

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## FAILED VACCINE ROLL OUT LEAVES SCHOOLS, COMMUNITIES UNSAFE

Teachers, Educators and Education Support Staff struggling to get access to vaccination has left schools and early learning centres unsafe, and society without a clear path out of the Covid-19 mess, three major education unions said today.

In a [letter released today](#) the unions called for the Minister, Greg Hunt, to prioritise access to vaccination for teachers, educators and support staff in schools and early learning centres to keep these frontline essential workers and those they educate safe.

In calling for priority vaccinations – staff in schools and early learning centres are not in any priority category at the moment – the unions argue priority access to vaccinations for staff would minimise the impact of future Covid-19 outbreaks on millions of families and children who rely on schools and early learning services.

The unions - United Workers Union, the Australian Education Union and the Independent Education Union - represent thousands of early childhood educators, teachers and education support staff across Australia.

**Helen Gibbons, Early Childhood Education and Care Director of United Workers Union, said today.**

“We are calling on the Federal Government to rectify what has always been an appalling situation and lift early educators up the queue so that they can get the jab as soon as possible.

“Early learning services remained open throughout the pandemic, supporting families, children and essential workers. You can’t socially distance with young children. The pandemic is travelling through our communities and educators are on the frontline unprotected.

“If that’s not the definition of requiring high-priority access to vaccines, I don’t know what is.”

**Correna Haythorpe, the Federal President of the Australian Education Union, said.**

“It has been infuriating that teachers and education support staff have been given no priority in the vaccination queue.

“As we understand more about the Delta variant, it becomes clear just how serious the health risks are to students and the education workforce.

“Schools pride themselves as being safe places for students, teachers and support staff and it’s simply not good enough that teachers and education support staff are not given priority vaccinations.”

**Christine Cooper, Acting Federal Secretary of the Independent Education Union of Australia, said:**

“Teachers and education support staff have exposure to an extensive proportion of the community.

“They have at all times met the challenges of this pandemic with professionalism and commitment to their students and communities. They too, deserve to feel safe and protected.”

“Instead of getting schools on a ‘return-to-normal’ path, we have teachers and support staff experiencing long waits for the vaccine. The way forward for schools and for society is to ensure that all teachers and education support staff have priority access to vaccination. This will safeguard schools and centres as the safe environment needed for the essential uninterrupted delivery of quality education.”

**ENDS**

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