

Staggered return to 'normal'

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The return to school after health restrictions begin to lift should be managed in stages, starting with kindergarten and year 12, Federation President Angelo Gavrielatos has proposed.

Rather than entire school populations returning at the same time once health authorities and governments begin lifting social distancing restrictions, Mr Gavrielatos recommended the return be staggered, commencing with students who have lost the most from the disruption.

With older and vulnerable teachers less likely to return to their classes as restrictions are lifted, he also said leaders had to consider how to ensure an orderly return to avoid a deluge of students with these teachers absent.

"What we are suggesting, at that right time, is that we start with year 12 and kindergarten," Mr Gavrielatos told the ABC.

"Then move onto year 7, and slowly pad it out in order to be able to best meet the needs of students at a time when there are, of course, still risks associated with the spread of this pandemic."

Mr Gavrielatos said bringing back year 12s and kindergarten kids first was the most obvious choice.

"Year 12, because of the pressures on students in year 12 and their learning for their HSC," he said. "Kindergartens, because you have got to feel sorry for them. They had barely been at school for six weeks before the pandemic started to take effect and impact schooling."

"You could say the same for year 7, that critical year 6 to year 7 transition, and also that final year for primary school. They are transition points and for those reasons we would think that it makes sense to ensure an orderly return, starting with those points of transition."

Speaking to the ABC on Good Friday, Mr Gavrielatos gave "a big shout out" to all of our teachers and principals.

"They have done a remarkable job turning themselves inside out, trying to ensure some level of educational continuity for kids while they are at home," he said.

"I would describe it more as emergency learning, emergency educational provision, to make sure that our kids have some educational continuity. I think it is important to remember that some kids don't have access to the technologies necessary for online learning platforms."

"In many cases, schools are actually producing hard copies of material, packages, which are being dispatched



from schools to homes by teachers themselves or indeed picked up by parents., The experience is vastly different for kids, depending on their circumstances.

“It has certainly put the spotlight on some serious inequities, which we have known have always existed in our communities.”