

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WRITTEN QUESTION

Mrs Hersey to the Minister for Education:

School Based Staff Absences due to COVID

1. How many teachers, principals and other school-based staff missed school due to contracting COVID in the 2021/22 financial year?

- Before 31 January 2022, staff absences from work were recorded as per usual practice which did not include specifying if the absence was due to COVID-19.
- From Monday 31 January 2022, the department collected data from schools and early childhood education and care (ECEC) services through a specifically developed app, on the COVID-19 status of staff and students.
- For the period 31/1/22 to 21/6/2022, 1,098 school-based staff were reported as absent due to COVID-19.

2. How many teachers, principals and other school-based staff missed school due to being a close contact to someone with COVID in the 2021/22 financial year?

- Absences due to being a close contact were not recorded separately to absences due to the number of changes in the definition.
- From 13 January 2022, school-based staff were considered essential workers under the guidelines released by National Cabinet.
- Essential workers who were close contacts and asymptomatic, were able to attend school with additional hygiene practices (e.g. masks) and testing provisions.
- As the frequency in cases dropped, the isolation requirements for close contacts changed, for example, from 27 April 2022, close contacts who had 3 doses of an approved COVID-19 vaccine were not required to isolate.
- Additionally, the definition of close contacts changed to include only household contacts and people who have spent 4 or more continuous hours indoors with a COVID-19 positive person while they were infectious.
- Due to the nature of schools, with classes changing and outdoor breaks/activities, very few staff would be considered a close contact.

3. What was the total number of school days missed by school-based staff due to either contracting COVID or being a close contact?

- Before 31 January 2022, staff absences from work were recorded as per usual practice which did not include specifying if the absence was due to COVID-19.

- From Monday 31 January 2022, the department collected data from schools and ECEC services through a specifically developed app, on the COVID-19 status of staff and students.
- Essential workers who were asymptomatic could attend school. If staff were away due to symptoms, they were included in the COVID-19 positive cases data, which was 3,382 days of school-based staff absences for the period 31/1/22 to 21/6/2022.

4. What is the total number of missed school days for school-based staff due to COVID absences?

- Before 31 January 2022, staff absences from work were recorded as per usual practice which did not include specifying if the absence was due to COVID-19.
From Monday 31 January 2022, the department collected data from schools and ECEC through a specifically developed app, on the COVID-19 status of staff and students.
- For the period 31/1/22 to 21/6/2022, 3,382 days of school-based staff absences due to COVID-29 were reported.