

Support the safety of all



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Safety in schools for teachers, support staff and students is paramount. Federation has long campaigned for strengthening of the Department's policies around:

- improved behaviour support
- inclusive practices in appropriate settings with resourcing for the individual needs of the student and learning environment
- advice and action in the workplace around work health and safety.

October Council last year called for improved support for students with challenging behaviours in schools and other workplaces, especially when there have been violent incidents.



Federation is escalating this matter with the Department. Meanwhile, it is essential that workplaces are aware of and utilise the policies currently in place to support the welfare, health and safety of all students and staff.

The Department has a responsibility under section 19 of the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 to ensure the health, safety and welfare at work of all employees so far as it is reasonably practicable.

This means putting in place measures that prevent or minimise the risks posed by the workplace, including violent behaviours, to make the workplace safe for employees and non-employees. These measures need to be reviewed and updated as needed in collaboration with staff to ensure the workplace and learning environment is safe.

Teachers should utilise the learning and support team and the school counsellor at their school as well as departmental specialists, including the learning and wellbeing advisers and behaviour specialist teams. Contacts can be found through the "School Services Contacts" in your Department portal.

Teachers need to report all incidents of occupational violence to the Work Health and Safety Hotline (1800 811 523) and schools must implement policies including risk management procedures and suspension policies to combat violence and aggressive behaviours.

Violence and aggression include: verbal and emotional abuse or threats in person or over the phone, written abuse, harassment, threats, bullying or intimidation, malicious damage, armed robbery, and physical attack to an individual or to property by another individual or group. The effect of violence on a victim depends on the severity of the violence, their own experiences, skills and personality. Violence in our workplace is unacceptable.

CONSULTATION AND RISK MANAGEMENT

An employer must consult with employees where it affects their health, safety and wellbeing at work. This includes risks. If, for example, it is proposed to enrol a student with a history of violence or with a disability, all employees whose physical or psychological health and safety may be affected must be provided with all relevant information known to the employer and risk management procedures put in place.

IMPLEMENT THE SUSPENSION POLICY THOROUGHLY

Suspension is not a punishment; it is a risk minimisation strategy that needs to be better resourced at a school and system level. The student should not be readmitted into the school until the issues identified in the risk assessment have been addressed.

UTILISE RISK MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES

Risk management procedures should be implemented, reviewed and continually updated as needed in consultation with staff that may be affected.

If you have difficulty accessing the support you need from the Department, speak with your local Organiser. Violence in schools is unacceptable. Challenging behaviours and poor social interactions in classrooms negatively affect teaching and learning. Federation aims to ensure you have the support you need to facilitate successfully enrolling and educating every student equitably in our public education system in a safe workplace. Hannah Archer Lawton is a City Organiser