

TANYA PLIBERSEK MP
SHADOW MINISTER FOR EDUCATION & TRAINING

The Hon. Dan Tehan MP
Minister for Education
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister

I'm writing regarding preparations for possible school closures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Labor has provided bipartisan support to the government throughout this outbreak. Labor appreciates the advice made available regarding international education in the early stages of the outbreak, and has ensured our public comments on education matters related to the outbreak have been responsible and constructive.

I appreciate that decisions regarding school closures will be made with state and territory governments drawing on medical advice, as they should be.

I write to seek assurances that the Government is giving full consideration to options to ensure hygiene standards within schools and is properly preparing for school closures when they do occur, including:

- Ensuring all schools have access to adequate sanitation facilities, including easy access to soap and water, ways to dry hands, and hand sanitiser. I have been contacted by a number of parents concerned that lack of soap or spring loaded taps in bathrooms at their children's school undermines good hygiene.
- Support for parents who are unable to attend work in the event of extended closures. In particular, ensuring arrangements are in place so that health and other essential services workers don't have to leave work and grandparents and other older relatives aren't put at risk providing child care.
- Making sure online learning options are available to minimise impacts on student learning and outcomes. This may mean support for schools to use online learning platforms and ensuring families can access internet and computing equipment at home.
- Support for at-risk children and families to make sure they don't miss out on essential support services provided by schools.
- Extra measures to ensure the health and safety of teachers and other school staff.
- Special consideration arrangements to make sure school closures don't unfairly affect a student's marks, especially in Year 12.

I acknowledge the complexity of this challenge and do not underestimate the task of ensuring the health and safety of all Australians at this time. I offer these suggestions as part of our ongoing bipartisan support in response to this crisis.

Yours sincerely



Tanya Plibersek
18 March 2020