



27 October 2021

The Hon Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister

By email: Scott.Morrison.MP@aph.gov.au

Dear Prime Minister,

We represent hardworking transport workers and operators who have borne the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions introduced to reduce its spread. We write urging the Federal Government to act immediately to secure sufficient national supply of rapid testing kits and implement a subsidy system for transport workers and companies.

You would recall we wrote to you some months ago proposing a COVID-Safe National Transport Roadmap to shield transport from future covid shocks. Key planks of the Roadmap included uniform border, testing and vaccination rules, paid vaccination leave for transport workers, and expanded access to vaccination hubs and rapid testing to end yo-yoing restrictions.

To that end, we believe that rapid testing has an important role to play in the pandemic response and note media reports that rapid antigen testing kits will be widely available in supermarkets from next week. While we welcome ubiquitous access to rapid testing, we are concerned that without a national plan to prioritise rapid testing for critical industries like transport, workers and supply chains remain at risk of virus exposure.

Throughout the pandemic, we have seen the devastating impact of medical supply shortages. The Federal Government's sluggish vaccine rollout caused chronic appointment shortages which were key barriers to vaccination for road transport workers early in the rollout.

These vaccine supply issues put transport workers and supply chains at increased risk of virus exposure and debilitating shutdowns, and saw the virus spreading through transport supply chains.

The Federal Government cannot repeat these mistakes when it comes to rapid testing. We urge you to roll out government-funded rapid testing in road transport to reduce virus risk and ease the additional financial burden that would be borne by interstate truck drivers – particularly owner drivers – and transport companies seeking access to these tests.

The clear need for a Transport Roadmap has become more urgent since our initial proposal. Since then, there have been at least 18 confirmed COVID-19 cases amongst interstate truck drivers, with hundreds of close contacts linked to these outbreaks.

These tests would play a critical role in helping truck drivers do their important work. They would end inconsistent testing regimes across the country and help truck drivers manage their fatigue more successfully by avoiding lengthy testing queues.

A coordinated rapid testing regime would assist in establishing uniform border rules nationwide, helping to end the chaos we have seen at State borders throughout the pandemic. Their quick results mean policymakers would have every confidence road transport is safe and end overzealous restrictions for truck drivers when travelling interstate.



Ultimately, while vaccination is our best weapon against the virus, it is not a silver bullet. We need a suite of measures to protect transport workers and virus-proof the industry, and rapid testing has an important part to play in ending the restrictions that have crushed road transport.

Without a clear plan to address this looming supply challenge, the Federal Government risks future outbreaks and State border restrictions again bringing transport to its knees.

We therefore urge you to adopt the industry's Roadmap as a national priority and ensure access to government-funded rapid testing becomes an industry standard in road transport. It is the very least the Federal Government can do to support the industry that carried Australia through the pandemic.

We would be prepared to meet with you to discuss these proposals. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Kaine".

Michael Kaine
National Secretary, TWU

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Anderson".

Peter Anderson
National Secretary, ARTIO