

Thursday, 13 January 2022

**ADIC Response - 'AHPPC Permissions and Restrictions for Essential Workers – Interim Guidance – draft for consultation, dated 10 January 2022**

The Australian Dairy Industry Council (ADIC) is the peak national representative body of the Australian Dairy Industry, representing the interests of dairy farmers and processors through its two constituent bodies, Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF) and the Australian Dairy Products Federation (ADPF), to create a more prosperous and sustainable future for the local industry and the regional communities that rely on it.

The dairy industry is currently experiencing high supply chain disruptions, with up to 35% absenteeism reported amongst dairy processors, product rationalisation underway, product being diverted to other manufacturing facilities, and lack of drivers and delays at retail DC impacting product availability.

The ADIC supports the key principles behind the 'Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) Permissions and Restrictions for Essential Workers – Interim Guidance document', in response to the current COVID situation to assist staffing levels and the management of the time critical dairy supply chain.

We provide the following comments on the Interim Guidance for your immediate consideration, given the perishable nature of dairy products:

- Dairy is recognised as an essential industry, and a **consistent, national approach to the management of COVID** is urgently needed to ensure workforce availability, safeguard the continuity of food supply to supermarket shelves and minimise any potential animal welfare concerns if cows are unable to be milked.
- The dairy industry welcomes the response by the Commonwealth and NSW, QLD and Victorian Governments to provide isolation exemptions for close contacts who are essential workers to maintaining the food supply – where workers have a negative RAT result and are asymptomatic, complying with COVID safe protocols. The remaining State Governments need to follow.

However, to be able to adopt these crucial exemptions and minimise supply chain disruptions, the ADIC is asking for:

1. **A logical and risk-based approach to the RAT requirements for essential workers who can return to work** due to isolation exemptions to maintain the food supply be adopted, with support for the Queensland requirement of a negative RAT result on day 6 only as an interim measure.
2. **Prioritised access to RAT kits**, to be able implement the isolation exemption for essential workers, with **free or subsidised RAT kits** to be made available – particularly given the frequency of RATs required to be undertaken to comply with COVID safe protocols, and the overall shortage and costs of the RAT kits.
3. A **nationally consistent approach** to the management of COVID-19 and the definition of a close contact should be adopted – with the differences in Federal and State RAT requirements, this needs immediate attention.



*Australian Dairy Industry Council Inc.*

4. **Reducing the isolation period for positive COVID cases from 7 to 5 days.** Countries overseas have made this change reflecting the latest information regarding the transmissibility of the Omicron variant.
5. **Remove the state OHS/WHS reporting requirements of a positive COVID-19 case in a workplace.**

We look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure the safe supply of dairy products and the wellbeing of our people.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rick Gladigau'.

Rick Gladigau  
Chair, Australian Dairy Industry Council

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Grant Crothers'.

Grant Crothers  
Deputy-Chair, Australian Dairy Industry Council