

MEMBER ADVISORY

Wednesday, 31 March 2021 | **COVID-19 Member Advisory #15**

Leave entitlements and access to WFH emerge as the key issues as lockdown continues

IEU members from across the Greater Brisbane Area continue to demonstrate extraordinary commitment and adaptability in the face of an uncertain health emergency.

The impact of the current lockdown is extreme and wide-reaching in schools – yet once again your professionalism has ensured the smoothest transition possible for students and their families during such a challenging time.

Work from home (WFH) must be considered a viable option

Members report the majority of school employers in the Greater Brisbane Area have adopted a common-sense approach to school operations this week.

In most cases staff supervision rosters have been developed to enable the majority of school staff to access work from home options. Our union and IEU Chapter Representatives have been successful in resolving such matters at the school level where initial flexible work arrangements were being denied.

We commend those employers who have worked collaboratively to develop timely and equitable arrangements with their staff.

IEU members should seek advice and support if concerns remain at their particular school.

Are support staff being guaranteed wage security at your school?

Our union has received some concerning reports from members in the independent sector regarding forced leave arrangements being imposed on support staff.

Our school officer and services staff members, often already subject to lower part-time and term-time incomes, cannot afford to exhaust their valuable personal leave accruals this week.

Schools that have modified their operations during the lockdown should commit to normal pay for all support staff. In many cases, your employer has committed to such protections with our union – **get in touch immediately** if support staff are being disadvantaged at your school.

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Are regional members forced to isolate upon return from Brisbane?

Initial government advice at the time of the lockdown announcement required anyone who had visited the Greater Brisbane Area since Saturday, 20 March to follow the same lockdown procedures.

While many employers committed to fair-minded special leave for employees in such situations, others have sought to impose unreasonable arrangements such as directions for employees to access their personal leave accruals.

In the most egregious of cases, employers have sought to penalise the leave entitlements of their staff who had visited Brisbane due solely to school work commitments or employer directed activities. Employers must accept their clear responsibility in such cases by providing additional special paid leave.

The QLD government has now provided an important **clarification from the Chief Health Officer that education workers are deemed 'essential workers'**. This new government advice now states that education workers are not required to follow lockdown isolation procedures upon returning to their location outside of Greater Brisbane and they are able to attend their normal school workplace.

Given this clarification, any employer that seeks to exclude an 'essential education worker' should only do so at the employer's expense and provide paid approved leave to the employee.

Our protection is our collective strength

Our full range of member resources and support materials are available at **COVID-19 Resource Hub**.

Another challenging school term will soon conclude, remember that our union is here for immediate support and advice throughout the school vacation period.

Disclaimer: This document is issued for general guidance only and does not constitute professional advice.

Do not rely solely on this document. All financial IEUA-QNT members can contact our union for advice about their personal circumstances. We cannot accept responsibility for the consequences should any person act in reliance on this document without obtaining appropriate advice from our union.