



MEDIA RELEASE

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VTA plea to resolve cross border chaos

The Victorian Transport Association has called for harmonisation of COVID testing requirements for Victorian heavy vehicle drivers that are required to regularly enter South Australia to carry out their essential work, in a bid to resolve ongoing cross border chaos that is disrupting supply chains.

Under present requirements, heavy vehicle drivers entering South Australia are required to get a COVID test every seven days. However, under Victorian law only those with symptoms or unwell are permitted to get tested, with further requirements that they quarantine at home until they receive results.

This contradicts South Australian regulations, which does not require quarantine after testing, putting Victorian truck drivers in the untenable position of having to flout either South Australian or Victorian law in order to work.

VTA CEO Peter Anderson said all Australians are feeling the pain of new COVID-19 restrictions that have become a part of everyday life, and that the lack of harmony across jurisdictions is causing chaos at the border.

“While most states have been able to contain the spread of coronavirus, Victoria is suffering under rampant spread during this second wave we are experiencing, which has seen the introduction of the strictest restrictions ever imposed on individuals and businesses to try and contain the spread,” he said.

“Victoria is providing over 25,000 COVID tests per day to the elderly, infirmed, those already positive and those with symptoms. Resources required to test, track and trace for coronavirus are already stretched, and cracks are being reported in the media every day. Victoria simply does not have the capacity to drive more and more daily COVID test into an already stretched system.”

Anderson said to reduce pressure on the testing regime, the Victorian Government had instigated a direction under a state of emergency that individuals can only request a test if they show symptoms, after which they must immediately quarantine until they receive their results.

“However, the South Australian Government does not care about the issues within Victoria, as evidenced by the onerous requirement for every interstate truck driver crossing into the border from Victoria to have a COVID test every seven days. But how is an Interstate driver crossing into South Australia from Victoria able to get tested when Victorian law does not allow casual or asymptomatic testing, therefore making it impossible to prove they were tested?”

Anderson said the issue was causing havoc at the border.

“On Monday night (10 August), SAPOL turned back over 60 loads of interstate freight bound for South Australia back to Victoria because drivers were not able to provide evidence of COVID testing. The on-road testing stations at Bordertown and Taillem Bend were closed and continue to be closed.

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Anderson said drivers and operators would not risk getting fined or break Victorian and South Australian laws that did not harmonise, and that supply chain disruptions were inevitable.

“Flouting the law in South Australia carries a \$1,000 fine for an individual and \$5,000 fine per company. In Victoria, individual fines range from \$1,652-\$4,957 for not staying home when directed and between approximately \$10K-\$12K for businesses that do not comply with restrictions. To do their job, the transport operator is being asked to break either Victorian law or South Australian law.”

Anderson said the interstate transport industry had proven it can operate within the law and safely crossing borders every day, whilst complying with requirements for border crossing permits, COVID Safe Plans, contact records and hygiene training. It does not have a trace of transmission of the virus into any state.

“If the situation persists, it is inevitable that freight bound for South Australia from Victoria will start to reduce. Operators will not place drivers in a position of compromise, risk attracting huge personal fines and not be acknowledged for the work they do to support the communities.

“If common sense cannot prevail perhaps all deliveries from Victoria into South Australia should stop for up to seven days? It sounds extreme but how else are we going to get the message through to the South Australian Government?”

“Victoria is in a state of disaster. Please help us by working through this issue with Victoria,” Anderson said.

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