Media Release: Response to changes to school COVID protocols

The State School Teachers' Union of WA says school principals across the state are grappling with how to implement new COVID protocols in schools after receiving very little notice the changes were coming into effect.

The SSTUWA has warned that schools still face extensive disruption and has asked parents and the community to support leaders and staff in keeping teachers safe so schools can stay open.

SSTUWA president Pat Byrne said a number of the changes introduced such as access to school grounds only for pick up and drop off in outdoor locations were welcome, as the union had raised concerns about unvaccinated volunteers being allowed in school buildings.

"However, some of these new measures have a major impact on schools," she said. "While some of these changes are supported by schools, they are logistically difficult, and staff need time to implement them.

"For example, staggering breaks and moving assemblies and timetables around adds to an already ridiculous workload for school staff.

"Principals and teachers need the support of parents in following the drop-off and pick-up rules, by wearing masks at all times on the school site and being patient and understanding when school is inevitably disrupted at some point.

"We'd just like people to remember that school staff are doing their best in a constantly changing and challenging environment."

The union had called for a number of health measures to be implemented in schools before the State Government madethe decision to reduce COVID-19 isolation requirements from 14 days to seven days.

While some of these concerns have been addressed, such as limiting the number of students gathering together, clarification from the Department of Education is needed on several matters.

In particular, the union will seek assurance that all ventilators and CO2 monitors are now operational in schools and will be following Occupational Safety and Health processes to ensure that is the case.

The union is also seeking details on the issue of priority access to PCR testing for teachers and access to Rapid Antigen Tests.

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