

Friday 25 March 2022

COVID cases on the rise, employers have obligation to keep workplaces safe

COVID case numbers across Australia are on the rise, and despite the highly contagious BA.2 variant many of the public health orders which have been in place over the last two years have now been removed.

Employers, however, still have legal obligations to keep workplaces safe, and a lack of public health orders is not an excuse for employers to drop the ball on keeping workplaces COVID-safe.

Increased ventilation including open windows and doors whenever possible, masks, density limits, and regular, free testing are all measures that may be appropriate regardless of whether they are mandated and must be used to keep workers safe.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary Sally McManus:

“Employers have a legal obligation to ensure workplaces are safe, regardless of what measures are mandated by public health orders. They must consult their employees about what’s appropriate now that cases are on the rise.

“Masks, rapid tests, density limits, working from home, and other measures should all be considered by employers and put in place where appropriate.

“Too many times during this pandemic we have squandered the hard work of everyone and slipped backwards thanks to lack of action or complacency.

“By putting in place COVID safety measures, we can limit the spread of the virus, as well as helping to keep the pressure off our hospital system.

“COVID safety measures also limit the negative impact of the virus on employers – it lessens the chance of huge numbers of workers being off sick at any one time.”

Media contact: Isabella Tilley 0414 894 040