



MEDIA RELEASE

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Victorian Government must help interstate drivers get vaccinated

Mandatory vaccinations to cross interstate borders are the latest condition state Chief Health Officers are placing upon interstate transport workers. With no choice in a move against national law that does not mandate vaccinations, the interstate driver will soon have to prove they have been vaccinated before crossing borders from state to state.

Since March 2020 when COVID-19 took hold of Australia, the transport industry has kept fragile supply chains working. This has been achieved in the face of arguably the greatest consumer demand Australia has ever faced, with communities' panic buying to keep their families fed, watered, fuelled and nourished.

"Our industry has carried millions of tonnes of goods over millions of kilometres within Australia since March 2020 and have maintained our disciplines and processes to ensure we comply with every directive," said VTA CEO Peter Anderson. "We've achieved this despite some of the most confused, onerous and personally intrusive requirements of any industry including different border crossing, testing, self-isolating and other permit requirements. We've kept our social licence with Australians to keep working despite these rapidly changing roadblocks, with transmission events from transport able to be counted on one hand.

"Now, the individual states are starting to mandate interstate truck drivers be vaccinated starting with New South Wales and South Australia, and Victoria not too far behind. Just as we've responded to every other sudden new requirement to work, our industry will comply as best we can with this latest new requirement."

The Victorian Government must help, and it must also recognise the transport industry and its workers' herculean efforts to keep fragile supply chains open with concessions for vaccinated drivers. Transport workers that haven't already been vaccinated will do their very best to ensure the supply chains remain open, but the Government should support a mobile workforce that is busier than ever to get vaccinated. The Victorian Government must:

- **Make it easy for transport workers to get vaccinated** – bring the vaccine to drivers at pop-up vaccination sites at established testing centres, truck rest stops, depots and locations drivers visit whilst carrying out their work;
- **Prioritise interstate drivers for vaccination** – as an industry we have refrained from requesting early access to vaccination. However, if the government is going to mandate vaccinations for drivers, they must be prioritised;
- **Reward vaccinated drivers with less frequent testing** – the requirement that drivers entering Victoria have a negative COVID test at least every three days is unnecessary for vaccinated drivers. This should revert to a maximum of one laboratory test a week, in line with the national Freight Movement Protocol;
- **Designate the road transport industry as an Essential Service in a State of Emergency** – transport workers have been doing essential work for over 18 months, yet the industry is not recognised as an Essential Service. Such formal recognition would give us a seat at the table on key legislative and regulatory decisions, and provide further support for supply chains that are already precarious; and
- **Implement what it agreed at National Cabinet** – the Freight Movement Protocol agreed to by every state and territory jurisdiction provides a uniform set of conditions for the transport industry to support national supply chains. The Victorian Government should implement national rules it agreed to.

"It is incumbent on any government that requires certain workers to be vaccinated to make it is easy as possible for them to do so. This is especially important for interstate freight workers, without whom our supply chains would collapse," Anderson said.

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