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School staff need priority vaccine protection Paid vaccine leave will make a difference

The Independent Education Union – Queensland and Northern Territory (IEU-QNT) Branch is again calling on the federal government to prioritise vaccinations for school staff.

IEU-QNT Branch Secretary Terry Burke said school employers must also support staff by providing paid time, if needed, for vaccinations.

“The unprecedented impact of COVID-19 continues to escalate in our community and in our school workplaces,” Mr Burke said.

“Current outbreaks and the presence of new and even more dangerous variants of the virus in Queensland and the Northern Territory highlight the importance of COVID vaccines – all school staff must have access to this critical safety measure.

“School staff have at all times met the challenges of this pandemic with professionalism and commitment to our students and they deserve safe workplaces.

“Clear evidence has emerged interstate and overseas that the Delta variant is more transmissible, particularly among children.

“New South Wales authorities have confirmed transmission between children and [experts agree that recent outbreaks reinforce the need to accelerate the vaccination of school employees](#).

“The federal government must take the lead of countries such as [the United States and United Kingdom](#), who have been battling the highly dangerous Delta variant for months and who now classify school staff as priority workers.

“We are also calling on school employers to provide up to two days of special paid vaccination leave for employees who are unable to obtain appointments outside of work time.

“COVID-19 interruptions have the potential to cause significant disruptions and threaten safety in our schools.

“A shared commitment by employers to support the vaccination program will help minimise this risk.

“We deserve safe workplaces and school communities – the federal government and employers can take immediate steps to help make this happen,” Mr Burke said.

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The Independent Education Union – Queensland and Northern Territory (IEU-QNT) represents more than 17,000 education professionals across Queensland and the Northern Territory. www.ieuqnt.org.au