

# CORONAVIRUS CONTAGION

## SPIT FINE BACKED

KIERAN ROONEY

VICTORIA'S Rail, Tram and Bus Union have called for the introduction of hefty new fines for anyone caught coughing or spitting on public transport staff.

In a letter to the State Government, state secretary Luba Grigorovitch urged for Victoria to follow new legislation introduced in NSW.

The laws, introduced in response to behaviour after the coronavirus outbreak, impose a \$5000 penalty on anyone caught coughing and spitting on people making their way to work.

It comes after reports police officers and other frontline workers were being targeted over the past month.

"While the vast majority of the travelling public continue to practise good hygiene, social distancing and are respectful of others' circumstances, there remains a minority who have used COVID-19 as a threat," Ms Grigorovitch said.

She said more enforcement was needed.

## MORE KIDS CONNECTED

ASHLEY ARGOON

AN extra 21,000 internet dongles are being sent to Victorian students as the government responds to extreme demand due to remote learning.

The Victorian Government struck up a deal with Telstra to supply the gadgets, taking the total number of internet devices being offered to families in need to 26,000.

Priority will be given to senior secondary students, bushfire-affected communities and those who can't afford internet at home.

Almost 50,000 laptops and tablets have also been loaned to Victorian kids through term 2.

Education Minister James Merlino said the new agreement with Telstra meant no child would miss out learning from home during this period.

"We're ... providing a device to every child that needs one as well as internet access to thousands of Victorian students," he said.



Relief teacher Carmelina Di Guglielmo is left with no work after her school switched to remote learning. Picture: ANDREW HENSHAW

# No respite for relief

## EDUCATION

ASHLEY ARGOON

A TEACHER drought may hit Victoria within months as relief educators flee the state due to coronavirus.

Hundreds of international teachers desperately needed before the pandemic have already left Victoria after Prime Minister Scott Morrison called on those with visitor visas to go home.

It comes as thousands of Victorian relief teachers are currently out of work due to remote learning at a time permanent staff are fighting to keep up.

Tradewind manager Ge-

## Support teachers left high and dry

orge Richards said 200 of his international teachers had already gone home to the UK, Canada and NZ.

"When we come to term three there's going to be a dramatic shortage of teachers at a time there will be a spike in demand," he said.

"We feel teachers are going to be mentally exhausted but there's not going to be the (relief) teachers there."

Standby staff manager Trish Murley said "there will be a drought".

The *Herald Sun* spoke with six agencies representing 6000 Victorian relief teachers — al-

most all were out of work.

Ms Murley said she usually had 120 teachers in schools each week. "We've had not one single booking — this time last year you'd be absolutely flat chat," she said.

Staffing Organisation Services director Noel Sheehan said typically there were bookings for 125 schools through the term but "we've had calls from four schools".

"We have teachers ringing in every day, 'Is anything happening?'," he said.

His agency is setting up a tutoring platform so its 330 teachers can assist students

one-on-one. Carmelina Di Guglielmo, a relief teacher now out of work, has been supplying worksheets because their kids have been running out of tasks from school.

She went to Officeworks on Wednesday to copy more sheets after delivering bundles to students. "It's giving me a purpose," she said.

Ms Guglielmo lost work as a part-time actor, along with teaching jobs.

"I've even heard some schools are thinking they won't be able to afford CRTs (casual relief teachers) for the

rest of the year because they're updating skills."

Agencies have struggled to get teachers paid through the federal JobKeeper support package as many did not qualify. Staff must have worked with a company for 40 days from March 1, but many CRTs work with multiple agencies or seek work directly with schools.

Australian Education Union Victorian branch president Meredith Peace encouraged "all schools to proactively support CRTs and utilise these valued members of the school community however they can to ensure they remain in the industry during this challenging time".

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## Warning on super double dip

DESPERATE Australians are applying multiple times to access \$10,000 of superannuation tax-free and are relying on outdated balances as a guide to know how much money they have.

Nearly a million people have registered their interest in accessing their retirement savings early as part of Morrison Government measures to help those financially hit by the coronavirus pandemic.

SOPHIE ELSWORTH

But the Australian Taxation Office warned people could only apply once this financial year.

"Some people are trying to apply more than once," ATO assistant commissioner Sonia Corsini said.

"You can only apply once per financial year — that's once this financial year and once next financial year, from

July 1 for the 2020-21 year. If someone does put in a second application we will reject it."

However, super balances held by the ATO are in most instances outdated — many will show the person's super balance at June 30 last year.

And that balance will have changed because more contributions have been made or the fund has delivered a subdued performance because of changing market conditions.

SEVERAL of Victoria's rental law reforms will be delayed from coming into effect for six months amid the coronavirus crisis.

All 130 amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act — which included introducing minimum standards for properties, allowing renters to make minor modifications to their homes, and banning no-reason evictions — were due to come into force by July

SAMANTHA LANDY

1. But the State Government has now stated it will postpone the start date of a number of the reforms to January 1.

The government is yet to respond to *Herald Sun* questions on how many of the reforms will be delayed, and specifically which ones.

Some of them have already come into effect, with

landlords blocked from "unreasonably" denying tenants from keeping pets and rent rises limited to once a year.

The Real Estate Institute of Victoria had called for a six-month moratorium on the rental law changes, saying a delay to January 1 at the earliest would "allow businesses and their regulators to focus solely on getting through this crisis".