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Union calls for stop to stand downs of school support staff

The union representing 17,000 teachers and support staff in non-government schools across Queensland and the Northern Territory has been advised that a small number of independent schools are considering standing down support staff without pay in Term 2 because of issues arising from COVID-19.

Independent Education Union of Australia Queensland and Northern Territory (IEUA-QNT) Branch Secretary Terry Burke said the union was calling for an immediate stop to any such action by independent schools.

“In light of the federal government’s new JobKeeper wage subsidy payments, there is no reason to stand down any school support staff,” Mr Burke said.

“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 our students,” he said.

Employers will be paid a wage subsidy of up to \$1500 per fortnight per employee, under the federal government’s plan to keep Australians in work during the COVID-19 crisis.

“Staff must not be stood down while these plans are still evolving,” Mr Burke said.

“Our union is seeking for all staff in schools and early childhood education centres to remain fully employed, even while schools and centres are operating with reduced numbers of students.

“There is no shortage of work to be done - schools need to creatively explore ways to ensure school sites remain safe for the staff and small numbers of students who attend and to enhance the online learning provided to students off-site.

“Our school support staff are already playing a valuable role in assisting teachers to provide online learning and maintaining contact with students and their families.

“Schools cannot be expected to deliver a new hybrid model of education without teachers and support staff working together.”

Mr Burke said all current awards and collective agreements covering teachers and support staff in non-government schools require employers to consult with employees and the IEUA-QNT as their union about any potential stand downs.

“Schools delivering online education are not shut and as such we are calling for an immediate halt to any threatened stand downs in our schools,” Mr Burke said.

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