

**Independent Education Union Victoria Tasmanian - Media Release - 29 April**

The Federal Government's attempt to use funding arrangements to force non-government schools into transitioning away from remote learning is divisive and destructive wedge-politics.

On 16 April, the Prime Minister publicly asked parents to follow the advice and instructions of state premiers and education ministers. Less than two weeks later, the federal government is now seeking to break state-based COVID-19 containment strategies by cajoling non-government schools to make school-by-school decisions about student attendance – and encouraging them to base these decisions on financial rather than health and safety reasons.

Schools, teachers and support staff are doing an extraordinary job of delivering quality education to our students in difficult circumstances. The federal government should support this in all schools and offer help where it is needed – but tying such help for one sector to a delivery method which contradicts state policy is reckless and irresponsible.

Schools and teachers cannot deliver curriculum by two modes at once. Schools must be able to commit to either remote learning or to classroom-based learning, and the transition between them must be clear and consistent. The Federal Government's funding benchmark for schools of 50% student attendance will significantly undermine the quality of the education that teachers can provide.

School leaders have been put in an impossible position, with three days to decide whether to prioritise short-term financial certainty or the health and safety of students and staff. This is extortion. The IEU is deeply disappointed to see education funding yet again being used as a political weapon, particularly at a time when our staff and students need consistency, clarity and support from all levels of government.

The IEU calls on non-government schools to reject this irresponsible federal government proposal which brings no new funding or support to the table, compromises the safety of staff and students and seeks to exploit short-term financial concerns. We call on state and federal governments to support all schools through this crisis, to ensure that advice is clear and consistent, and to let teachers and support staff get on with the important work of safely educating our students.

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