

## COVID-19

### Key health and safety and educational issues raised by AEU members

When you ring or email your local MP you may wish to draw on the feedback members have provided to the AEU to help you describe your experiences at your school.

#### *General*

- Staff OHS concerns are serious and increasing.
- Staff are increasingly concerned as community transmission grows and mixing at school, particularly in classrooms, where we cannot physically distance easily feels unsafe.
- Staff anxiety and stress are causing them to become unwell.
- Schools need more flexibility to implement programs to increase staff and student health and safety.
- Some schools are requiring too many staff to be on-site when they don't need to be contrary to the key government message that 'if you can work from home you must work from home'.
- Remote learning, with staff based at home, has worked before.
- There is significant anxiety about the level of community transmission. The Chief Health Officer has advised that restricting movement is effective in reducing transmission of the virus, so it makes no sense to have school staff and students onsite when they don't need to be.
- Some teachers and support staff of P-10 students, are working on-site, alone in a classroom, meeting via zoom with staff in the next room – this could easily be done from home.
- Our school has had a positive case and this has caused a greater level of stress and concern for staff, students and families.
- The rate of student absenteeism is high which means some students are missing out completely on an educational program.
- Despite not being required to provide remote learning programs and materials for absent students, many staff are doing so and this is having a significant impact on already unsustainable workloads.
- Some students that are attending are distracted, anxious, and finding it difficult to focus on their learning.

#### *VCE/VCAL*

- Senior Secondary campuses, with no excess classroom space or small classrooms cannot implement physical distancing in a feasible way.
- There is significant anxiety about the travel to and from school for senior students and staff.
- Our students attend other neighbouring schools to undertake some VCE or VET programs. There is considerable concern that if there is a positive case at one of these schools it may impact on many staff and students across schools. In other industries, such as aged care, they are trying to limit the numbers of staff moving between different sites.

## Special schools

- Reports of approx. 50% absenteeism are very concerning and means many students are missing out on the education and care they need.
- Special school students are often more vulnerable and have multiple health issues. Some parents are keeping their children at home because they are worried about their health, but this means they cannot access educational programs.
- Those attending often have significant medical, toileting and other requirements making physical distancing impossible. It also means staff are exposed to greater risk when carrying out these necessary processes.
- Anxiety for this group is significant, change is difficult to manage.
- Temperature checking requirements are needed but add to anxiety for staff and students.
- Checking student's temperature after being bused together with other students to school does not make sense and places students and staff at risk unnecessarily
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- Staff want access to PPE to provide greater protection, however access is sometimes limited with not enough equipment or clear guidance on its use.