



COVID-19

Member Update

Victorian Independent Schools - 24 March

As you will be aware, Victorian school holidays have been brought forward for students and start today in most schools. Arrangements for staff will vary from school to school, but in most cases staff have been asked to keep working this week with a focus on preparing for possible remote learning arrangements for next term. We welcome this decision, which was supported by Victoria's Chief Health Officer. Our national union yesterday [released a statement](#) calling for all other states to follow Victoria's lead.

We have been in frequent discussions with Independent Schools Victoria and have communicated with all employers to advocate for the safety of staff and to emphasise that no employee, including support and ancillary staff, should be financially disadvantaged as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

TERM DATES

We understand that arrangements between schools vary significantly. While independent schools are not required to follow the state government's early dismissal of students, the vast majority have already dismissed students and transitioned to safe working arrangements.

Many schools will continue to run "supervision classes" for vulnerable students, the children of staff and the children of essential services workers – where this is occurring these should be small classes and teachers must be properly resourced to ensure that they are run safely and in a manner which minimises transmission risk.

Contact the IEU if you have concerns about requirements of staff or the manner in which your school is operating this week.

ATTENDING THE WORKPLACE

Where schools have asked staff to continue working this week, staff who are unable to or have good reason not to attend the workplace should request this immediately. Any proposal for work-from-home arrangements should be given genuine case-by-case consideration. If you are in a high risk category or you live with or care for a person in a high risk category you should make your employer aware of this and request either to work-from-home or to take personal leave (reasonable evidence of the risk factors may be requested by the employer). If you have children requiring care at home, you should request personal leave in the form of carer's leave.

If you make a request and do not believe that your employer's response is reasonable, please contact the IEU for further advice and support.

YOUR INCOME SECURITY

The economic fall-out from this pandemic will be extensive, and it may be that over the longer term some schools are significantly impacted. However, our schools receive considerable government funding and the vast majority are relatively well-insulated against short-term economic shock – so at this stage it is not justifiable for any employer to move to a position that would jeopardise any employee's income. Where schools are unable to provide safe and appropriate working arrangements for staff, they should continue to pay their salary regardless. Many independent schools have been commendably quick to guarantee that no staff will be financially disadvantaged in the foreseeable future, and some have committed to offering additional paid leave to staff who are affected by COVID-19.

We will continue to strongly advocate for the financial security of our members throughout this difficult time. Please contact us if you have any concerns about employment arrangements at your school.

At this stage, we do not know how our schools will operate from the start of Term 2. There is a high likelihood that remote learning arrangements will be put in place – these could last for days, weeks or months. These will present significant challenges, but we believe that with genuine staff consultation they can be made to work.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the extraordinary work you've been doing over recent weeks. We know that IEU members have played a crucial role, providing clear information and vital hygiene education as well as stability and calm leadership to our students in this deeply stressful time.

Please continue to check for further information and updates on this [dedicated section of our website](#) and on our [Facebook page](#).

**If you need assistance, advice or support, do not hesitate to contact us on
(03) 9254 1860 / 1800 622 889 / info@ieuvictas.org.au**

In unity

Debra James

General Secretary