

TO: QTU MEMBERS

## Decisions on hold

Negotiations with the Queensland Government on the operation of Queensland schools during the pandemic have been very productive, to the extent that an agreement could have been finalised and announced today.

However, those decisions are on hold while the Prime Minister convenes a meeting with the national leadership of teacher unions. This was publicly announced last night after the National Cabinet meeting. There remain serious problems with the position communicated last night by the federal government.

Yesterday, the QTU participated in:

- three teleconferences with the Queensland Education Minister
- a national Australian Education Union teleconference with the Federal Education Minister
- a Queensland Council of Unions teleconference with the Chief Health Officer
- several department briefings and meetings.

The QTU will continue to pursue a negotiated solution. However, time and patience are in as short supply as hand sanitiser.

### QTU position

The QTU position remains as it was on Monday (Newsflash 9-20):

- the closure or partial shut-down of schools is inevitable
- transition time is needed before continuing education can be provided through alternative programs
- it is better to undertake the initial transition preparation before Easter.

The Queensland Government has a firm position on the continued attendance of children of essential workers. That is not the same as the ill-considered “anyone with a job” definition of an essential worker given by the Prime Minister last night.

“There is no business as usual. Everything is COVID-19”.

The QTU wishes it could claim credit for this quote. It sums up the situation perfectly. Schools will not be operating on a normal basis for the foreseeable future.

The issue is how to maximise the educational opportunities of Queensland state school students in the middle of a pandemic. It is, accurately, an unprecedented situation.

Though some in authority have come very belatedly to the realisation, the provision of education to children is a fundamental provision of a civilised society. If anything, teachers and principals do not want students to “lose a year of education” more than the general population.

There is a balance to be struck between:

- the health and safety concerns of teachers and school leaders (including the working from home provisions for vulnerable teachers)
- the continued education of students

- the impossibility of changing the mode of education delivery while still teaching as usual
- supporting the provision of other essential services during the pandemic through attendance of some children.

## Procedures already in place

- Vulnerable workers should go home and work (in whatever way possible) from home
- Children with flu-like symptoms should be sent home with the backing of a Chief Health Officer's directive
- Arrangements are being made for the departure of teachers from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities going into lock down
- Vulnerable students in special schools and special education programs should be kept at home.

## C2C going nationwide

The Queensland Department of Education has made C2C resources available to other states and territories to assist in the transition to online and remote learning. Other jurisdictions do not have comparable resources, so C2C is a valuable contribution to the national effort.

The familiarity of Queensland teachers with C2C resources will be an advantage in the move to new modes of delivery.

## Is your QTU membership paid?

To maintain your financial status, the closing date for lump sum payment (and discount) is 31 March. Any member who is having financial difficulties paying should contact the Union so that financial arrangements can be made and you can maintain full rights and benefits of QTU membership.

Authorised by:

Graham Moloney  
General Secretary