

1 March 2022

Union files dispute with industrial umpire over decision to reopen Brisbane Catholic schools

The union representing over 17,000 teachers and staff in Queensland non-government schools has filed an urgent dispute with the industrial umpire – the Fair Work Commission (FWC) – over Brisbane Catholic Education’s decision to reopen the majority of schools today Tuesday, 1 March 2022.

BCE’s decision comes despite [the Queensland Government’s decision to keep all Brisbane state schools closed](#) over ongoing safety concerns related to the flood emergency.

The government’s decision to close these schools was based on risk assessments of the schools concerned and to prevent community members from travelling on roads – many of which remain impacted by localised flooding and damage.

IEU-QNT Assistant Branch Secretary Brad Hayes said the dispute was filed with the FWC late last night after BCE failed to consult with our union over the decision to reopen schools.

“Failure to consult with employees and their union goes against workplace health and safety legislation,” Mr Hayes said.

Mr Hayes said our union had received reports that teachers and school support staff are facing long and hazardous commutes as they navigate flood damaged roads – many of which remain cut off.

“The government’s decision to keep schools closed was made in part to keep community members off damaged roads,” Mr Hayes said.

“Reports from across Brisbane this morning indicate that even open roads are heavily gridlocked and emergency services need priority access.

“BCE’s decision has contributed to teachers and school support staff making unnecessary journeys on potentially hazardous roads.”

“In the absence of leadership from their employer, staff are being forced to access leave in order to prevent themselves from being placed in unsafe situations,” Mr Hayes said.

Mr Hayes said IEU members in affected schools are meeting urgently today to consider critical safety and consultation issues.

“Our union is calling on BCE to keep schools closed while individual risk assessments can be undertaken in schools in consultation with workplace health and safety representations at the site level and our union at a peak level,” he said.

Mr Hayes said it was important to remember that no employee can be directed to attend work if their safety is at risk; this includes any employer requirement for an employee to travel to work in unsafe or risky conditions.

“Many employees will simply be unable to undertake duties this week due to property damage, caring responsibilities or power outages,” Mr Hayes said.

“Now is the time for employers to do the right thing and show compassion and support for staff – we call on BCE to consult with our union and keep schools closed while safety concerns can be addressed.”

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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