

18 March 2020

COVID-19: ANMF SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL CLOSURES

When: DOORSTOP TODAY: Wednesday 18 March 2020
Time: 1.30pm
Where: The Charles Garden opposite the Launceston General Hospital
Who: Emily Shepherd, ANMF Tasmanian Branch Secretary

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation Tasmanian Branch (ANMF) today stated its support for the potential for future school closures by either the Tasmania or Federal Governments.

ANMF Tasmanian Branch Secretary Emily Shepherd said school closures and assertive social distancing will enable the health system in Tasmania to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic in a more controlled way.

“The issue is young children – primary school children - don’t understand social distancing,” Ms Shepherd said.

“While the children themselves may not become very unwell, they will potentially be asymptomatic and spread the virus to their families and vulnerable family members.”

Ms Shepherd said the ANMF supports immediate school closures to flatten the curve of the pandemic.

“We also call upon the Government to urgently develop a plan to ensure support of the children of healthcare workers, so nurses, midwives and care workers are enabled to continue working.

“The ANMF suggests healthcare workers’ childcare needs should be mapped now and teachers who would not be working with school closures could work in small groups (less than 10) to support ongoing curriculum to healthcare workers children of similar ages.”

Ms Shepherd said Tasmania needs healthy nurses, midwives and care workers now more than ever before.

“Nurses, midwives, and care workers are at the frontline in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. As always, our highly skilled and professional members will confront this challenge head on with

the unwavering dedication and resolve in supporting their patients, families and their communities back to good health.”

Ms Shepherd said for many weeks the ANMF Tasmanian Branch has been advocating for nurses, midwives, and care workers in the growing crisis of the pandemic.

“Nurses, midwives and care workers are supported and prepared in their workplaces. We have called for paid special leave for all nurses, midwives, and care workers who may need to self-isolate due to COVID-19.

“This must include our casual and part-time workforce, particularly those who may not have leave entitlements to support them during this time.”

The ANMF has also called for clear, concise, consistent and timely communication to members in all workplaces supported by the Director of Public Health and the Tasmanian Government.

“We have also called for additional resources to keep our members safe, additional personal protective equipment (PPE) - masks, hand sanitizer, ventilators - and also workforce plans that clearly articulate when and how the nursing and midwifery workforce will be staffed and the altered ways of working so that plans can be implemented prior to mass presentations.”

Ms Shepherd said internally, the ANMF Tasmanian Branch has implemented actions to assist continuity of service for its members, including enabling staff to work from home.

“We have also moved our HERC Diploma of Nursing and Certificate III in Individual Support (Ageing) teaching on-line and postponed our face-to-face professional development workshops and conferences.”

End

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