

Media Release

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PROTECTING VICTORIA'S MOST VULNERABLE WORKERS

The Andrews Labor Government is forging ahead with plans to tackle insecure work, with consultation on its Australian-first initiative to provide casual workers sick pay now underway.

The *Secure Work Pilot Scheme* will help look after our most vulnerable workers – providing up to five days total of sick or carer's pay at the national minimum wage for casual or insecure workers in priority industries.

The pandemic has highlighted how unfair and dangerous it can be for a worker to have to choose between keeping their co-workers and community safe and paying the bills.

Beginning in the first half of next year, the Government's two-year pilot will protect many Victorian workers from having to make that terrible choice, as well as supporting them to take time off if they need to care for a loved one.

The scheme will allow people who are unwell to stay at home, reducing the spread of illness in the workplace which costs the Victorian economy billions of dollars in lost productivity each year.

Workers in occupations with high levels of insecurity such as private sector aged care staff, cleaners, hospitality staff, security guards and supermarket workers will be among the first to benefit from the pilot.

The Government is calling for submissions from industry, workers, unions and the community to help shape the scheme and ensure it supports workers, benefits business and safeguards the health of our community.

Public input will be vital in shaping the scheme – and we want to hear from any workers who have been forced to choose between a day's pay and their health – and the health of every Victorian.

Further targeted consultation with industries most likely to be affected will take place throughout the year and during the operation of the pilot, with a view to moving towards a sustainable and effective ongoing scheme.

Throughout the coronavirus pandemic Government has provided more than \$141 million in payments to vulnerable workers without access to sick leave, so they can get tested and isolate.

This has helped to keep the Victorian community safe by reducing the financial pressure on workers to return to work when unwell and risk spreading illness.

For more information or to have your say on the Secure Work Pilot, visit engage.vic.gov.au.

Quote attributable to Minister for Workplace Safety Ingrid Stitt

"The risks around insecure work cannot be ignored any longer – so we're putting our hand up when no other government has, to improve the health, safety and economic security of these vital workers."

"It is unacceptable that any worker should have to choose between feeding their family and keeping their workmates and community safe. This scheme will remove that terrible choice for our most vulnerable workers."