

Monday 17 January 2022

Emergency meeting of unions to consider action to keep workers safe

An emergency meeting of national union leaders today will consider what action will be taken to keep workers safe as the Prime Minister ignores repeated requests for assistance and spurns offers to work together to address the workforce crisis.

The meeting will hear from all unions and consider all options to respond to the Omicron variant, in light of the latest health advice on what is needed to avoid infections to limit the spread.

Faced with the failure of the federal government, working people in their unions will step up and ensure that Australian workplaces are safe and that working people have access to the basic items they need to keep themselves and their communities as safe as possible.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary Sally McManus:

“We have a monumental workforce crisis with a record level of essential workers sick and unable to work. This has led to an overwhelming of our health systems and a crippling of our supply chains.

“Some employers are responding by pressuring Covid-positive people to work, others have not changed safety measures despite the more infectious nature of Omicron, workers are sick, many now without income and there is a serious lack of national leadership.

“Too many people are being put in harm’s way and the failure of the Federal Government to secure RATs means we do not have the tools to keep ourselves and the community safe.

“We have offered to work with the Morrison Government as we did in 2020, but this offer has gone unanswered. We have called on the Government to provide the immediate support working people need, such as free RATs, better masks, proper definitions of close contact and support for businesses and workers in the unofficial lockdown. These requests have also fallen on deaf ears, just like our requests to the Federal Government to secure a supply of RATs six months ago.

“Businesses and working people have waited for this Government to learn from its mistakes and take some leadership – we can’t wait any longer. Unions cannot accept working people being put in danger at work and so we will chart our own way forward.”

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