

TO: QTU MEMBERS

COVID-19 and Queensland state schools: revised operating guidelines released

COVID-19 and Queensland state schools

Recent reports regarding new cases of COVID-19 in Queensland, including temporary school closures, would reasonably concern members.

Queensland Teachers' Union (QTU) members in all workplaces should feel confident in continuing to make the choices necessary to minimise the potential spread of COVID-19 in schools and the community. This includes staying home and seeking medical advice if they have any of the common symptoms of COVID-19, including: fever (a temperature higher than 37.5 degrees), cough, sore throat, runny nose, fatigue, shortness of breath and loss of taste or smell. Symptoms can vary from case to case.

The Chief Health Officer's (CHO) Public Health Direction of 29 March, which mandates the temporary exclusion of students who are unwell, remains in force:

"If an educator or staff member suspects a child in their care is unwell with a contagious illness, they must notify the parent or guardian. The parent or guardian must collect the child as soon as possible, and the child must not return to the school or early childhood service until they are well or enough time has passed that they are not contagious".

This was a direction that the QTU sought from the CHO to ensure unwell students were not being sent to school. The full direction can be found at this [link](#).

Arrangements remain in place requiring members who exhibit any signs of COVID-19 to be supported in accessing sick leave and seeking the relevant medical advice.

Members who have any COVID-19 symptoms, no matter how mild, should call their doctor or 13HEALTH (13 43 25 84) and get tested.

Departmental advice for principals involves:

- ensuring students with compromised immune systems remain home and are supported in their learning
- ensuring unwell students stay away from school in accordance with CHO directions
- establishing regular communications with students about appropriate hygiene measures, including display of student posters on handwashing
- planning for monitoring and responding to increased wellbeing concerns.

Members are well versed in preventative measures within schools including:

- regular handwashing and hand sanitising, particularly before and after eating, and after going to the toilet
- increased cleaning of school classrooms, particularly high frequency touch points such as water fountains or bubblers
- regular cleaning of playground equipment and play materials
- physical distancing of adults (currently 1.5m).

What happens when a case of COVID-19 is confirmed?

If a case of COVID-19 is confirmed, the Public Health Unit will directly contact a school and advise of any additional measures that are required, such as self-quarantine/contact tracing. Schools should continue to report confirmed COVID-19 cases through existing reporting channels. In accordance with health authority advice, schools may close for a period of time, during which contact tracing and specialist cleaning will be conducted.

COVID-19 operating guidelines

On Friday 24 July, revised operating guidelines were released by the Department of Education. These guidelines contain minor amendments from those that were effective from the start of Term 3. The changes to the guidelines are in line with the changes to the Queensland Government's COVID-19 Roadmap.

The amendments to the guidelines include:

- the removal of the section of the guidelines on formals and graduations, which has been replaced by a more generic section about school functions that makes it explicit that "dancing is not permitted at school functions"
- the section on school sports has been amended to explain the conditions under which intra and inter-school sport and representative competitions are permitted
- the section on school transport extends the exemption from physical distancing requirements on public transport to "travel for school-related activities such as inter-school sport, excursions and camps".

The QTU will continue to meet with the department to develop contingency plans should any adjustments be required to the roadmap or there is further evidence of community transmission of COVID-19 in Queensland.

These discussions will include support for members in schools where there is a known case of COVID-19, how schools will operate in a situation where there are localised outbreaks of COVID-19, support for members for travel over school holidays and for access to professional and curriculum development.

The Union is also seeking further advice in relation to the initial guidance from the CHO around senior school students and physical distancing requirements, given the prevalence of community transmission in New South Wales and Victoria.

Members who require further information should refer to the QTU website or contact their QTU Organiser or the Queensland Teachers Assist Desk (QTAD).

Authorised by:

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