

## AMIC welcomes easing of restrictions on meat manufacturing in Victoria

27 September 2020

The Australian Meat Industry Council (AMIC) welcomes today's announcement by the Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews, stating that the workforce capacity limit placed on Victorian red meat and pork processors and smallgoods manufacturers will now ease.

Effective 11:59pm Sunday 27 September, abattoirs and meat processing facilities in regional Victoria will move to 90 percent of normal staff capacity, and 80 percent for Melbourne metropolitan, a welcome increase from the 67 percent limit introduced on 7 August.

"AMIC has been at the forefront advocating for the easing of the 33 percent reduction in peak onsite workforce for our Victorian meat manufacturing members," said AMIC CEO, Patrick Hutchinson.

"There has been lengthy consultation, provision of data, following all DHHS advice and implementing strict COVID safe plans, resulting in zero reported cases by DHHS for the meat manufacturing sector for over three weeks.

"We are still working on the functional details under the Victorian Premier's roadmap system on restricted workforce, including testing and on-site COVID safe plan management.

"We had continually growing concerns around livestock supply blockages, and workers being in limbo for an extended length of time should the 33 percent reduction continue.

"Today's announcement eases those concerns, but we are not at 100 percent yet, so there will remain impacts on the supply chain from processors, wholesalers, cold stores, independent local butchers and even supermarkets," said Mr Hutchinson.

AMIC recently polled its Victorian members, which included the large cohort of retailers, meat processors and smallgoods manufacturers, on the impacts to supply with workforce capacity remaining at 67 percent.

Results showed that the current restrictions have delivered, in some cases, up to a 40 percent reduction in meat supply to certain businesses. There has also been an initial impact on the peak spring lamb season, due to constrained ability to buy lambs under normal conditions. Also, pork products, such as Christmas ham production, having already started, also experienced some supply issues, including restricted order taking and supply to smaller businesses, such as independent butchers.

"Due to these results, AMIC will continue to work closely with the Victorian Government towards pre-COVID normal meat and smallgoods supply, and hopefully soon be able to send the message to domestic and export customers that the Australian meat supply chain is fully open for business," said Mr Hutchinson.

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