

A step in the right direction but more needs to be done

The IEU welcomes the announcement by the TCEO that, consistent with the arrangements in government schools, Catholic schools are now preparing for an earlier end to term for all students. However, we share the AEU's concerns that more needs to be done – and urgently.

It is clear that staff safety is not properly being considered. Vulnerable employees work in our schools or may have members in their household who are vulnerable. Students themselves may be at less risk, but their families, and the adults who work with them may not be. Vulnerable employees need to be able to work from home immediately. The Union has raised these concerns this morning directly with the federal Education Minister, Dan Tehan, and communicated them to the office of the Tasmanian Premier.

'The rest of Australia can't have gatherings of more than a few people, but somehow the rules can be bent for teachers, principals, and support staff' said Deb James, General Secretary.

'It is still incredibly challenging to put in place the social distancing and hygiene requirements for students that would enable schools to operate safely'.

We note that many independent schools have already moved to remote learning arrangements.

The IEU calls on the Catholic Education Office and independent schools to put in place arrangements immediately that:

1. Ensure that employees with concerns about their health or the health of a member of their household can work from home
2. Enable the provision of learning for vulnerable students and the children of essential workers but direct all other students to stay at home.

'This can't just be about parental choice' said Ms James. 'Our members need the time to prepare properly for a potentially hybrid approach to education of all their students across multiple settings'

