then to be excluded further and not knowing when it would end.”

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Instead of forcing Holli to face unknown period of exclusion and segregation, the parents made the call to move her to Seymour College, an Adelaide boarding school.

“We were told, in a roundabout way by the authorities, that changing her guardianship temporarily was the only way to do it,” Ms Gust said.

“If there was a medical emergency we (probably) would not have been granted an exemption (as a Victorian to enter SA) because nobody else is.

“There was no other solution.”

They will not be able to see their daughter during school holidays or weekends.

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The couple’s son Bodhi, 17, is living in SA completing an apprenticeship and also they cannot visit him.

Ms Gust is one of the organisers of the Facebook group “Cross-border Call-out”, which is rallying to push the SA Government to stop the hard border shutdown, and keep previous cross-border arrangements, including a 40-km border bubble zone.

The group’s petition, so far signed by almost 8700 people, calls on Mr Marshall to address the collateral damage caused to rural and regional communities on the border, which they say is “disproportionate to the COVID-19 threat in that region when risk mitigation strategies are implemented”.

The group recognises COVID-19 as a major health threat causing significant fear in the community, and accept border restrictions as a legitimate response, but want a “proportionate response”.

There are currently no [active Victorian cases](#) within 40km of the SA border.

Emma Kealy, MP for Lowan — the Victorian electorate that runs the border region from Rainbow in the north to the coastline in the south, has backed their calls.

Ms Kealy said the SA Premier needed to urgently adapt the cross-border restrictions to take a more “balanced approach to the risks”.

“I’m extremely disappointed”, she said, adding the hard border and lack of flexibility, and poor processes were leading to severe problems from people both sides of the line.

“From my point of view Premier Marshall has taken a strong man approach and he’s saying to Adelaide voters, I’ll keep you safe from Victoria; it might sounds like a clever (political) idea but I think it could have very harmful medium and long-term consequences for communities on both sides of the border, South Australians, families, and their businesses and medical needs, as well as Victorians.

“It’s going to have ongoing impacts too, SA regions draw a lot from Victorians for their economy; one Victorian farmer I’ve been speaking to today said they normally spend \$1 million a year in SA.”

Ms Kealy said Victorians and South Australians, living in remote areas along on the border, many of whom “live their lives over the border, send their kids to school, spend all their money there” felt “abandoned and totally isolated by SA and also not well supported by the Victorian government”.

The SA Premier’s office failed to return *The Weekly Times*’ calls.

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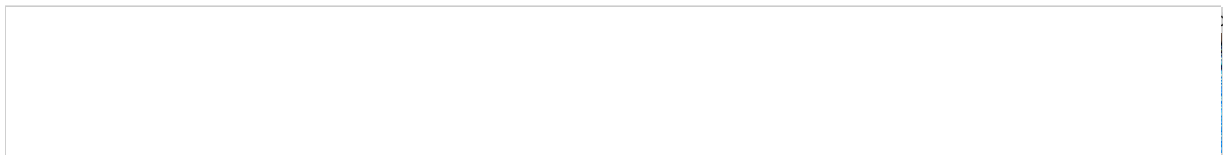
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