



17 November 2021

We Need More Than Mandates

Yesterday's announcement that South Australia will follow the lead of other states and require mandatory vaccination for all staff in schools across Victoria raises many questions for school leaders across the State.

"Many school leaders will have legitimate concerns following this announcement," said the Christian Schools Australia Director of Public Policy, Mark Spencer, "Despite having the purpose to 'maintain the provision of education services' it may have the opposite effect".

The most recent, 6 November, data from the Melbourne Institute [Vaccine Hesitancy Tracker](#) shows persistent 'Not Willing To be Vaccinated' rates above 5.5% in NSW and Victoria, where similar requirements have been in place for the longest period. The equivalent rate in South Australia is over 11%.

"Experience in the jurisdictions with these policies in place is that staff losses are equivalent to these rates of community concern," Mr Spencer said.

"In smaller independent schools, without the resources of a large system which can redeploy staff from back-office roles, even small number of staff can be difficult to replace".

"If staff who chose not to be vaccinated are in key roles that obviously compounds the situation," he said.

"Making school staff a priority for vaccination we have fully supported, and we approached the Federal Government about that earlier in the year," he said, "but mandating vaccination is a significant step beyond this".

"State Governments need to address the concerns in the broader community and focus on providing education and information."

The Communicable Diseases Network Australia (CDNA) [National Guidelines for Public Health Units](#) identify a number of high risk settings, but these do not include schools. Indeed, the CDNA document indicates that the 'best way to prevent transmission of COVID-19 in schools is through the promotion of correct hand hygiene habits and cough/sneeze etiquette'.

"Schools have always followed stringent procedures to ensure that schools have been COVIDsafe", Mr Spencer said, "they will continue to do so as the safety of students and staff is their top priority."

ENDS

For all media enquiries:

Mark Spencer, Director of Public Policy
[mspencer@csa.edu.au](mailto:m Spencer@csa.edu.au) | 0419 419 224

About Christian Schools Australia

Christian Schools Australia is the largest association of Christian schools in the country and has member schools educating over 70,000 students and employing more than 10,000 staff at 180 locations across Australia. CSA is part of the global ACSI network of 24,000 schools educating in excess of 5.5 million students in over 108 countries world-wide.

