



THE HON BEN MORTON MP  
MINISTER ASSISTING THE PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET  
MINISTER FOR THE PUBLIC SERVICE  
SPECIAL MINISTER OF STATE

Reference: MC21-119529

Mr Michael Kaine  
TWU National Secretary  
Transport Workers' Union of Australia  
388-390 Sussex Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Mr Peter Anderson  
National Secretary  
Australian Road Transport Industrial Organisation  
PO BOX 5  
SOUTH MELBOURNE VIC 3205

Dear Mr Kaine and Mr Anderson

Thank you for your letter dated 8 September 2021 to the Prime Minister, the Hon Scott Morrison MP, regarding the establishment of a *COVID-Safe National Transport Roadmap*. The Prime Minister has asked me to respond on his behalf. I sincerely apologise for the delay in responding to you.

The Australian Government acknowledges that the necessary measures implemented throughout the COVID-19 pandemic have impacted the normal business operations of transport businesses and their employees. Through the joint efforts of governments, health advisers, industry and workers, the transport sector has demonstrated extraordinary resilience. This has ensured Australian businesses, consumers, and families have access to the goods and services they need. The National Cabinet, and Australian governments, including through the National Cabinet, continue to work to find solutions for the health and economic consequences of COVID-19.

Throughout the pandemic, the Australian Government has supported Australian businesses and workers affected by the COVID-19 restrictions and border closures. This includes supporting one million businesses through \$88.8 billion in JobKeeper payments.

In addition, the Australian Government has committed over \$5.1 billion to ensure our nation's aviation sector withstands the challenges posed by the global pandemic. This includes, the Retaining Domestic Aviation Capability program and International Aviation Support program to help airlines maintain key staff and equipment, and the Australian Government also extended support for ground handlers through the Aviation Services Accreditation Support program.

As restrictions ease and vaccination rates increase, the need for industry specific measures is reducing. The Australian government's national reopening plan is a whole-of-economy plan, and will support a safe reopening as Australia achieves vaccination milestones. All Australians over the age of 16 are now eligible for vaccination and freight workers that choose to get vaccinated will be supporting not only their own health and safety, but that of their colleagues, families, and the communities into which they travel. Further, as Australia reopens, I expect that measures impacting transport operations should be gradually lifted.

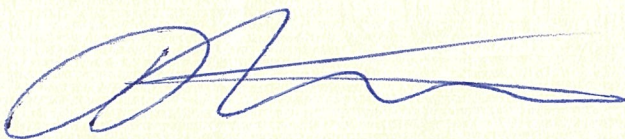
This is not to say that specific sectors or jurisdictions will not implement particular measures to manage health risks into the future. I note your letter raises the rapid antigen testing (RAT). The Australian Government continues to work closely with states and territories to evaluate and implement new testing tools as part of the *National Plan to transition Australia's National COVID-19 Response*. RAT is a screening test that is less accurate than the gold-standard polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test, but can be processed on-site in 15 minutes. For this reason, RAT is not currently intended to replace PCR testing, but is an additional layer of protection to detect potential infections early to reduce spread. State and territory governments are responsible for adopting RAT under their COVID-19 management plans.

From 1 November, RAT will be available for purchase from community pharmacies, supermarkets and online retailers for self-test use at home. Currently, the Therapeutic Goods Administration has already approved nine home self-test RAT and is considering further formal applications.

Thank you again for writing to the Prime Minister.

I have copied this letter to the Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon Barnaby Joyce MP, the Attorney-General, Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, and the Minister for Health and Aged Care, the Hon Greg Hunt MP.

Yours sincerely



**BEN MORTON**

2 / 11 / 2021