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Federal government is playing politics with our schools

Latest funding proposal is irresponsible and reckless

The federal government's attempt to use funding arrangements to force non-government schools into transitioning away from remote learning is divisive wedge-politics, the union representing 17,000 non-government teachers and school staff across Queensland and the Northern Territory said today.

Independent Education Union of Australia – Queensland and Northern Territory (IEUA-QNT) Branch Secretary Terry Burke said that on 16 April 2020 the Prime Minister Scott Morrison publicly asked parents to follow the advice and instructions of state premiers and education ministers.

"Less than two weeks later, the federal government is now seeking to break state-based COVID-19 containment strategies by cajoling non-government schools to make school-by-school decisions about student attendance – and encouraging them to base these decisions on financial rather than health and safety reasons," Mr Burke said.

"Schools, teachers and support staff are doing an extraordinary job of delivering quality education to our students in difficult circumstances.

"The federal government should support this in all schools and offer help where it is needed – but tying such help for one sector to a delivery method which contradicts state policy is reckless and irresponsible.

"School leaders have been put in an impossible position, with three days to decide whether to prioritise short-term financial matters or the health and safety of students and staff.

"This is extraordinary behaviour," Mr Burke said.

Mr Burke said the IEUA-QNT was deeply disappointed to see education funding yet again being used as a political weapon, particularly at a time when our staff and students need consistency, clarity and support from all levels of government.

"We call on non-government schools to reject this irresponsible federal government proposal, which brings no new funding or support to the table, compromises the safety of staff and students and seeks to exploit short term financial concerns," Mr Burke said.

"At best it 'kicks the can down the road' on funding arrangements rather than addresses the need for new financial arrangements to support schools experiencing financial strain.

"We call on the federal and state governments to support all schools through this crisis, to ensure that advice is clear and consistent, and to let teachers and support staff get on with the important work of safely educating our students," Mr Burke said.

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