

Inquiry into the Government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic

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YOUR SUBMISSION

Submission:

To whom it may concern,

Re: Inquiry into the Victorian Government's Response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

On many fronts I applaud the Victorian Government's rapid and thorough response to such an unprecedented and unpredictable emergency. There are many areas I could discuss, however I would like to maintain the focus of this submission on one area.

When the pandemic started one of my three jobs was as a casual sessional lecturer [REDACTED] [REDACTED] to a full cohort of International students.

Due to the nature of the student's visa none of our program was available remotely. Like many education institutions [REDACTED] had to make a rapid transition to online learning which required immense adaptability and work from the dedicated teaching staff. In addition try and continue providing our students with an education we were tasked with managing the vulnerable wellbeing of students trapped away from their home countries and families with great uncertainty to their future. Within the first few weeks I performed over 50+ additional hours to my contract.

The sudden change in scope in our role and work expectations was not discussed with the staff at any stage, and we, like many just worked hard to keep ourselves, students and our employer above water during such a confusing time.

Unfortunately due to the changing scope of our role, despite the evidence of extra work was tracked through the intranet, all casual teachers were paid either half or a third of their usual wage. No one received remuneration or recognition for the extensive overtime we performed.

There was no consultation in the changes to our contract and many teachers received verbal abuse when questioning their sudden pay reduction. [REDACTED] continued citing that all overtime must be approved prior, despite written evidence of the requests to perform the extra work/training, intranet tracking of our activities and being told to track all tasks and additional hours on our timesheets.

Working at a community legal centre as another role I sought legal advise and was able to end my

employment at [REDACTED], despite not being remunerated for my completed work.

I have sought support through the Union and through Fair works, whom, I believe is currently investigating the situation.

The reason I bring this to your attention is that it not only happened to the entire Casual staff pool at [REDACTED] - many who did not have the capacity to fight back - but I have had reports of it occurring across all tertiary institutions, with real accounts from [REDACTED] being relayed directly to me.

The impact on International Students caused by the pandemic is going to have long lasting effects on the tertiary sector and those impacts will be worn mostly by casual teachers, who already dedicate so much of their time to providing quality education. The ripple effect will erode the quality our tertiary education even further and diminish our pool of qualified professionals across all sectors.

I urge you to invest in the investigation of the impacts of COVID-19 on our tertiary education, in particular the mistreatment and exploitation of casual staff and full fee paying students.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

Do you have any additional comments or suggestions?:

In the same vein that a call out to the arts sector was made for submissions I urge the PAEC to reach out to the tertiary sector to share the impacts of COVID-19 on our education.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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