



## **MEDIA RELEASE: CFMEU NSW, ETU & NSW Plumbers Union**

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### **Enough is Enough. NSW must stop discriminating against construction workers**

The NSW Government's decision to deny construction workers from LGAs of concern being able to use rapid antigen testing as a means of proving they are safe to work is discriminatory and a slap in the face to an industry that has met every challenge Covid has thrown at it. The current rules have caused untold distress and anxiety to a group of construction workers already doing it tough as a result of an issue not of their own making.

“The CFMEU, ETU and Plumbers union have been calling for the Berejiklian Government to support a rapid antigen testing regime in the industry since the start of the pandemic, and as an alternative to mandatory vaccination, and it is shameful that some construction workers are going to be excluded from it. Construction workers are being unjustifiably punished,” said Darren Greenfield, CFMEU NSW Construction Secretary.

“Until today the Berejiklian Government had consistently resisted supporting rapid antigen testing in the industry. Despite this resistance, rapid antigen testing has been adopted widely across the industry following the long-term advocacy for its use by the CFMEU ETU and Plumbers Union as a means of detecting and managing the risk of covid on construction sites.”

“It is bizarre and defies any sensible rationale that in announcing the rapid antigen testing regime for every other industry that the government has excluded construction workers living in the 12 LGAs of concern from being able to use it as a means of proving they are safe to work. Construction workers, in an industry that is such an important pillar of our economy, deserve much better”.

“Construction workers who live in Sydney's Western and South Western Suburbs are being discriminated against by a government that ignores the evidence of how the industry has successfully managed Covid.”

“The industry has effectively managed the risks posed by Covid-19 since this pandemic began by putting in place upgraded and enhanced safety measures, including staggered start, finish and break times, social distancing on sites, enhanced cleaning and hygiene practices, mandatory face masks, contact tracing and elevated testing regimes - including rapid antigen testing.”

“Many builders have adopted the Contact Harold system which tracks where workers are on sites and assists in identifying close contacts of any case where a covid-positive person has been on a site.”

“The measures put in place over the past 18 months are over and above what any other industry has done in response to the risk of Covid-19 at the workplace. These measures have ensured that any time Covid has been detected on a site the industry has acted immediately and successfully managed the risk to construction workers and their families.”

“If the government is serious about increasing vaccination rates, they need to make vaccines easily available, providing workers with choice and back it up with a clear and consistent public information campaign so workers can make an informed and confident choices about their own health.”

“Now that tens of thousands of construction workers have been vaccinated, we demand of the Government to introduce immediately the opportunity for antigen testing, which is already in place, as an alternative to mandatory vaccination. We will continue to fight for all workers in the construction to return to work unconditionally and to be treated no less favourably than any other worker.”

“Workers should not be forced to pay the price for the bungled vaccine rollout, mixed messaging on vaccine safety and the ongoing failure by the State and Federal Governments to give people the accurate information they need to make their own health choices.”