

Thursday 29 April 2021

ACTU writes to Hunt calling for action on failed vaccine rollout for aged care, disability support workers

The ACTU has written to Minister Hunt to express increasing concern that the vaccine rollout isn't reaching those most vulnerable, including elderly and disabled people and those working with them.

The current rollout appears to have abandoned in-workplace vaccination plans for workers in aged care and disability support, instead requiring workers, who are often in insecure work, to take time off to travel to a vaccination hub or GP clinic.

This puts the burden on workers to choose between getting paid and getting vaccinated. In the absence of financial supports they face the risk of losing income if they experience routine side-effects.

To ensure a faster and more complete vaccine rollout for essential staff in aged and disability support, unions call for the Government to immediately adopt the following three key changes:

1. Publicly release a comprehensive plan for the rollout in aged care and disability support. Currently workers in these sectors have no idea when, or how, they will be able to access the vaccine.
2. Begin daily reporting of vaccination numbers in these sectors specifically. These workers have been told time and again they are in the highest priority group, they deserve to know that they and their colleagues are getting the vaccine as fast as possible.
3. Provide financial support for workers to get vaccinated, and for workers who experience side-effects. No one should have to give up pay to get vaccinated. We know that these sectors have high rates of insecure work and with 10 per cent of Pfizer recipients experiencing side-effects which would stop them attending work, we know that without support, huge numbers of workers will miss shifts and go without pay. This is unacceptable.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary Sally McManus:

"Unions have attempted to work with the Coalition throughout the planning and execution of the vaccine rollout and the inability of the Government to reach these essential workers is of serious concern.

"Like many other vaccines, around 10 per cent of Pfizer recipients do experience routine side-effects, which in many cases will leave them unable to work for a day or two. It is essential that financial supports are in place for workers when this happens.

"If vaccinations won't be happening in workplaces, disability and aged care support workers will have to take time off to travel for their vaccinations and with many of them in insecure work it's likely they will have to choose between getting vaccinated and getting paid.

"Workers are currently in the dark as the Government fails to disclose vaccination details. We need a detailed plan and rollout information must be shared so that workers know how and when they'll be vaccinated."

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