

CHAPTER BRIEFING

Thursday, 16 April 2020

Health and safety of school employees remains paramount

Non-government employers must take action to protect employees

Non-government school employers appear to be following the Northern Territory government directive that schools should operate as “business as usual” for Term 2.

Other states and territories are adopting a more considered approach with schools open for vulnerable children and the children of required workers. Students staying at home are being provided with online instruction.

Employees in the NT are understandably concerned with safeguarding the health and wellbeing of all staff and students under ‘normal’ classroom and school conditions where social distancing is impracticable and hygiene measures under constant strain.

Non-government school employers in the NT must take immediate steps to ensure appropriate social distancing measures are put in place in addition to enhanced hygiene and cleaning procedures.

IEUA-QNT members should convene an urgent meeting of their Chapter next week – either virtually or at school with appropriate social distancing measures in place – to consider the attached resolutions.

TIME FOR EMPLOYER ACTION IS NOW

Non-government school employers in the NT must commit immediately to new safety and employee welfare measures.

The IEUA-QNT Charter of Action was sent to all non-government employers on 23 March 2020, seeking their commitment to putting in place a range of measures related to the health and safety as well as workload impacts of the COVID-19 crisis.

To date, there has been no response from any non-government school employer in the NT to this.

The employers must confirm with employees what social distancing measures will be put in place as well as what their plans are for enhanced hygiene and cleaning procedures.

IEUA-QNT has provided a [set of guidelines](#) to employers outlining the expectations in regard to a number of urgent matters including on-site health and safety measures.

ON-SITE HEALTH AND SAFETY MEASURES

Section 6 of the guidelines provided to employers sets out seven key employee expectations when it comes to the protection of their health and safety at the school site in light of the current crisis.

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In order those are:

- 6.1 School arrangements should be put in place to allow staff and students to clean their hands regularly. Cleaning your hands regularly with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub remains a key component to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- 6.2 Social distancing will be implemented in classrooms. To maintain appropriate social distancing, student numbers should be limited to accord with the size of the learning space.
- 6.3 To ensure compliance with social distancing measures, students and families should not congregate in areas around the school (e.g. before or after school in car parks/outside classrooms/at the school gate). All persons entering and leaving the school grounds should maintain a distance of 1.5 metres from each other.
- 6.4 Unwell students are not to attend the school site and the school must require parents/carers to collect the student from school.
- 6.5 All suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases should be escalated and any measures such as self-quarantine and contact tracing must be reported through approved channels.
- 6.6 Staff, including principals, teachers and support staff, should follow these guidelines:
 - avoid sharing small office spaces
 - adhere to social distancing of at least 1.5 metres, including in staff rooms and other shared spaces
 - use hygiene products and continue to practise good hand washing and cough/sneeze hygiene
 - unwell staff members must remain or return home
 - open windows to promote air flow where possible
 - take appropriate security measures if working in isolated areas of school sites
- 6.7 School cleaning should prioritise those areas in use by students and staff, with extra attention to high touch point surfaces such as a door handles, light switches, desks, toilets, taps and sink.

PROTECT VULNERABLE WORKERS

When it comes to those most vulnerable in the current crisis, non-government school employers in the NT have also failed to provide any guidance for these employees – again failing to provide any leadership to protect those most at risk in our schools.

Employers must allow employees with underlying health conditions, those aged over 65, those who are pregnant and those who provide care for elderly relatives within their own household to work from home or be granted paid ex-gratia leave.

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This means there needs to be a pool of relief/casual teachers available for emergent situations where staff cannot be on-site at school.

CHAPTER ACTION REQUIRED

Employers have not acted to enhance hygiene and social distancing provisions.

IEUA-QNT members should convene a meeting of their Chapter next week – either virtually or at school with appropriate social distancing measures in place – to consider the attached resolutions.

The first resolution calls on their employer to commitment to the IEUA-QNT Charter of Action and to confirm with their employees the immediate social distancing measures that will be put in place as well as their plans are for enhanced school hygiene and cleaning procedures.

The second resolution calls for vulnerable workers (as outlined above) to be permitted to work from home or granted paid ex-gratia leave with immediate effect.

Members with direct concerns regarding the measures being put in place at their schools to protect their health and safety should contact our union immediately via industrial@qieu.asn.au or FREECALL 1800 177 938.



TERRY BURKE
BRANCH SECRETARY

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Chapter Feedback

Northern Territory Employer COVID-19 Response

SCHOOL NAME:

ADDRESS:

RESOLUTION 1

The Chapter at calls on our employer to commitment to the IEUA-QNT Charter of Action and to confirm the immediate social distancing measures that will be put in place to protect employees as well as their plans are for enhanced school hygiene and cleaning procedures – as outlined in Section 6 of the IEUA-QNT guidelines.

Carried

Not Carried

RESOLUTION 2

The Chapter at requests that employer allow vulnerable employees – including those with underlying health conditions, those aged over 65, those who are pregnant and those who provide care for elderly relatives within their own household – to work from home or be granted paid ex-gratia leave with immediate effect.

Carried

Not Carried

Please return your Chapter feedback to IEUA-QNT by close of business

FRIDAY, 24 APRIL 2020

Via email: memberalert@qieu.asn.au