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## Health and safety of staff and students critical as all students set to return to school

### No justification for staff stand downs

Maintaining the health and safety of all school staff and students needs to be the number one priority for schools following today's Queensland government announcement that all students will return to on-site learning from 25 May 2020, the Independent Education Union of Australia – Queensland and Northern Territory (IEUA-QNT) Branch said today.

IEUA-QNT Branch Secretary Terry Burke reiterated the need for all Catholic and independent school employers to provide clear guidelines to staff, students and parents regarding the social distancing and hygiene procedures that will need to be in place to facilitate this return to school by all students.

"Queensland 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 maintaining a safe workplace when all students return to school," Mr Burke said.

"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.

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

"There is also the clear need for more cleaning staff to be hired to ensure the required sanitisation and cleaning needed takes place every day within our schools," he said.

Mr Burke said the full return of students to school meant there was no justification for any stand downs of school staff by non-government school employers.

"With all students returning to school amid this unprecedented pandemic, there will be work for all teachers and school support staff as well as the employment of casual and relief teachers," Mr Burke said.

"Casual and relief teachers will be critical to the operation of our schools in order to support arrangements for vulnerable staff who continue to work from home.

"Schools may also need to continue the provision of online learning to vulnerable students who need to remain at home, and this is an obvious area where casual staff may be employed," 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](http://www.qieu.asn.au)*