

Media Release



28 September 2021

VFF requests urgent support for agricultural freight workers

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) is requesting urgent support for agricultural freight workers to comply with COVID-19 interstate border crossing requirements in the lead up to harvest.

With limited access to freight-friendly testing and vaccination sites in regional Victoria, the VFF are deeply concerned by the impact the current cross border requirements will have on the significant additional movements of freight workers required to cross state borders.

This includes impacts on contract harvesters, farmers delivering grain and machinery across borders and heavy vehicle operators transporting grain to stockfeed mills, bulk handlers or port for export.

The VFF is calling for:

- Increased opening times for existing freight-friendly testing sites;
- Additional freight-friendly testing sites in regional Victoria;
- Targeted vaccination for agricultural freight workers in regional areas, including the provision of Pfizer vaccines for freight workers under 60;
- Extend the frequency of testing for freight operators who have visited red zones from every three (3) days to every seven (7) days in line with the National Freight Code if freight operators have been vaccinated.

VFF President Emma Germano says there are a number of concerns that need addressing.

“Currently, the majority of freight-friendly testing and vaccination sites are concentrated in metropolitan Melbourne which isn’t feasible for agricultural freight operators to access during harvest time.”

“There’s only five (5) freight-specific testing sites within Victoria, none of which are in Northern Victoria, and these are only open during limited times of the day. Our industry doesn’t just operate from 9am to 5pm and it should be a no-brainer to expand the number of sites and make them open 24 hours a day.”

“We need freight-friendly vaccination centres in regional Victoria near key agricultural freight routes, instead of mostly within metropolitan Melbourne.”

“Every day we wait to implement these changes, the harder we make it for people to follow the rules.”

“These workers have helped keep our country moving and fed throughout the pandemic and it’s time they are looked after,” Ms Germano said.

The VFF recently wrote to Victorian Minister for Health, Martin Foley to [convey these concerns](#).

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The VFF continues to champion public health measures to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our community, however it is crucial that the agricultural freight industry is given the appropriate support it requires to comply and continue providing essential services in the delivery of essential goods.

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