

Wednesday 19 January 2022

Prime Minister continues to duck responsibility for providing RATs, instead attempts to slash WHS protections

Prime Minister Morrison has again today refused to accept any responsibility for the failure of his government to listen to advice from medical experts, businesses, and unions as far back as 2020 that large numbers of Rapid Antigen Tests would be required to keep working people and the broader community safe.

The US and UK are providing free RATs for anyone who wants them, enabling people to test frequently and without delays, keeping the community and workplaces as safe as possible.

The Morrison Government's failure stands in stark contrast, with workers desperately trying to find tests through tipoffs on social media and family members of aged care residents using visits – and the mandatory RAT that this involves – as a makeshift replacement for at-home or in-workplace testing.

Rather than accepting responsibility or attempting to address the issue, the PM has again flagged pushing ahead with plans to reduce WHS protections for working people in the midst of the worst health emergency in living memory, a virus that spreads rapidly through workplaces.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary Sally McManus:

“Every Australian has been affected by the Morrison Government's failure to secure a reliable supply of RATs. It is shameful that it is easier for Australians to catch Covid than it is to find a test kit.

“We can limit admissions to hospitals, keep workplaces open and supply chains operating if we have free and accessible RATs.

“It appears that instead of moving on this issue, the Prime Minister wants to move on worker's health and safety rights. We will strongly oppose this.

“It is not the time to be stubborn, it's the time to respond to the voices of workers, employers and the community who all want this issue sorted, so we can have confidence in our ability to keep safe and manage this pandemic.”

Media contact: Peter Green 0400 764 200