

Wednesday, 11 March 2020

ACTU calls for two weeks paid special leave for all workers

BREAKING

The ACTU Executive, at its meeting in Merimbula, as today called on the Morrison government to provide a guarantee of two weeks paid leave for all workers, permanent, casual and contract, who are forced to either self-isolate as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic or where there is a genuine business downturn or shutdown as a result of the pandemic.

The resolution, which passed unanimously, followed a debate about the wide-ranging impacts on workers employed under all forms of mechanisms. While 1 in 3 workers have no access to paid leave the ACTU Executive heard of the wide range of responses from employers which varies from paid support for workers needing to self-isolate to removing shifts from casual workers and sending employees home without pay.

The Australian union movement has reached out to business with the resolution calling on the Morrison government to provide support “for employers, especially small business, in our collective efforts to respond” to COVID-19 which the ACTU has identified as needing a public health response of “the highest priority”

Quotes from Sally McManus:

“The most important thing for public health is to ensure everyone knows that if they have to self-isolate that there is not going to be a financial penalty for them and their family. If working people are forced to choose between going to work sick or being able to pay their bills and feed their families then we are creating a disaster scenario for public health.”

“While the national employment standards provide 10 days sick leave for ongoing employees there are many workers who will not be able to spend two weeks in self isolation and keep their household income at their current levels. In addition to those who will lose out because they have to self-isolate many employers are standing down workers and considering letting people go due to the economic impacts of COVID-19.”

“All workers need assurance that they will get through the pandemic without losing out on their entitlements. The Morrison government needs to urgently legislate to create these provisions for all workers. If the government underwrites two weeks of paid leave for all workers who are under threat from the economic impacts of COVID-19 that will stimulate the economy and help alleviate the impact on working Australians”

“With 1 in 3 workers in Australia not having any access to paid leave we need the government to step in and ensure that employers are able to fund proper leave for workers who have to self-isolate due to public health concerns. Working people in Australia are already struggling with a slowing economy and domestic spending is drying up across the nation.

“Some businesses are already committing to doing the right thing by their employees, and they should be congratulated, but we know some employers won’t support their workers, and for some small businesses they simply do not have the capacity to keep people on during this pandemic. By creating a special leave provision, the government will be able to provide support for workers, their families and communities, confidence to business to operate during the pandemic and ensure that small business can stay afloat and not lay off their workers.”

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Contact – Francis Leach - 03 9664 7246 media@actu.org.au