

ECHUCA MOAMA FOOD & FIBRE

NAVIGATING COVID INTO 2022

INTRODUCTION

As we approach 2022, our industry understands that the easing of restrictions will increase the risk of our businesses incurring infections. With this comes concern that the current directive, including up to 14 days of isolation for close contacts creates a significant risks to continuity. A closure for our industry could:

- Financially cripple our Food & Fibre businesses;
- Create loss of product and affecting supply chains

Committee for Echuca Moama and Industry representatives, "the collective", have come together to raise our concerns. The collective have met, discussed internal processes, discussed learnings from positive covid tests within our businesses and collectively have agreed on options to help support our industry so we have a clear procedure to enable us to continue to manufacture, process and supply through these times.

OUR COMBINED IMPACT ON THE ECONOMY



**COMBINED
ANNUAL
SPEND**

\$461.1 MIL



REPRESENTING 1464 EMPLOYEES



**ESTIMATED
LOSS IF
CLOSED FOR
14 DAYS**

\$44.5 MIL

These figures do not include the ongoing cost to supply chains within our organisations.

NATIONAL ISSUE

The businesses represented are all regional and grow, process and/ or manufacture food (& other) that is perishable and time sensitive. That is, if the produce is not harvested or processed within a certain time then it will be lost to waste. These businesses cannot shut down for an extended period of time due to the increasing risk of COVID infections that will occur following the easing of restrictions within and between States of Australia. It is therefore critical that businesses can continue to operate with certainty, implementing agreed procedures to provide confidence to all parties (Employer, employee and DHHS) that the workplace remains safe and infections are controlled.

LEADERSHIP REQUIRED

The collective businesses require absolute certainty that they can continue to grow, process and manufacture as COVID restrictions ease, even in the incidence of a positive infection within the workplace. The collective proposes to introduce protocols that provide DHHS the confidence to allow the businesses to manage positive infections internally. The collective would self-manage the situation internally once it is determined that a positive infection had occurred within the workplace.

Each business would commit to;

- A robust contact tracing system within the workplace to ensure that all staff contacts can be identified in a timely manner (4 hours)
- An ability to deep clean common areas (Canteens, toilets) and workstations within 2 hours of a positive infection (cleaning company would provide certification)
- Option of using Rapid Antigen Tests (RAT) for all contractors & visitors prior to entering the site
- Inform and communicate with a pre-determined contact within the DHHS who will have oversight of the situation if / when a positive infection occurs.

The collective would appreciate support from Regional Development Victoria;

- To make readily available COVID business adaptation grants to fund RAT kits and preventative measures within the workplace, together with 'sick leave' payments while causal staff are unable to work pending the result of a Covid test.
- Advocate for priority in receiving timely results for Nasal pharyngeal swabs. These business's cannot afford to wait 5 - 10 days for test results to ascertain whether an employee is positive.
- Identify an appropriate 'case manager' within DHHS who will be the primary contact for the collective.
- Preparedness to develop in partnership with DHHS, submit to and participate in a "certification" regime, formalising our capabilities to address and respond to positive cases effectively.

The collective would welcome the opportunity to meet and speak to Minister Mary-Anne Thomas regarding our proposal to support the industry.

THE COLLECTIVE



Jason Fritsch
Kagome Australia Pty Ltd
CEO
jasonf@kagome.com.au
0417 143 967



Robert Tanti
SPC
General Mgr People &
Culture
Robert.Tanti@spc.com.au
0429 392 885



Steve Taylor
Fonterra Australia Pty Ltd
Operations Manager
steve.taylor2@fonterra.com
0421 060 932



Scott Spedding
Coolabah Turf
General Manager
Scott@coolturf.com.au
0408 882 474



Deanne Armstrong
Committee for Echuca Moama
CEO
ceo@c4em.com.au
0400 519 024



Tim Ford
Foodmach Pty Ltd
Operations Manager
tim.ford@foodmach.com.au
0418 766 222



Matthew Pain
Kraft Heinz
Site Manager
Matthew.Pain@kraftheinz.com