



**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **VTA calls for free rapid tests for freight workers**

The Victorian Transport Association has welcomed Commonwealth and Victorian government changes to close contact rules that would enable asymptomatic close COVID contacts in critical industries to return to work immediately.

To address a growing shortage of workers in supply chains across the country, Prime Minister Scott Morrison today flagged that workers in supermarkets, distribution centres, transport and other critical industries would be exempt from isolation if they were a close contact and had returned a negative COVID test result.

VTA CEO Peter Anderson welcomed the announcement and urged states and territories to immediately adopt the changes to prevent further supply chain disruptions. Victoria has already exempted close contact transport workers from isolation requirements provided they return a negative rapid antigen test every day for five days. He also reiterated the association's calls for free rapid antigen tests for transport workers.

"If a critical service worker is identified as a close COVID contact but returns a negative test result, there is no reason they shouldn't be permitted to return to work, so we welcome this variation to the rules and encourage the states and territories to adopt it immediately," Anderson said. "This should include those that have had and recovered from COVID and have since returned a negative test result.

"While the Victorian government is to be commended abolishing isolation requirements for close contact transport workers, its additional requirement that they be tested every day for five days with a RAT presents its own challenges. The freight industry has experienced the same problems finding rapid tests as everyone else and where they are a legal requirement of government to work – such as in Victoria – rapid tests should be made readily available for free."

Rapid antigen testing is likely to be a condition for close contacts to return to work in other jurisdictions and where this is the case it is the VTA's position that governments should be supplying the tests at no charge.

Anderson said the VTA had been advocating for rapid tests to replace PCR testing for months as a less intrusive form of testing for freight workers.

"Interstate heavy vehicle drivers have been testing up to three times a week for many months as a condition of maintaining their border crossing permits and we welcome the conversion to rapid tests across many jurisdictions.

"But with supply chains on the brink of collapse and rapid tests not readily available, it is incumbent on any government that mandates rapid tests as a condition of working that they supply them free of charge – just as they have been doing with PCR tests for many months."

**Ends...**

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