

School Canteens Closed Without Warning

Despite the announcement from the NSW Premier that schools will remain open for the rest of Term 1, P&C Associations were blindsided by the decision of the Department of Education to shut canteens without warning. Many canteens were planning to stay open to support the students who are still at school until the end of term. They now find themselves having to stand down staff and scramble to deal with remaining stock.

This decision by the Department of Education appears to have been taken without providing any solid justification. It shows a lack of consideration for the welfare of students whose parents simply cannot provide packed lunches because of work commitments. It also shows a lack of consideration and understanding of P&C Association run canteens, who are not all volunteer based but are small businesses in their own right and have obligations to the staff they employ.

We are deeply disappointed that the Department of Education did not offer the courtesy of informing P&C Federation about canteen closures, thus allowing time to help member P&C Associations to wind down and deal with their employees. We are also greatly disappointed that students still at school will have no access to healthy food options from a facility already setup to do just that. There is considerable anger and confusion as a result of this decision, which could have been avoided with appropriate consultation and messaging.

As the COVID-19 crisis deepens it is more important than ever for everyone to work together. P&C Associations, like other small businesses, are very vulnerable to the impact of this pandemic and we would call on the Federal and State governments to provide clear and easily accessible support for those P&C Associations who need it.

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