

Tuesday 6 July 2021

Morrison Government must not move on from failed aged care rollout

The union movement, along with NSW Health Minister Brett Hazzard, have been calling for vaccinations to be administered in aged care workplace as an immediate priority. Rather than getting vaccines to the two thirds of aged care workers who have still not been vaccinated, the Morrison Government is shifting its focus to a general population rollout and once again excluding working people from discussions.

The ACTU is concerned about reports that big business are claiming they can treat the rollout of this vaccine as just another flu shot. The side effects of this vaccine are much more common and serious than the flu vaccine and should be taken seriously. This rollout should be left to healthcare professionals to manage.

If the Morrison Government is beginning to plan a broader rollout with the involvement of businesses, then they must meet immediately with unions to discuss the needs of working people – ignoring the needs of workers has been the critical error of the aged care rollout.

NSW is in the grips of another terrifying COVID-19 wave, and again the Morrison Government has allowed the virus back into aged care homes. If the Morrison Government does not act fast, many vulnerable Australians will die.

The union movement is urging the Morrison Government to move very quickly on practical solutions that make it as easy as possible for workers to get vaccinated, at no cost to themselves. The Morrison Government needs to immediately provide in-workplace vaccines for aged care workers and paid vaccination leave so that workers can get the job and recover without losing pay.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil,

“Plans to vaccinate aged care workers in their workplaces were completely abandoned. These workers should have been fully vaccinated by April of this year. The Morrison Government must urgently finish the job of vaccinating aged and disability care staff.

“We are yet again seeing the dangers of insecure work: overworked and underpaid aged care workers are having to work across different sites to make ends meet and are now being forced to get vaccinated on their own watch, out of their own pocket. We must ensure workers have access to paid vaccination leave to attend and recover from vaccination.

“Aged care workers shouldn't have to take matters into their own hands and use aged care residents' leftover doses – they should be provided with in-workplace vaccinations.

“If the Federal Government doesn't ensure aged care workers have access to vaccines by September, they will not be allowed to work in their sector. That is a crisis not only for the workers who will go without a paycheck, but also for the already critically understaffed aged

care facilities and their vulnerable residents, who will now potentially go without the quality of care they deserve.”

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