

8 April 2022

Dr Neil McGoran
Director
Catholic Education SA
By email

Dear Neil,

Response to your letter of 7 April 2022

Thank you for your reply to my 5 April request for further information regarding the rationale for maintaining a staff vaccine mandate in SA Catholic schools. This response helps crystallise our position on the matter and the advice we will be giving members.

In acknowledging your support for the initial mandate on WHS grounds, I point out that you had no choice as it was a legal requirement. The public risk assessment at the time of the mandate was such that a vaccination mandate for school staff was appropriate.

The situation has changed and now the public risk assessment is that vaccination mandates have outlived their usefulness and are no longer appropriate. There is no legal restriction on unvaccinated staff working in SA schools and even the Department for Education's rules about unvaccinated staff requiring masks and daily RATs is only applicable to government schools. It is not a general legal requirement.

The provision of an 11 page risk assessment conducted by CSHWSA might on the surface look compelling, but it simply lists a range of activities and gives them a "High" risk rating with no justification or explanation. The document has no probative merit.

I also take exception to the selective quoting of the CPHO, Professor Spurrier, on ABC radio (6 April 2022) as saying that unvaccinated teachers returning to the classroom is "risky". Her words followed my interview and I clearly recall her saying that is "certainly is very **risky for them**". The Advertiser reported the words the next day. She did not say it was risky for everyone else.

Obviously the opinion of the CPHO would **not** be that it was an unacceptable risk to have unvaccinated staff back in schools. Her advice was to remove the mandate rather than maintain it. Whether other organisations mandate vaccination or not, is not a test of the appropriateness of a mandate in SA schools.

Ideally all schools in SA should be following the same rules in this regard. There are no appreciable differences between schooling systems that would warrant a different approach to vaccination mandates.

The real risk factor in school COVID control is unvaccinated students rather than a small number of potentially unvaccinated staff. I find it curious that CESA is looking to push the boundaries of the health advice towards a mandate in the interests of marginal at best outcomes, but CESA's Elysia Ryan appeared on ABC TV news calling for the loosening of isolation requirements in the interests of maximising staffing obviously at an increased risk of contagion. You can't have it both ways.

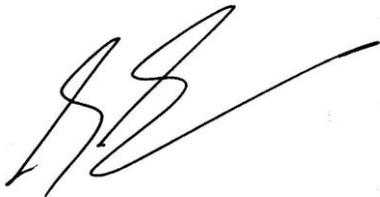
Nothing in your reply goes anywhere near convincing me that to adopt more restrictive requirements than the current health advice is warranted.

You have not provided any evidence-based rationale for the proposal nor if unvaccinated staff are dangerous to anyone but themselves. I am not convinced that even with a mandate that the situation will be materially better.

Don't get me wrong. The IEU is very supportive of maximising vaccination levels. We have consistently aligned with the health advice and have accepted the mainstream science behind it. Now is not the time to deviate from the health advice in the interests of nothing more than optics and any possible marketing advantage.

As it stands, the IEU will be advising members that there is no objective, evidence-based reason to deviate from the current health advice that a vaccination mandate in schools is not warranted.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'GS', written over a light grey circular stamp.

Glen Seidel
Secretary