

**30 March 2020**

**Stop stand downs of support staff in independent schools**

The union has been advised that a small number of independent schools are considering standing down support staff without pay in Term 2 because of COVID-19.

**The union is calling for an immediate stop to any such steps.**

“In light of the government’s recently announced job-keeper wage-subsidy payments, there is no reason to stand support staff down,” said IEUA NSW/ACT Branch secretary Mark Northam.

Businesses will be paid a wage subsidy of up to $1500 per fortnight per employee, under a Federal Government plan to keep Australians in work during the coronavirus crisis.

“Staff must not be stood down while these plans are still evolving,” Northam said. “The union is seeking for all staff in schools and early learning centres to remain fully employed, even while schools and centres are operating with reduced numbers of students.

“There is no shortage of work to be done. Schools need to creatively explore ways to ensure school sites remain safe for the staff and small numbers of students who attend and to enhance online learning provided to students.

“Support staff are already playing a valuable role in assisting teachers to provide online learning and maintaining contact with students and their families. Schools cannot be expected to deliver a new hybrid model of education without teachers and support staff working together.”

All awards and enterprise agreements require the employer to consult with employees and the union about potential stand-downs.

“It is not clear that schools will need to stand down employees in the current situation and they must consider all the issues before taking any drastic steps. Schools delivering online education are NOT shut. We are calling for an immediate halt to any threatened stand-downs,” said Northam.

Teachers and support staff should not hesitate to call the union if they are concerned about work health and safety at their school, their requests to work from home, or their employment rights. Our latest updates are on our website and Facebook page.

**Further comment**

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*The IEUA NSW/ACT Branch represents over 31,000 teachers, principals and support staff in Catholic and independent schools, early childhood centres and post-secondary colleges.* **Authorised by Mark Northam, IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary**