

Independent Education Union Victoria Tasmanian - Media Release - 14 April

The Independent Education Union Victoria Tasmania is continuing to defend its members against unreasonable, unwarranted and unlawful stand-downs.

Today, the IEU will file a dispute in the Fair Work Commission regarding the standing-down of music teachers at Haileybury College. Tomorrow we will appear in the Fair Work Commission in a dispute over the standing down of staff employed by Ballarat and Clarendon College on their King Island campus, and we are considering our response to Ivanhoe Grammar School following reports that staff have been informed that stand-downs are planned with the primary purpose of allowing the school to balance its books.

We do not accept in these cases that there is a legitimate “stoppage of work” as is required to justify the standing down of employees. These well-established high-fee schools clearly have the resources and the capacity to find useful and relevant work for all employees to continue to undertake.

The IEU opposes any move by schools to stand down or dismiss staff as a result of the health crisis or of the transition to remote learning. Our students deserve a quality education in Term 2, and we believe that all existing employees have an important role in delivering this. Schools have greater income certainty than most other organisations, and major cuts to employment at this stage are premature and unjustifiable, displaying a lack of loyalty to hard-working staff as well as a lack of respect for students and families.

General Secretary Deb James said: “We know that this is a difficult time for non-government education, and that every school will face challenges. We don’t want to get bogged down in unnecessary disputation, and so have encouraged all employers to consult with us around any staffing or employment issues.”

“Like government and Catholic schools, the majority of independent schools are doing the right thing by staff and students – but unfortunately it seems that a handful of high-fee schools are seeking to balance their books at the expense of their most vulnerable employees rather than dipping in to their own significant financial buffers.”

“Staff stand-downs should be a matter of last resort, and we do not believe that in these very early days of remote learning implementation schools can have genuinely considered every avenue for continuing the employment of staff. In the Haileybury case, we understand that the majority of families want music lessons to continue – so the argument that there is a stoppage of work beyond the employer’s control simply doesn’t stack up. We will continue to oppose any unreasonable threat to the employment of our members.”

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