



**13<sup>th</sup> August 2020**

### **VTA plea to resolve border chaos with South Australia**

The VTA is continuing to advocate 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.

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. Victoria is providing over 25,000 COVID tests per day to the elderly, infirmed, those already positive and those with symptoms. We simply do not have the capacity to drive more and more daily COVID test into an already stretched system.

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?

The issue continues to cause havoc at the border and we are advocating for South Australia to relax this unworkable requirement for the transport industry or, like NSW, at least make seven day testing a recommendation instead of a requirement. 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.

Drivers and operators understandably will not risk getting fined or break Victorian and South Australian laws that do not harmonise, and supply chain disruptions are 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. This is unacceptable in a modern, national supply chain.



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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.

We will continue to keep members informed as we advocate for better outcomes on our borders.