

Wednesday 20 July 2022

ACTU Executive calls on employers to do more as Covid cases surpass peak

Today's meeting of the ACTU Executive has heard from health and social care unions about the unsustainable pressure being placed on our healthcare system by the current Covid wave and has passed a resolution calling on employers to honour their obligation to ensure all workplaces are safe for workers.

5200 hospitalisations were reported yesterday, close to the peak of the pandemic so far, and Chief Medical Officer Professor Paul Kelly confirmed this morning that Covid case numbers will soon surpass all previous peaks.

Employers have a legal obligation to consult and cooperate with workers about making work safe. The current level of infection means employers are obliged to ensure that all workers who can work from home do so, and those who cannot are required to wear masks and socially distance in the workplace.

The resolution also calls on employers to provide free RATs to all employees, regardless of whether they are working from home or in the workplace. In addition, it calls for employers to go beyond the Federal Government's Disaster Leave Payment and provide paid leave at full pay for workers who need to isolate.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil:

"The biggest Covid wave of the pandemic so far is about to hit and it's imperative that employers adhere to their legal obligations to protect their workers' health and safety by ensuring that all workers who can work from home do so, and those who cannot have masks and social distancing arrangements in place.

"We have heard from health and social care unions today that pressure on our healthcare system and healthcare workers is at an unacceptable level. Healthcare workers are doing more than their part on the frontline, it's time that all employers and the community support them.

"No worker should have to decide between putting food on the table or isolating with Covid. Employers must support workers by providing free RATs and providing leave at full pay when workers have to isolate.

"Working people have been doing their part to support health and social care workers and reduce the strain on the healthcare system since the start of the pandemic.

"Australia's entire healthcare system will be compromised unless Covid cases are controlled by all employers stepping up and supporting the health and safety of their workers."

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