



COVID-19

Member Update

Victorian Catholic Schools - 23 March

As you will be aware, student school holidays have been brought forward and will start tomorrow. Arrangements for staff will vary from school to school, but in most cases staff will be expected to keep working this week with a focus on preparing for possible remote learning arrangements for next term.

We welcome this decision, which was supported by Victoria's Chief Health Officer. Our national union has [today released a statement](#) calling for all other states to follow Victoria's lead.

All Catholic schools are making arrangements for the rest of this week – these will differ between schools and between the four Dioceses. Our current understanding is that Catholic schools are allowing staff to bring their children to work this week, and that in some cases staff children enrolled at other schools may be able to continue to attend their usual school. Arrangements are also being made to provide supervision for vulnerable children and the children of essential services workers – so some teachers may be asked to run supervision classes – these should be small classes and teachers must be properly resourced to ensure that they are run safely and in a manner which minimises transmission risk.

Staff who are unable to or have good reason not to attend the workplace should discuss this with their principal immediately. Any proposal for work-from-home arrangements should be given genuine consideration by your employer. If you are in a high risk category or you live with or care for a person in a high risk category you should make your employer aware of this and request either to work-from-home or to take personal leave (reasonable evidence of the risk factors may be requested by the employer). If you have children requiring care who you do not wish to bring in to work, you may take personal leave in the form of carer's leave.

If you make a request and do not believe that your employer's response is reasonable, please contact the IEU for further advice and support.

At this stage, we do not know how our schools will operate from the start of Term 2. There is a high likelihood that remote learning arrangements will be put in place – these could last for days, weeks or months. These will present significant challenges, but we believe that with genuine staff consultation they can be made to work.

We've been working hard over the last fortnight to secure guarantees from employers that staff will not be financially disadvantaged as a result of school closures. At this stage we are reasonably confident that at least in the Victorian Catholic sector short-term closures will not put any employee's income at risk, and we will continue to advocate strongly on your behalf in our negotiations with employers.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the extraordinary work you've been doing over recent weeks. We know that IEU members have played a crucial role, providing clear information and vital hygiene education as well as stability and calm leadership to our students in this deeply stressful time.

Please continue to check for further information and updates on this [dedicated section of our website](#) and on our [Facebook page](#).

**If you need assistance, advice or support, do not hesitate to contact us on
(03) 9254 1860 / 1800 622 889 / info@ieuvictas.org.au**

In unity

Debra James
General Secretary