

Thursday 13 October 2022

Lessons of the pandemic must not be forgotten for workers left without sick leave

ACTU Executive has today passed a resolution reminding employers that even with public health orders and income support ending, they must ensure that workers are safe and healthy in their workplaces. The resolution also calls on the Albanese Government to bring forward legislation aimed at addressing rampant insecure work which means one in three Australian workers has no sick leave.

Employers have an obligation to support workers who contract COVID-19 to isolate and prevent the spread of the virus. This support should include provision of paid leave where required.

The pandemic exposed the significant public health risk posed by having millions of working people with no access to paid sick leave, but this risk will not end with the pandemic. We need to change our workplace laws to stop rorts and close loopholes which strip these basic rights from workers and have caused so much unnecessary illness and death during the pandemic.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Assistant Secretary Liam O'Brien:

“The danger of forcing workers into workplaces while they are sick just so they can keep food on the table was one of the first lessons we learnt during the pandemic. We cannot afford to forget it again.

“Even with public health orders and income support payments ending, employers still have a legal obligation to make sure that workplaces are safe and that working people have the support they need to keep themselves and the community protected from the spread of disease.

“We need to stop the erosion of workplace rights which have left millions of workers without sick leave and increased the risks associated with COVID. Our workplace laws are out of date and are being easily exploited by unscrupulous employers.

“We call on the Albanese Government to change our workplace laws to reduce the rates of insecure work and ensure that we have a stronger, more resilient workforce with the basic rights that all working people should be able to rely on.”

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