

18 March 2020

Dear

I write on behalf of ELICOS staff in your workplace. The spread of COVID-19 poses a serious risk to ELICOS staff, students and the broader community. As an international school, with high concentrations of staff and students, yours is a high-risk workplace. It is vital we act responsibly and take urgent steps towards harm minimisation.

As such we call for the implementation of the following:

1. Firstly, that alternative duties/the option of working from home be arranged in the event of teachers being unable to teach 'face-to-face'. We ask for a proactive approach to ensure that digital teaching is available, and is facilitated in a timely manner, so that teachers can continue to play the central role they do in the functioning of the school and the provision of quality education.
2. It is vital that no staff are punished for acting responsibly. If a staff member cannot work due to illness or self-isolation, they should not lose pay. Regular and long-term casuals, along with sessional and ongoing staff, must be financially compensated by way of special leave arrangements.

That all employees, including casual, sessional and ongoing be provided with 2 weeks' paid special leave arrangements, consistent with teachers in other sectors. For instance 10 days special leave for government teachers and for Catholic teachers.

In the ELICOS sector, International House has set a useful precedent in covering all rostered shifts for teachers at their Bondi campus, which has had to shut for a week due to a student testing positive for Covid-19: other employers should announce they are following this example.

Ensuring that *all* teachers are compensated during self-quarantine is not only a necessary measure to ensure the economic wellbeing of those individuals, but also vital for the protection of the wider community. There have already been reports of casual workers in other industries continuing to work while sick, and failing to undertake the appropriate self-isolation measures due to it being financially unviable to do so. This dynamic creates a broader risk to public health during a time when we should be working together to mitigate the risk of infection.

If the relevant medical authorities' advice is that schools should close, and should they be unable to provide alternative arrangements for teachers, it is important that teachers are able to return to their jobs when conditions stabilise. Many teachers have committed their time and energy on a regular basis to the schools where they are employed. Existing staff should be prioritised for re-employment following a period of leave, or in the event of a temporary school closure.

3. Workplace health and safety laws give employers a legal obligation to provide a healthy and safe working environment. To do so, ELICOS schools must ensure the following are implemented:

- Hand sanitiser widely and readily available (ideally in every classroom);
- Adequate and multi-lingual signage for students to ensure the hygiene and caution is strictly observed;
- Hygiene and virus transmission prevention incorporated into lesson plans for every level and orientation for new students;
- Increased and improved cleaning measures;
- The immediate cessation of all non-essential large gatherings such as combined classes, graduations and excursions.

Workers in the ELICOS sector are committed to playing an active role in the society-wide effort to contain this pandemic. We believe the measures outlined in this letter will help us, and the whole sector, to play our part in achieving this. I look forward to discussing these issues further at your earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Debra James', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

**Debra James**  
General Secretary