

Key Advice for IEU Members in Victorian Schools – 10 August

This will continue to be a challenging time for everyone - school leaders, staff, students and parents. We urge patience and flexibility from all parties as we come to terms with the new arrangements.

This document is a summary of our current understanding of and advice around remote learning arrangements, permit requirements, on-site staffing and availability of childcare, kinder and school supervision for the children of staff. As we know from recent experience, arrangements, restrictions and government advice can change at short notice.

The vast majority of principals and school leaders have shown a genuine commitment to staff health, wellbeing, workload management, employment security and to meaningful workplace consultation throughout this crisis - we thank them for this and acknowledge how challenging it has been to lead through this crisis.

We know that some IEU members - particularly CRTs and those employed in ELICOS or RTO / Private Provider settings - are far more likely to have their employment and income seriously affected over coming weeks. Make sure you keep us posted about your situation and remember that we can consider waiving fees for any member suffering serious financial hardship – contact us to make a request.

There are big changes being implemented very quickly – the IEU will continue to advocate for you and keep you informed. Where the health and safety or employment of IEU members is put at risk your union will be there to back you – please don't hesitate to contact us for advice or assistance.

Remote Learning

From Wednesday 5 August, Victorian schools switched to remote learning for students at all year levels. This will continue until at least 13 September.

In Melbourne, on-site supervision will be available for:

- Children whose parents are permitted workers, where nobody in the household is able to provide care. Currently this does not appear to include children of those working from home.
- Vulnerable children in out of home care, children known to child protection and other agencies and children the school identifies as vulnerable.
- Children with a disability who also fit one of the above two categories.

In rural and regional Victoria, on-site supervision will be available to:

- Children whose parents cannot work from home
- Vulnerable children
- Any child with a disability.

The very clear message is that as few people as possible should be onsite at a school – this includes students and staff.

Permits

In metropolitan Melbourne from midnight last night, a permit is required for any permitted employee to attend their workplace and travel between their home and workplace. You may travel to your workplace once without a permit in order to collect it.

Principals/employers are responsible for issuing the permits to school staff who are required to be onsite for supervision, assessments, and any other critical tasks that can't be done remotely. Employees are required to carry their permit or have a digital version available on their device.

There are significant penalties for employers and employees who breach the scheme requirements.

On-site staffing

Key Points:

- **Those who are not required for on-site supervision or other essential on-campus tasks must work from home.**
- **Genuine consultation with staff, Health and Safety Reps and the IEU rep should occur in all workplaces.**
- **It is essential that the personal circumstances of staff as well as issues of equity be taken into consideration in the allocation of on-campus duties.**

Consideration of who and how many staff are onsite at any point should be based on basic operational needs. Staffing levels should be sufficient to run student supervision programs and to perform essential tasks that can only be performed on the school property – and no higher.

The question should not be whether an employee's usual tasks can be performed remotely, but rather how many staff are actually needed on campus at any time to meet operational requirements. Blanket arrangements such as mandatory attendance for certain categories of staff are not appropriate nor consistent with health advice.

It is important that there is genuine consultation around the allocation of on-site duties. While equity is important, right now individual and collective health and safety must be a top priority, together with genuine consideration of individual circumstances including caring responsibilities.

The Catholic Education Commission of Victoria School Operations Guide provides the following advice to principals:

Principals should consult their staff to identify those willing and able to work on-site, either in an ongoing or rostered basis. They should ensure staff are consulted on, and have input into, the ways work may be organised and allocated.

Staff work hours at home should be consistent with the attendance arrangements already in place at each school and determined in accordance with the school's local consultative arrangements.

Schools should communicate these hours of work to parents/carers and indicate that teachers and support staff are not required and will not necessarily be available to students or families/carers outside these hours.

Staff working from home, including teachers and education support staff, will not visit or work in students' homes.

Working alone or in isolation from others presents hazards of which employees should be made aware, including impacts on mental wellbeing. Principals and school staff are encouraged to develop a program of regular contact with staff who are working from home.

On site staffing requirements may vary between schools and may change over time as attendance varies.

If it is necessary to identify which staff are to work on-site either for a specified day or days or as part of a roster to meet the above requirements, the school should follow procedures determined at the school using the school's consultative procedures.

The [Operations Guide for Victorian Government Schools](#) outlines the following process, in the absence of local arrangements determined through consultation, for principals to observe in allocating onsite duties. This is a useful starting point for discussions and consultation in all schools – in particular we support the emphasis on offering employment to CRTs before resorting to rostering staff who would prefer to work from home:

- a. The principal will notify all staff they are seeking volunteers to be available to work onsite for a specified day or days or as part of a roster.*
- b. If there are insufficient volunteers, Casual Relief Teachers (CRTs) should be engaged [...].*
- c. Where it has been identified through (a) and (b) above, that there are insufficient staff to meet the needs of the school, the principal will provide an opportunity for the employees to provide reasons why they should not be considered for work on-site for a specified day or days or as part of a roster.*
- d. The principal will take into account the overall work needs of the school and the submissions from individual employees in accordance with (c) above in determining which staff will be required to work on-site for a specified day or days or as part of a roster.*

e. The principal will make every effort to ensure that an employee is not identified to work on-site where there are compelling personal compassionate grounds pertaining to that employee.

In addition to caring responsibilities and willingness to attend the workplace, individual risk factors must be taken into account. The Victorian Chief Health Officer has advised that individuals may be at greater risk of more serious illness if they contract coronavirus (COVID-19) if they are:

- aged 70 years and older.
- aged 65 years and older and with chronic medical conditions.
- of any age and have a compromised immune system.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and are aged over 50 years and with one or more chronic medical conditions.

Staff who are medically vulnerable or living with or caring for a medically vulnerable person should work remotely. It may be necessary to seek advice from a medical practitioner to provide to the employer. If such an employee is unable to work either on-site or remotely, they can access personal leave by providing a medical certificate.

Childcare, kindergarten and school supervision for children of school staff.

In metropolitan Melbourne, a staff member who is a permitted worker or who is performing work from home and who can attest that there is nobody in their household who can provide care to their child will be entitled to access childcare or kindergarten. A permit signed by the employer and the employee is required.

Permitted workers working on site will be able to access school supervision programs for their child if there is nobody else in their household to provide care. At this stage this does not include the school-aged children of school staff working from home.

Childcare and kindergarten remain open as usual in regional Victoria.

Other resources

- [**Current advice on Victorian restrictions**](#) (DHHS website)
- [**COVID-19 section of the IEU website**](#)
- [**Permitted Worker Permit / Version incorporating Childcare/Kinder form**](#) (for those working onsite)
- [**Access to Childcare and Kinder Form**](#) (for those working from home)
- [**IEU Advice: JobKeeper / JobSeeker \(August update\)**](#)
- [**IEU Advice: working from home**](#)
- [**IEU Advice: alternative Duties for Education Support Staff**](#) – ideas that ES staff may find useful in discussions with their principal about alternative duties during this period of remote learning