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Morrison must support two thirds of aged care workers still trying to get vaccinated

The failures of the Morrison Government have led to two thirds of aged care staff at a Sydney aged care home currently dealing with an outbreak not being vaccinated. The Federal Government must ramp up efforts to support aged and disability care workers to get vaccinated.

The Morrison Government has tried to shift the blame for a failed vaccine rollout to workers, now mandating that all aged care workers must be vaccinated by September.

In February, the Federal Aged care Services Minister Richard Colbeck and Federal Health and Aged Care Minister Greg Hunt released a joint media release; in it they announced that the aged care vaccination rollout would take six weeks. Minister Hunt and Colbeck promised that there would be an in-workplace service available to residents and staff.

Federal Health Department Data shows that as of the 25th of June two thirds of aged care staff nationally remain unvaccinated.

Issues surrounding aged care workers getting vaccinated do not stem from worker unwillingness, they come from the Morrison Government's failure to provide enough vaccines and from cancelling the in-workplace rollout. The aged care sector also suffers from a high rate of insecure work, and for many workers getting a vaccine means missing shifts and therefore pay, especially if they experience side effects.

The Morrison Government must provide up to two days paid vaccination leave per shot for aged care workers so that they can get vaccinated and recover from routine side-effects.

Most aged care workers are under the age of 60 and therefore Pfizer is the preferred vaccine. Whilst mandating that workers get vaccinated before September, the Federal Government must provide Pfizer is an available option.

The Government should also recommit to their promise to vaccinate workers in-workplace so that the rollout for these vulnerable workers is completed as quickly as possible.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil:

"Two thirds of aged care workers nationally are unvaccinated despite the Morrison Government promising that all aged care workers would be vaccinated by March and would have access to an in-workplace rollout.

"After the disastrous residential aged care Covid outbreaks last year, The Federal Government should have learnt that getting aged care workers vaccinated as quickly as possible is critical.

"The Morrison Government is trying to shift the blame for their failed vaccine rollout to workers by mandating all aged care workers are vaccinated by September, despite Government failures to provide in-workplace vaccine rollouts and accessibility to Pfizer which is the preferred vaccine for the vast majority of the workforce who are under 60.

"The aged care sector is highly insecure, and many workers cannot afford to miss shifts to get the vaccine and to recover from routine side effects. The Morrison Government must support these workers by providing paid vaccination leave and in-workplace vaccinations."

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