



DE20/07977

Mr Andrew Gohl
President
Australian Education Union, SA Branch
163 Greenhill Road
PARKSIDE SA 5063

Office of the Chief Executive

31 Flinders Street
Adelaide SA 5000

GPO Box 1152
Adelaide SA 5001
DX 541

education.ce@sa.gov.au

www.education.sa.gov.au

By Email Only: andrew.gohl@aeusa.asn.au

Dear Mr Gohl,

RE: Outcomes of Executive AEU Branch Executive Meeting

Further to your letter dated 25 January 2022, I note that AEU Branch Executive has resolved to maintain industrial action set for Wednesday 2 February 2022.

In response to your request for written confirmation of various items by 10.00am Thursday 27 January 2022, I provide the following information:

- I confirm we have ordered an additional 3,000 air purification units taking our overall inventory to 4,050.
- DFE is liaising with SA Health regarding a clear definition of 'vulnerable' with respect to staff. We are committed to resolving the working arrangements for vulnerable employees.

Work is underway between the People & Culture and Partnership, Schools & Preschools divisions to outline the proposed guidance for sites.

- DFE acknowledges concerns amongst staff regarding the use of individual leave entitlements due to circumstances that might require repeated furloughing or isolation.

We appreciate that our site-based workforce has a potentially higher risk of exposure to COVID than the general public due to working with children and students. A range of risk management strategies to reduce this risk are in place however the potential cannot be eliminated. I am unaware of any workplace that could promise a risk free environment. DFE is committed to reviewing the policy position in relation to leave arrangements and flexible working arrangements in the event of illness and / or isolation requirements.

The People & Culture division is currently working through options, and this will require input from the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment.

- I acknowledge the AEU Branch Executive preference for rapid antigen testing (RAT) surveillance of all staff and students.

DFE has already advised of RAT surveillance for staff in early childhood and care due to its different setting and 7-day RAT to stay protocols for classroom contacts. The AEU is also aware that DFE and SA Health are partnering in a trial of RAT test to stay for students in special settings.

The Chief Public Health Officer has explained to the AEU Executive in depth the health position and why the circumstances are different between this jurisdiction and others. DFE has accepted the SA health advice throughout the pandemic, and it has placed us in a strong position. The AEU has also historically accepted the SA Health advice.

As a result of all that is explained above, I am unable to confirm *“A firm model that ensures a consistent use of Rapid Antigen Testing across the public education sector...that model encompasses tests for both staff and students”*.

In closing, I urge the AEU Branch Executive to call off its proposed industrial action.

The threat of this action is adding to anxiety amongst staff and school/preschool communities. It will be divisive in staffrooms. It is already causing community criticism of educators, a profession that deserves recognition and praise from across the community for what they have achieved and will continue to achieve.

My senior staff and I have worked in good faith with you and your team. I believe we have made genuine progress and that we have shared goals for our staff and your members.

Yours sincerely



Rick Persse
Chief Executive

27 January 2022

Cc Minister for Education, Hon John Gardner, MP