

30 July 2020

COVID-19 response plans essential in all schools

Casual staff must have wage security

The union (IEUA-QNT) representing 17,000 non-government sector teachers and school support staff across the state has reiterated its call for employers to have clear emergency response plans in place should a COVID-19 case be detected in one of their schools.

Independent Education Union – Queensland and Northern Territory (IEUA-QNT) Branch Secretary Terry Burke said the union had today written to all sector employers requesting confirmation COVID-19 response plans were in place and that these had been clearly communicated to all school employees and parents.

“Recent developments interstate, and now emerging in Queensland, have highlighted a number of priority safety protocols and protections that school employers must put into action,” Mr Burke said.

“Schools must be prepared to enact an emergency response plan should there be a suspected or confirmed infection in a school community.

“These should include protocols for when a school is required to close for thorough decontamination as well as the provision of paid leave for employees (including casuals) during any such period.

“Casual employees have so far been generally ignored in the various pandemic leave policies developed by employers during this crisis.

“Yet the very nature of insecure casual work has proven to have potentially disastrous consequences interstate where, in the absence of any paid leave, casual employees have felt compelled to attend work even when feeling unwell.

“Paid pandemic leave must be extended to include casual staff who are required to self-quarantine or in the case of a school closure,” he said.

Mr Burke said the union had also written directly to Queensland’s Chief Health Officer Dr Jeannette Young today seeking further clarifications regarding school operations.

“Our union is seeking an urgent meeting with Dr Young to consider concerns about the current advice regarding the operation of Queensland schools.

“The health and safety of school staff and students must be fundamental to government advice.

“Recent developments here, and interstate, clearly highlight the need to review current policy positions as well as best practice procedures in the event of a school closure due to community transmission of COVID-19,” Mr Burke said.

Contact: Laura Wise, IEUA-QNT Communications Manager: lwise@qieu.asn.au / 0419 653 131

The Independent Education Union of Australia – Queensland and Northern Territory Branch represents more than 17,000 education professionals across Queensland and the Northern Territory. www.qieu.asn.au