

# CFPE online meeting this Saturday: COVID-19 spreads through Australian schools—Lives before profit! Stop the pandemic!

**The Committee for Public Education (Australia)  
8 December 2021**

The Committee for Public Education (CFPE) invites educators, students and working people in Australia and internationally to participate in an online meeting on Saturday, December 11, at 2 p.m. (AEDT). The event will assess the impact of the rushed reopening of the schools in New South Wales (NSW) and Victoria, and discuss the need to build a movement to suspend face-to-face classroom teaching amid the escalating spread of the Omicron variant.

Among the confirmed Omicron cases in Sydney, 20 are linked to two schools, Regents Park Christian School and St Peter Chanel Catholic Primary School, both in Regents Park, a working class western suburb.

Scientists are still determining the extent to which the Omicron variant is more infectious and potentially more dangerous than previous iterations of the virus. Initial reports from southern Africa, however, are alarming, including on the potential impact on young children. South African authorities have noted a higher rate of hospitalisation of children, including those under 5 years of age, than at any other stage of the global pandemic.

The situation is an indictment of the entire Australian political establishment—Liberal, Labor, and Greens. The Liberal-National state government in NSW and Labor state government in Victoria rushed to reopen the schools, including in Sydney and Melbourne, in early October. This was a central aspect of the ruling elite's drive to permanently junk lockdown measures and other health restrictions impinging on the interests of big business and finance capital.

The teacher unions are actively collaborating with

this agenda. The Australian Education Union (AEU) and NSW Teachers Federation (NSWTF) have covered up data on school closures and infection rates and have blocked every effort of teachers and school workers to defend their safety and that of their students in the face of efforts to keep classrooms open. A strike in NSW involving 50,000 teachers, the first in the state in a decade, reflected mounting anger over stagnant wages amid a soaring cost of living and increasingly unbearable working conditions. Yet the NSWTF bureaucracy did not once mention COVID-19 at the rally in central Sydney.

The Omicron variant has now spread to at least 49 countries around the world. The emergency measures taken at the start of the pandemic in China and other Asia-Pacific countries must be advanced by the international working class today in order to stop the spread of the Delta and Omicron variants and save millions of lives. These include the temporary closure of schools and non-essential workplaces with full income protection for affected workers, combined with comprehensive testing, contact tracing, the isolation of infected patients, mask wearing and more.

Rank-and-file safety committees need to be formed in every school, independent of the unions, to organise the widest discussion on the necessary steps going forward to take up the fight for emergency school shutdowns, as part of a global fight for the elimination of the virus.

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

Details: Saturday, December 11 at 2 p.m. (AEST), register [here](#).



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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