



11 January 2021

Hon Grace Grace  
Minister for Education  
Via email: [education@ministerial.qld.gov.au](mailto:education@ministerial.qld.gov.au)

## **BOOSTING COVID19 SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS AND SCHOOLS**

Dear Minister Grace,

I write with regards to supports that should be put in place to support teachers, students and staff as schools resume within weeks.

I understand that there have been a number of changes made to the school year, to avoid students starting back at school during the predicted spike in COVID19 cases in Queensland. I understand that:

- The school year will now start on 7 February;
- Year 11 and 12 students will start remote learning on 31 January;
- Students experiencing vulnerability and those whose parents are essential workers will be able to attend school for supervision from 24 January and;
- The school year will be extended to 16 December, from 9 December.

This gives families time to get their children aged 5-11 the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. This also gives the government time to put in a number of additional measures to keep teachers, students, staff and families safe. From my conversations with teachers and families, I urge the government to prioritise these additional measures:

- **An urgent ventilation audit of all Queensland classrooms:** There needs to be a full and rapid assessment of all Queensland classrooms to assess ventilation, access to fresh air, good working order of fans, rooms that require air conditioning, size and density. This information can then be used to assess priority for the distribution of air purifiers.
- **Installing HEPA Air purifiers in all classrooms:** The Victorian Government is distributing HEPA air purifiers to all Victorian state schools, and low fee-paying non-government schools.<sup>1</sup>
- **Shade sails to facilitate outdoor learning spaces:** The Victorian Department of Education website reads "Increased use of outdoor areas for outdoor learning activities

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/ventilation-air-purification/policy>

will assist in mitigating the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Schools are encouraged to maximise the use of outdoor learning areas”.<sup>2</sup>

- **PPE for all Queensland teachers:** Teachers should all be issued with properly fitted N95 masks.
- **Readily available free RAT tests to monitor staff and students:** Schools need to be issued with sufficient RAT tests to allow for regular and proactive screening of both students and staff. This is particularly important for any staff deemed to be ‘close contacts’, who are still required to work.
- In consultation with the Queensland Teachers Union (QTU), investigate the feasibility of further measures adopted overseas, including a cohort split approach at lunch breaks, to ensure all year levels are not mixing together.

These measures are essential, particularly given that teachers who are classified as ‘close contacts’ may still be required to work.

I’d also like to reiterate the calls of the Queensland Teachers Union (QTU), and urge your Department not to extend the end of the school year from 9 December to 16 December. Our teachers have worked extremely hard during the pandemic to provide Queensland kids with the best possible education under these challenging circumstances, they deserve a break, not an additional week of work.

Please do not hesitate to contact my office on 3724 9100 if you would like to discuss this matter in more detail.

Kind regards,



Amy MacMahon  
Member for South Brisbane

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/ventilation-air-purification/policy>