

Australian rank-and-file groups call online public meeting: “Unite educators and health workers: Oppose the ending of COVID protection measures! Lives before profit!”

Health Workers Rank-and-File Committee, The Committee for Public Education

21 October 2022

The Health Workers Rank-and-File Committee (HWRFC) and the Committee for Public Education (CFPE) call on all workers, students and professional people to join our online public meeting on Sunday, November 20 at 3 p.m. (AEDT).

The meeting, titled, “Unite educators and health workers: Oppose the ending of COVID protection measures! Lives before profit!” will outline a political perspective, including the building of rank-and-file committees, to unify health workers, teachers and other sections of workers in the fight for decent wages, working conditions and the elimination of COVID-19. Register now: <https://bit.ly/3CRCuOh>

Such a struggle is being blocked by the trade unions, which are keeping workers divided and seeking to channel the growing anger and opposition behind the Labor Party and futile appeals to state and federal governments, which have identical positions on pay cuts, budget freezes and mass COVID infection.

On October 13, the HWRFC and the CFPE released a joint statement calling on workers to oppose the ending of COVID-19 isolation requirements and the abolition of pandemic leave payments for infected workers.

These measures, spearheaded by the Albanese federal Labor government, with the unanimous support of all state and territory governments, amount to a declaration of war against public health and working people.

It marks the final stage in a protracted assault on any coordinated public health response to the pandemic. The “let it rip” policies, adopted by all of Australia’s governments last December, have already claimed more than 13,000 lives. Hundreds of thousands, or even

millions, face the prospect of debilitating Long COVID.

There is a direct relationship between the dire situation facing educators and health workers, both of whom are on the pandemic frontlines. Both confront widespread understaffing and punishing workloads, exacerbated by COVID-19, and a deepening assault on real wages.

Health workers and educators have also been in the vanguard of rising strike action over the past year. But in taking forward these struggles, workers confront the opposition of the unions which are limiting all industrial action and enforcing sell-out deals with governments and management.

The unions have forced educators and students back into classrooms amidst the spread of the pandemic, and have systematically pushed for the ending of COVID safety measures. This was highlighted by Gerard Hayes, the New South Wales state secretary of the Health Services Union, who for months demanded an end to COVID isolation requirements out of concern for its impact on the profit-making activity of big business.

This conspiracy cannot go unchallenged! It must be fought by the entire working class, as part of the fight for workplace safety, wage increases greater than inflation, and drastic improvements to ever-worsening conditions.

A crucial first step in building such a movement of the working class is uniting healthcare and education workers in a common struggle against the ending of the isolation mandate. To do this, workers must take

matters into their own hands, through the formation of rank-and-file committees, independent of the unions and run by workers themselves.

Our meeting will discuss and develop a campaign to take forward this fight.

Register to participate in this vital discussion on Sunday, 20 November at 3 p.m. (AEDT).



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