

9 January 2022

## **Non-government employers have additional time to plan safe return following changes to school commencement date**

The union representing over 17,000 teachers and staff in Queensland non-government schools says non-government school and kindergarten employers must now use the additional time to plan for a very safe and supportive return to education settings given today's (9 January 2022) announced changes to the 2022 school year.

Mr Burke said IEU-QNT members had a range of questions regarding how today's announcement will be managed in terms of what can be reasonably expected of teachers and other education staff.

"These questions include how remote learning will be conducted for Year 11 and 12 students from the week commencing 31 January 2022," Mr Burke said.

"The plan to manage the attendance at schools (from the week starting Monday, 24 January 2022) for vulnerable children and the children of essential workers also needs to be confirmed by employers as soon as possible.

"Non-government school employers must also outline their plans for the eventual reopening of schools as well as questions posed by changes to the structure of the school year," he said.

Mr Burke said the plan for the eventual return to school needed to deal with a range of significant issues and concerns currently held by IEU-QNT members including:

- how staff and student exposures will be managed and return to school and kindergarten policies.
- what enhanced pandemic leave arrangements will be put in place.
- how air quality and ventilation improvements will be made in classrooms and other enclosed education settings.
- what ongoing work from home policies will be enacted for school staff with medical vulnerabilities.
- will Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) be provided for free to teachers, school staff and early childhood education employees given their role as frontline and vulnerable workers.
- what provisions will be put in place to support casual teachers and what could their role be in providing remote learning and assisting in filling possible staff shortages.

Mr Burke said the notion of an extended length of the school year announced today will clearly be rejected by teachers in schools.

"IEU-QNT are dedicated professional who have put the safety and continued quality education of their students and school communities front and centre for the last two years and an extension of the school year would be poor recognition of that commitment," Mr Burke said.

"Our members are ready to get on with doing their jobs, we just need their employers to ensure they can do so in a supportive and safe environment," he said.

### **ENDS**

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*The Independent Education Union – Queensland and Northern Territory (IEU-QNT) represents more than 17,000 teachers, school support staff, principals and early childhood education employees across Queensland and the Northern Territory.*

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