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Clusters in schools: Union calls for decisive guidance

The Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT Branch, the union representing staff in all non-government schools in NSW and the ACT, shares the concerns of our members and the broader community around the expanding COVID-19 clusters in schools. It is imperative that non-government school employers adhere to COVID-safe plans and practices. Extra-curricular activities should be curtailed.

“The IEU would find it unacceptable if any of our members were asked to expose themselves needlessly to additional risk by participating in extra-curricular activities such as sporting trips, school excursions, retreats, or other such activities,” said IEU NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Mark Northam.

“We are now calling on the government to provide clear and decisive guidance to schools, in particular making an explicit recommendation for staff and senior students to wear masks within school settings.

“This aligns with existing health advice that recommends wearing a mask in circumstances where it is not possible to socially distance. This advice must be clearly articulated and conveyed to all school leaders.

“Students in Years 11 and 12 are often working casual jobs, might have girlfriends or boyfriends, and are otherwise mobile in our communities in a way similar to adults,” Northam said.

“The IEU is concerned that our members, and the young people in their charge, are being told there is something exceptional about passing through the school gates that means the COVID-safe precautions we are all undertaking out in the wider community need no longer apply.

“As a result, we are also seeking a review of COVID-safe protocols in non-government schools to ensure the highest safety levels possible are achieved.”

For interview and additional information

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The IEUA NSW/ACT Branch represents over 30,000 teachers, principals and support staff in Catholic and independent schools, early childhood centres and post secondary colleges.

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