



Media release

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Union says schools need clarity and support to combat COVID 19

The Tasmanian Government must urgently provide additional support and clear advice to schools trying to implement a range of social distancing and hygiene measures, some of which are impossible in a school setting, the AEU said today.

“Schools have been told to implement measures such as a 1.5m distance between people which is impossible for students in crowded classrooms,” said AEU Tasmania President Helen Richardson.

“There’s also a lack of supplies, resources and staff for enhanced cleaning measures.”

“The government’s directions are even more impossible to manage on wet days when students are forced inside for the whole day,” said Ms Richardson.

“Schools need advice that is clear, specific and viable for their workplace to reassure them it is safe for students and teachers.”

Some teachers and support staff in schools, colleges and TAFE are in the vulnerable age category while others have underlying health conditions. Similarly, there are students with complex health needs and behaviours that make it impossible for teachers to adhere to the government’s direction on hygiene and social distancing.

“There is a lack of clear advice from the State Government about how vulnerable educators should manage their own health and welfare and how to keep vulnerable students safe and adhering to hygiene measures,” she said.

“We need the state government to immediately better assist schools with procuring cleaning supplies and roster additional cleaning staff to ensure satisfactory levels of cleaning and sanitation can be achieved.”

“The government must ensure that its Work Health and Safety obligations to all staff and students are met.”

Ms Richardson said members see apparent conflicts in advice from government and medical professionals, adding to concerns for teachers, support staff and principals. This is causing considerable stress on top of an increased workload.

Ms Richardson said the Government needs to acknowledge that teachers, support staff and principals are dealing with extremely difficult circumstances and increased pressure and workloads.

“Many of our educators themselves are parents and carers and they continue to go ‘above and beyond’ to support students and the government needs to acknowledge this and step up its assistance.”

The AEU will continue to work constructively with the Department of Education to ensure the health and safety of all public school communities.

Further information

Jon Stanger, AEU Tasmania, 0437 374 125.