

7 July 2020

In response to the Premier's announcement this afternoon about a return to increased restrictions in some parts of Victoria, a joint statement from Amaze and ACD:

Today's announcement marks a very challenging time ahead for all Melbournians – particularly for those with disabilities.

Students with a disability and their families did it particularly tough during school disruptions in Term 2. If the "learning from home" policy is to be extended further, it is critical that it is done better this time.

We welcome the recognition from the Premier this afternoon that students with disability need additional support. The decision to keep special schools open is an important acknowledgment of their needs that cannot be met through home learning.

But extra measures are also needed for the 80% of students with disability who attend mainstream schools.

This week is a crucial time in the government's planning to ensure these students do not again miss out.

A standard of support for students with disability that includes:

- **Flexible deployment of Education Support Staff** to ensure continued personalised support for the 28,000 students funded to receive education support. Like disability support workers, they should be able to go into homes, and to communicate via video conferencing with students.
- **Access to differentiated learning** – a right of all students with disability that was not broadly observed during the last period of remote learning.
- Provision for **students with disability or their siblings to attend school** – as was successfully piloted in some regions during the previous shutdowns.
- **Proactive contact** by mainstream schools to students with disabilities and their families to ensure their individual education needs are met either at home or by attending school.
- Strengthen **mental health and wellbeing support** for students with disability and their families during this next phase.

To support of the **opening of special schools**, the following is needed:

- **Information regarding infection control and physical distancing** at special schools and on the school buses.
- **Options for in-home support** for students with disability who attend special schools in hotspot suburbs.

We need to ensure students with disability do not fall further behind, that their parents are able to continue employment, and that there is strong and consistent support available whichever part of Melbourne they live in.

Amaze and ACD will continue to speak with Ministers and Department of Education officials in the coming days to continue to emphasise the needs of students with disability.
