

TO: QTU MEMBERS

QTU Zoom area meetings about pay deferral start

Welcome back to Term 3. The QTU hopes that members have had a restful holiday and are prepared for the term ahead.

A series of Zoom area meetings start tonight to brief members on the proposed QTU response to the government-imposed pay deferral before a member ballot is conducted electronically next week.

The QTU Executive meets this evening to finalise the ballot questions and recommendations before the first Zoom meeting tonight involving members of the QTU State Council from around the state.

The proposed ballot questions are:

- To formally oppose the pay deferral
- To endorse industrial action in the form of a one-day strike in protest at the pay deferral
- To endorse a series of work bans directed at reducing teacher and principal workload.

COVID-19 has meant a change to the way in which the QTU is conducting this ballot. Normally, it would involve school meetings followed by a ballot. In circumstances where staff meetings are not allowed under department operating guidelines, the Union is using Zoom meetings as well as written materials and videos to inform members this week.

Next week, an electronic ballot paper will be sent to each member individually to record their vote. Please ensure your email address is up to date. The ballot will close on Friday, 24 July.

An alternative ballot?

During the school vacation, members of the Queensland Police Union were advised of a package of benefits for police officers that had been negotiated with the Queensland government. A number of QTU members have enquired if the QTU was going to do something similar.

The QTU has had discussions with government and advised them what steps could be taken to offset the impact of the pay deferral on teachers and principals; the Union has focused on workload reduction because extensive member consultation has shown that to be the number one priority for our members.

The government has also confirmed that the public service hiring freeze does not apply to front-line workers, and therefore does not apply to teachers. No proposal has been received as yet, though the QTU is hopeful one is imminent.

If a proposal is received, that will be provided to members. If members of the QTU Executive believe that the proposal should be accepted, the focus of the Zoom meetings and the member ballot will change accordingly.

Either way, members will have the final say.

COVID-19 and school operations

The Term 3 Operating Guidelines for Queensland State Schools were finalised well before the school holidays.

In spite of the changing national environment and the easing of restrictions in Queensland, there has been no change to the Term 3 Operating Guidelines that have been negotiated with and published by the Department of Education.

The QTU's most recent briefing with the Chief Health Officer was on 26 June. The topics covered included the arrangements for remote communities, any changes in the definition or consideration of vulnerable workers and any changes in understanding about transmission of the virus in or through children.

The CHO's public health direction, the School and Early Childhood Service Exclusion Direction for sick students remains in force. Otherwise, the risk of transmission of the virus through children is still regarded as low or very low.

The risk of transmission of COVID-19 in schools remains between adults. The resurgence of cases in Victoria is a clear warning against complacency. The importance of staying home if sick with even the mildest symptoms, of getting tested, of hand hygiene and physical distancing cannot be over-emphasised.

The AHPPC, the national committee of Chief Medical/Health Officers, has recently issued further guidance refining the definition of vulnerable people. There has been no change in the definition for the purposes of school operating guidelines however and they remain in force.

Though the tempo of meetings concerning COVID-19 has slowed, the QTU continues to work closely with the department to ensure the safety of teachers, principals and students.

New Temp to Permanent Conversion Agreement signed

The QTU secured a reduction in eligible service required for conversion to permanency in the certified agreement, and the Memorandum of Agreement which underpins this process has now been finalised. This means invitations to opt into the conversion process can now be released. The department advises that eligible teachers will receive their invitations by the end of week one. Temporary teachers who are eligible for conversion should be offered ongoing temporary work until a permanent offer is made. Please contact the QTU urgently if you believe you are eligible for conversion and have not been offered ongoing work.

Authorised by:

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