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Health and safety of staff and students remains paramount in return to school plans

Maintaining the health and safety of all school staff and students will be paramount in the return to school by Kindy, Prep, Year 1, Year 11 and Year 12 students next week, the Independent Education Union of Australia – Queensland and Northern Territory (IEUA-QNT) Branch said today.

IEUA-QNT Branch Secretary Terry Burke said while the Queensland government had announced the return to school for students in these year levels from next Monday, 11 May 2020 – it must be underpinned by clear processes and procedures in every Queensland school to ensure the health and safety of everyone in the school environment.

“This includes maintaining appropriate social distancing measures for staff working within the physical school environment and ensuring vulnerable employees can continue to work from home,” Mr Burke said.

“It also means employers must ensure that the proper hygiene equipment is available in our schools.

“That may mean the hiring of more cleaning staff to ensure the required sanitisation and cleaning needed takes place every day within our schools,” he said.

Mr Burke said everyone in the school community would need to adhere to social distancing and good hygiene practices to assist in ensuring the safe transition of more students back to the physical school environment.

“A lot is still unknown about COVID-19 and we cannot let our guard down,” Mr Burke said.

“Already this past weekend we have seen school closures in Melbourne and Sydney due to confirmed cases of the virus.

“With any large-scale return to school by students, there needs to be an associated emergency response plan in all schools for dealing with potential cases and outbreaks.

“We call on all Catholic and independent school employers, to make these plans clear to their staff along with an outline of the social distancing and hygiene procedures that are in place to facilitate this return to school by these students next week.

“Our teachers and school support staff have done an outstanding job over the last two months in the most challenging of times and their employers need to ensure there is more than adequate attention given to a safe workplace,” Mr Burke said.

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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