

# AEU NT Member Bulletin 3/2020

25 March 2020

*Special bulletin – update #3 on COVID-19*

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**Branch Executive resolutions on COVID-19 and schools**

A special Branch Executive meeting took place yesterday afternoon and resolved the following:

- The NT Government and Department of Education must immediately provide certainty to staff, students and the community about continuing education provision in schools until the end of Term 1. All such decisions must be made in consultation with the AEU.
- The Department must ensure a safe working environment for all staff. This includes ensuring that additional cleaning staff and resources are budgeted for and provided, that schools are adequately stocked with soap and other hygiene products, and that alternative working arrangements (including working from home) for staff classified as “vulnerable” are authorised. Further discussions about WHS provisions in high-risk worksites such as special schools and annexes need to take place urgently.
- To alleviate pressure on school-based staff, the following measures must be considered (and implemented) in consultation with the AEU and other key stakeholders:
  - Bringing forward the end date of Term 1
  - Additional pupil-free days for teaching staff to plan for future alternate delivery
  - Reducing workload for teaching staff by directing that teachers are NOT required to produce alternative work this term 1 for students whose families have elected to keep them at home
- The NT Government, OCPE and the Department must continue to negotiate with the AEU to develop special provisions for teaching staff in remote communities.
- The Chief Executive and the Commissioner for Public Employment should ensure that in the event of school closures, School Council staff continue to be paid as though schools were open.
- The Full-Time Officers will convene virtual meetings for members in all regions over the coming week to provide an update and to provide an opportunity for members to ask questions and raise further concerns.

This resolution was conveyed last night to the Minister for Education and the Department’s Chief Executive. The Full-Time Officers have held ongoing discussions today with the Minister and the CE and have secured agreement to hold a meeting of the School Operations Advisory Group tomorrow to progress these matters. Representations have been made to the Chief Minister to ensure our views are conveyed to tonight’s National Cabinet meeting.

The AEU NT acknowledges the incredible stress the current situation is placing on all staff in public education. We do not believe the current situation is tenable and our Full-Time Officers are working to

achieve outcomes that protect your health and safety and provide some certainty about the future (more on this below). We appreciate members' patience at this very difficult time, and ask you to trust that union officers are doing everything we possibly can to protect your interests.

### **National negotiations with the Prime Minister ongoing**

AEU Federal Officers met with the Prime Minister this morning and negotiations are ongoing to address the concerns teachers and educators have expressed about schools continuing to be open for business as usual. Our view is that business as usual absolutely cannot continue in schools and we need to dramatically change school operations from this coming Monday 30 March to alleviate pressure on school staff.

We are advocating for a nationally consistent position that will mean immediate changes on the ground in NT schools, with emphasis on protecting vulnerable staff, bringing forward the end date of Term 1 and providing additional pupil-free days for teaching staff.

### **Still no clarity for remote-based staff**

From midnight tonight new restrictions will be in force for remote communities that restrict movement into and out of those communities. Despite numerous enquiries, the AEU NT has not been able to gain any clarity on what these restrictions mean for our remote members, such as your ability to access services in towns and cities and your capacity to return to your community if you leave. At a minimum there would be a 14-day self-isolation period. We have requested an urgent briefing and will seek to provide more information before the end of the week.

### **Updates for members – Regional Zoom meetings Thursday and Friday**

To explain the latest decisions from the Federal AEU and the Branch Executive, the Full-Time Officers will brief members over the next two days.

Regional meetings via videoconferencing will be held on Thursday and Friday via Zoom. The meetings are scheduled as follows:

#### *Thursday 26 March*

Barkly Region – 7.30-8am

Darwin Region – 3.30-4pm

Alice Springs Region – 3.30-4pm

#### *Friday 27 March*

Katherine Region – 7.30-8am

Palmerston Region – 3.30-4pm

Arnhem Region – 4-4.30pm

You will receive a separate email to this one based on your region with instructions on how to join the Zoom meeting. You will have to RSVP by return email and we will then provide more info. Each sub-branch is asked to ensure at least 1-2 members join the meeting and then provide a report back to their colleagues.

The next update to members will be provided no later than Friday.

**Please let us know ASAP if your workplace, contact details or income have changed**

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