

8 April 2020

The Principal via email

Dear Principal

I'm writing to you to seek details of employment arrangements at your school during Term 2. Arrangements in Victorian government schools have now been clarified, and we trust that the key principles designed to minimise transmission of COVID-19 and to ensure the safety of staff and students will be observed by all schools.

Firstly, though, I want to acknowledge the great challenges faced by all schools and school leaders as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. I know that you are being faced with difficult situations and tough decisions on a daily basis, and I assure you that our intention is to work constructively and flexibly with employers and employees to ensure that our school communities get through this challenge.

We have been heartened by the significant number of employers in education who have been prepared to commit to ensuring that vulnerable employees are protected and that no members of staff are disadvantaged in terms of their employment during the current crisis. We believe that this deserves recognition and acknowledgement and so we intend to publish our understanding of the commitments and guarantees made by independent schools.

To assist us in this, we seek further details of arrangements and commitments to staff health and employment security at your school during this crisis. Your prompt response to the following questions would be greatly appreciated.

- 1. Can you please indicate whether remote working arrangements have been put in place for Term 2, and if so whether these apply to all staff, specific groups of staff, or staff in high-risk categories or with family/household members in high-risk categories?**
- 2. Is your school undertaking genuine consultation with any employees (including non-teaching staff) whose normal duties may not be required during Term 2 in order to negotiate alternative appropriate work?**
- 3. Can you confirm that your school will not put pressure on any employee to take leave without pay during Term 2, given that this would leave individuals unpaid and unable to claim government benefits?**
- 4. Can you confirm that your school does not currently have any definite plans to stand down, dismiss or cut the hours or salary of any current employees, and further that should such plans be considered during Term 2 you will engage in genuine consultation with the IEU before any decision is finalised?**

- 5. Is your school offering additional leave entitlements to individual staff affected by COVID-19, either directly, due to a suspected or confirmed case in their family or household, or due to self-isolation requirements? If so, please clarify:**
- a. the quantum of additional leave available**
 - b. any specific details around the circumstances in which this leave is provided**
 - c. whether this additional leave has been made available to casual staff.**

We understand that each independent school is in a unique situation and facing unique challenges during this uncertain period. Compared to other sectors, ours is well-placed to support staff and maintain current employment levels – but we would welcome further discussion of any relevant issues or challenges to help us fully understand the situation at your school. We highlight that at a time like this, consultation is vital – both directly with employees and with the union representing them.

I ask that if possible, you provide a response to the above questions by Friday 17 April. If there are any supporting details or further information in your response provided in confidence which you do not wish to be publicly noted, please make this clear in your response.

Finally, I again stress that we want to work constructively with you and avoid disputation during this difficult time. In this spirit, I urge you to contact the IEU office or the IEU organiser allocated to your school, to discuss any plans or proposals being considered which may impact upon employment arrangements.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely



Debra James
General Secretary