

Friday 10 December 2021

Paid leave for parents critical to getting kids a first dose before school returns

With children aged 5 to 11 now able to get vaccinated if a parent is present, the ACTU is calling on the Morrison Government to provide paid leave for every worker, including casual workers, to take their children to get vaccinated and to look after them as they recover from routine side effects.

From the 10th of January children will be able to get vaccinated at a general practice, vaccination clinic or pharmacy if a parent or guardian is present. This is a critical step forward in the fight to stop the spread of Covid and in protecting teachers and school support staff. If we are going to try and get kids a first dose before school returns, we must make every effort to support parents with paid leave.

With so much still unknown about Omicron's transmissibility and severity, it is more important than ever that vaccination rates be as high as possible across the entire population.

Australia has seen some of the world's longest lockdowns and border closures because of the Morrison Government's vaccine rollout failures, including the failure to provide sufficient leave and financial support for working people – we cannot afford to continue making the same mistakes.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Assistant Secretary Liam O'Brien:

“Sydney is still seeing hundreds of Covid cases a day and Melbourne over a thousand. Over the next month borders will be coming down around the country and Covid will soon spread to every state – we need to get kids a first dose before school returns next year and the best way to do this is give all working parents, including casuals, paid leave to get their kids vaccinated.

“Australia has already paid a heavy price with prolonged lockdowns and border closures because of the Morrison Government's vaccine rollout failures. We cannot make the same mistakes again. Parents must be supported to get their kids vaccinated and look after them as they recover from routine side effects.

“Unions fought for and won paid vaccination leave for over one and a half million workers to get vaccinated. We now must ensure every parent is supported to get their kids vaccinated as soon as possible.

“Omicron's transmissibility and severity are still largely unknown. It's critical that our government does everything it can to increase vaccination rates in order to protect us from this and future variants.”

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