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Paid vaccine leave essential for all workers

The ACTU is calling on the Morrison Government to provide a new universal leave entitlement through the National Employment Standards (NES) for paid leave for every worker, including casual workers, to get the job and recover from any routine side effects.

New South Wales, Melbourne, Canberra, and parts of the Northern Territory are all in lockdown because of the Morrison Government's failed vaccine rollout.

According to AusVaxSafety up to 20 per cent of people report routine side effects from the vaccine that require time off work. We Need to ensure that workers do not have to choose between getting the vaccine and getting paid.

Unions have already been winning paid vaccination leave workplace by workplace, and 1.6 million people are already covered by a new entitlement to leave. But to ensure that all of Australia's 13 million working people can access the new shipments of vaccines arriving in the next few months we need to remove all the barriers people may have and losing pay to get vaccinated is one of them.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary Sally McManus:

"There is no more important job to be done, than getting 80% of Australians vaccinated. As the supply issue finally get resolved in Spring, we need everyone – employers, unions and Governments to be doing everything they can to make it simple and easy for people to get vaccinated.

"We need the Federal Government to remove every barrier people may have to getting vaccinated. One important barrier is any financial penalty. Casual workers and anyone without leave will risk paying a price to get the vaccine due to routine side effects which means lost income because they have no paid leave. This can be rectified with the Federal Government taking action to guarantee paid vaccination leave. This will give all working people an equal choice.

"From September the Morrison Government expects to vaccinate 2 million workers per week. We will not get the job done by Christmas if we expect working people to get the jab on lunch breaks and weekends – this is where paid vaccination leave comes in.

"The recovery of our economy relies on consumer spending and businesses being open – vaccination leave will pay for itself as the rollout speeds up and we have fewer lockdowns.

"Unions have won paid vaccination leave for 1.6 million workers.

"The Morrison Government needs to step up and ensure that every Australian can get the vaccine as soon as possible."

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