



COVID-19

Member Update - 12 May 2020

We now have a clear roadmap for the return to on-site schooling in Victoria. Our job now is to ensure that on the ground this transition is safe, fair, consultative and does not increase workloads for already stretched staff.

Education Minister James Merlino this morning clarified that on 26 May (two weeks from today), government school students in Prep, Grades 1 & 2 and Year 11 & 12 will return to school campuses, with other year levels to follow two weeks later on 9 June. Monday 25 May will be a pupil-free day to allow for planning.

In [public statements made yesterday and this morning](#), I said that the IEU supports this cautious return, providing that a number of key matters are prioritised. These follow from the resolution endorsed by IEU Committee of Management last week [outlining the fundamental principles of this return](#).

We expect the CECV to announce further details of arrangements in Victorian Catholic schools shortly, but we understand that these will closely follow government school timelines and protocols. We believe that it is important that independent schools do the same and will continue to advocate for consistency across all Victorian schools.

There are many important questions and considerations which arise from this planned transition. We are working through the detail and are in active discussions with employer representatives, and we will continue to advocate for safe and fair working environments for all IEU members. Below are some of the immediate considerations for members, and we will provide further updates over coming weeks.

Cleaning, hygiene and social distancing. Schools will need to initiate effective protocols to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19. Government schools will dramatically increase the frequency and intensity of their cleaning schedule, and all non-government schools should do so as well. Parents must be strongly encouraged to practice social distancing at the school gate, and should not be entering school grounds or approaching staff unless absolutely necessary. Protocols such as staggered drop-off times should also be considered.

Employees considered to be at high risk should not be attending the workplace.

Details of high risk categories can be found [here](#) - they include:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 50 years and older with one or more chronic medical conditions
- People 65 years and older with one or more chronic medical conditions
- People 70 years and older
- People with compromised immune systems

Some members who do not fall into the above categories will have legitimate concerns about attending the workplace – these include pregnant staff as well as those who live with or care for anyone in a high-risk category. We will continue to advocate for employers to take a fair and compassionate approach towards this. For the moment, we advise affected members to seek medical advice and put their concerns in writing to their employer – and of course to contact us for assistance and individual advice.

Managing caring responsibilities. The ability of staff with children in the cohort not returning to school until 9 June to attend the workplace before this may also be limited. Again, we will be advocating for a compassionate approach to this which acknowledges staff caring responsibilities – and again, members should contact us for individual advice around this.

Consultation is key! For this transition to be safe and effective, all staff must have the opportunity to have their say and have any concerns addressed. The roles of IEU Reps, Health and Safety Reps and Consultative Committee Reps have never been more important. If you are an HSR or Consultative Committee Rep we encourage you to respond to this email to ensure that we have you correctly listed on our system, as we want to be able to support you throughout this process.

We know also that there are many members, including those employed in ELICOS colleges, Registered Training Organisations as well as Casual Relief Teachers, who may not be returning to work as normal as part of this transition and who have lost income or employment. We will continue to work with and advocate for these cohorts, and we encourage you to update us on your circumstances so that we can best support you.

Finally, I want to say again that the work of IEU members across Victoria in delivering quality education to our students over recent months is nothing short of extraordinary and that you deserve to be congratulated. I know that many of you are exhausted, and that we still have a big job ahead of us - but please do take the time to look after yourself after your efforts so far. We will continue to stand beside you, advocate for you and support you throughout the next phase of this very unusual year.

If you need assistance, advice or support, do not hesitate to contact us:
email info@ieuvictas.org.au or send a text message to 0480 092 251.

In unity

Debra James

General Secretary