

Wednesday 5th January 2022

Morrison refuses to listen to public health experts, doctors, unions and businesses to make RATs free

Prime Minister Scott Morrison, in his announcement today, has once again rejected the calls of doctors, public health experts, unions, and small businesses to make rapid antigen tests free for all. This is a slap in the face to the Australians who have sacrificed and lost so much to keep each other safe during the pandemic.

This failure is accompanied by the Prime Minister's announcement to potentially water down work health and safety laws, which should send shivers down the spine of every worker in this country that is concerned about attending work and being infected. Every worker has the right to a safe workplace, and one that minimises risks of Covid. Rapid tests are an effective tool at keeping Covid out of work settings and employers should be working with their workers to look at all the potential ways, including through the use of rapid antigen tests, to make work safe.

Unions and businesses have been warning the Morrison Government since October that the government needs to introduce free rapid antigen tests to keep workplaces safe and businesses open.

We are now seeing the consequences of Morrison's failure to secure enough RAT tests and provide them freely as PCR testing is swamped and businesses are having to close or reduce hours because of staff shortages.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Acting Secretary Liam O'Brien:

"Morrison's failure to secure enough RATs and provide them freely is a slap in the face to small businesses and workers who have already sacrificed and lost so much and are trying to recover from the pandemic.

"Even in America with their broken health system there are half a billion free rapid tests. In the UK the government is mailing them to your home and to your workplace. It is an embarrassment that in Australia you cannot get them.

"The Morrison Government is once again putting the lives of Australians at risk and rejecting the calls of public health experts, doctors, unions and small businesses to make RATs free and accessible for all.

"Once again under the guise of the pandemic Mr Morrison is trying to water down the rights of workers and health and safety laws. Workplaces have a duty to minimise safety risks, including against Covid, and the Morrison Government mustn't undermine this."

Media contact: Isabella Tilley 0414 894 040