

Independent Education Union Victoria Tasmania

Statement on School Staffing & Safety in Term 3 – 12 July 2020

The IEU supports today's announcement that most students will receive their learning remotely while Stage 3 restrictions are in place. While we know this is a difficult ask of parents, students and staff, it is critical that we all work together to reduce the chance of infection.

We recognise the reasons for educating senior students on campus at this critical stage of their education. Senior students are better equipped to practice good hygiene and social distancing – but as recent reports of transmission between students demonstrates, supporting and educating students about the need for this is absolutely critical, as is providing the space, support, encouragement and resources for students and staff to maintain safe distancing and hygiene.

Minimising physical attendance at workplaces minimises the risk of transmission, and we call on employers to maintain physical staffing levels no higher than required to teach senior classes on-site and run supervision programs. Schools showed great initiative during Term 2 in supporting remote work and meetings, and staff demonstrated extraordinary capability and dedication to the education and wellbeing of student while working from home.

Particular consideration should be given to staff who have health or family reasons for not attending the workplace. Other staff may prefer to work on school grounds, and this should be taken into account when planning onsite staffing levels. We encourage schools to provide sorely-needed employment for casual relief teachers in order allow classroom teachers to focus on delivering quality education.

Schools have a legal duty to provide a safe and healthy workplace, and it is the employer's responsibility to ensure that there are very clear hygiene and distancing protocols in place for staff and students.

We call on all employers to consult with staff about how best to safely and fairly manage this next period, and to avoid the temptation to require any unnecessary staff attendance on campus.

- Debra James, General Secretary, Independent Education Union Victoria Tasmania.