

Wednesday 14 September 2022

Workers must not be asked to isolate without paid pandemic leave

The ACTU welcomes the decision of National Cabinet to extend Paid Pandemic Leave arrangements. It is essential that these arrangements are kept in place as long as working people are being asked to isolate while infectious.

The reduction in payment alongside a reduction in isolation period will leave some workers who still miss a full week of work worse off, and more clarity is needed with regard to what any new medical evidence requirements would mean for a healthcare system which is already overloaded.

We cannot allow the absence of sufficient paid leave to create a financial disincentive for working people to isolate and protect themselves and their workmates from the virus. This is one of the first lessons we learnt in dealing with the pandemic.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Assistant Secretary Liam O'Brien:

"Paid pandemic leave needs to stay in place as long as working people are being asked to isolate and take time away from work to control the spread of the virus.

"The third of our working population who do not have access to paid sick leave cannot be expected to go without pay to keep the rest of the community safe.

"More clarity is needed about what these changes will mean for GPs and frontline healthcare workers who are already overwhelmed. It is also disappointing that the reduction in payments will leave some working people worse off. We should not be pulling back supports from working people who are doing the right thing to stop the spread of the virus."

Media contact: Peter Green 0400 764 200