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Federal government must amend JobKeeper wage subsidy to protect school support staff

With an increasing number of non-government school employers standing down, or threatening to stand down, support staff as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, the union representing these workers is calling on the federal government to amend its JobKeeper allowance package to ensure education employee livelihoods are protected.

Independent Education Union of Australia - Queensland and Northern Territory (IEUA-QNT) Branch Secretary Terry Burke said the union was aware of support staff stand downs at a number of schools across the state and the country – with more threatened.

“That is why our members are very disappointed that calls by our union to Federal Education Minister Dan Tehan for the JobKeeper package to be amended for non-government schools – at least to be consistent with other NGOs and not-for-profit organisations – have so far been rejected,” Mr Burke said.

In a tweet earlier this week (6 April 2020), Minister Tehan said “Non-Government Schools are eligible for the JobKeeper Payment. They will need to meet the turnover threshold of a 30 per cent reduction for those with an annual turnover of less than \$1 billion”.

“Minister Tehan seems unaware of the reality that the levels of state and government school funding mean that the vast majority of non-government schools will not meet this criterion to access the new JobKeeper wage subsidy,” Mr Burke said.

“This means, IEUA-QNT members will continue to face a combination of unwarranted, unnecessary stand-downs while simultaneously being denied access to the JobKeeper allowance.

“As a result, the future of non-government school support staff and their families is being put at risk as is the future of our schools and the quality of education provided to students.

“We call on the Minister and the federal government to take immediate steps to amend the JobKeeper wage subsidy so that all non-government schools have access to this initiative – ensuring the protection of school support staff jobs and their financial futures.

“From teacher aides, school office administration staff, laboratory and audio-visual technicians, our school support staff have roles essential to the functioning of our schools and to the quality of education provided to students.

“They provide critical support to our teachers, students and our schools – the federal government must now ensure it supports them during this unprecedented crisis,” Mr Burke said.

ENDS

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