

# CFPE (Australia) online meeting: Form rank-and-file safety committees to oppose school reopening amid COVID-19 pandemic

The Committee for Public Education (Australia)  
15 August 2021

The Committee for Public Education (CFPE) invites educators, students and working people in Australia and internationally to participate in an online meeting on Sunday, August 22 at 1 p.m. (AEST), to discuss the urgent need to build a movement opposing the drive to reopen the school system amid significant COVID-19 infection spread. [Click here to register for the meeting.](#)

The Delta-variant driven pandemic upsurge is an unfolding catastrophe in Sydney, Australia's largest city. Acting on behalf of big business and finance capital, and enjoying the tacit support of the Labor Party and trade unions, the New South Wales Liberal-National government of Premier Gladys Berejiklian has refused to implement the necessary lockdown restrictions to eliminate coronavirus transmission. The consciously worked out agenda is to lay the basis for the permanent lifting of all restrictions on economic activity, with every worker herded back into their workplace.

The push to reopen the schools globally is a central aspect of this criminal "herd immunity" policy. Working-class parents cannot return to their workplaces if they are obliged to supervise their children doing online learning at home. The Berejiklian government is attempting to dragoon Year 12 students and their teachers back first—on the bogus grounds of the importance of the final school year HSC exams—as the first step in getting all students and school workers back. This is despite the fact that a snap state-wide lockdown was announced on Saturday.

The school reopening campaign flies in the face of all epidemiological science. In Australia and internationally, schools have repeatedly functioned as vectors for COVID-19 transmission. More than half the

infections in NSW are among people aged under 30. Almost 60 percent of those are children and teenagers under 19. Over 60 schools have been closed due to infections. On one day last week alone, 44 children under 9 tested positive.

The Delta variant is especially dangerous for young people. There is now a clear scientific body of evidence on the substantial risks posed to children and young people by the disease, including long-term neurological and respiratory effects. At the same time, Australia ranks near the bottom of all advanced countries for vaccinated adults, and teachers and school workers have been given no priority status.

Teachers, school staff, students and working people cannot allow this threatened disaster to eventuate!

Throughout the pandemic, the teacher unions, including the New South Wales Teachers Federation and the Australian Education Union, have functioned as the mouthpieces of the political establishment, relaying official health guidelines while working to block any independent action of educators and school workers in defence of their health and safety.

Educators and students need to take matters into their own hands, forming rank-and-file safety committees in every school to organise resistance to the reopening drive. The CFPE has played the leading role in the fight for the formation of these committees in Australia, drawing on the critically important experiences of educators in North America, Europe, and Asia who have likewise organised independently of their trade unions.

The CFPE online meeting will review these experiences, outline our perspective for mobilising a unified struggle of school workers, students, and

working people, on the basis of an internationalist and socialist program.

The CFPE is proud to announce the speakers for this meeting:

**Zac Corrigan** is a member of the Socialist Equality Party (US) playing a leading role in the Michigan Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee. In 2018 Corrigan participated in an on-the-spot *World Socialist Web Site* reporting team intervening in strikes of educators across the US, beginning with the wild-cat teacher strikes in West Virginia.

**Prageeth Aravinda** is the chairperson of the Sri Lankan Teachers-Parents-Students Safety Committee, established under the political guidance and initiative of the Socialist Equality Party. Aravinda is a teacher in a government school and a member of the SEP Political Committee. For two months, 250,000 teachers have been taking strike action over wage demands and opposition to the Rajapakse government's refusal to fight the pandemic, which has resulted in Sri Lanka having the fourth highest COVID-19 death rate per capita in the world.

**Patrick O'Connor** is a teacher and member of the Committee for Public Education. O'Connor is a regular writer for the WSWS and a member of the National Committee of the Socialist Equality Party in Australia.

The meeting will be chaired by **Sue Phillips**, a teacher and the national convenor of the CFPE. She is also a writer for the WSWS and a member of the Socialist Equality Party's National Committee.

Register in advance and promote the meeting among educators, students, colleagues and friends!

Details: Sunday, August 22, 1 p.m. (AEST), register [here](#).



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)**