Friday 17th July 2020

The Honourable Daniel Andrews, Premier of Victoria

Office of the Premier
1 Treasury Place
Melbourne, Victoria
Australia, 3002

By email

Cc'd: Hon. Tim Pallas, Minister for the Coordination of Treasury and Finance – COVID-19
Hon. Jenny Mikakos, Minister for the Coordination of Health and Human Services – COVID-19
Hon. Jill Hennessy, Attorney General and Minister for Workplace Health and Safety
Hon. Jaala Pulford, Minister for Small Business
Hon. Martin Foley, Minister for Creative Industries
Hon. Martin Pakula, Minister for the Coordination of Jobs, Precincts and Regions – COVID 19 and Minister for Industry Support and Recovery
Hon. Gayle Tierney, Minister for Training and Skills
Hon. Gabrielle Williams, Minister for Women

RE: COVID-19 – Essential Service and Essential Service Supply Chain Provider – Print, Publishing, Mail and Distribution

Dear Premier,

The Real Media Collective (TRMC) is an industry association representing the paper, print, publishing, mail and distribution sectors across Australia and New Zealand. Across the Australian Board and Member companies of the organisation, we represent $15.88BN of the $18.9BN industry.

Given recent events in Victoria, and the possibility of further restrictions, we write to provide insight to government the print, mail and communications industry being an essential service provider, the current impact to industry on the effects of COVID-19 and the collective steps undertaken by our industry to ensure ongoing operational ability safely for employees and the community.

The Victorian industry

Our industry is the largest manufacturing employer in the country providing critical communication products and services to ensure our country operates well. Victorian based (metropolitan and regional) businesses within the printing, publishing, media, communications, advertising, marketing, graphic arts, mail and distribution, related IT businesses, along with supplier businesses and related businesses are part of a national industry that employs approximately 250,000 individuals. Specifically, those businesses and their employees within Victoria account for approximately 35% of the overall Australian industry.

The essential nature of the industry

Our member base and the broader industry provide critical services to the community – news, media and information services, printed medical labelling and packaging, Government notices and communications, magazine publications providing in-home media and community notices, signage to advise public health and other notices to the public, food labelling and packaging, toiletries, transactional mail and postal services, finance and insurance notices and more.

Our industry encompasses all forms of communications that service Victorians to provide physical and mental health support, particularly those experiencing unwellness, loneliness, anxieties or concerns during this difficult period. Further, our members are producers of masks, safety screens and other products used by various sectors to reduce the impact and possible spread of COVID-19 in workplaces.

Effect of COVID-19 on the Victorian industry

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, most Victorian businesses within the overall industry have been hit hard. The economic consequences on the industry have already been significant, and this has happened rapidly. The industry has had shocks to both supply and demand and have already suffered significantly decreased production volumes or stopped operations.

Based on our most recent survey of members, most businesses within the overall industry have already had significant double-digit percentage reductions in production and in work. Where business has continued, physical-distancing measures are dramatically altering operations, employee responsibilities, and employment. Some businesses within the industry have been able to pivot their production capabilities from the traditional printing and packaging to the production of face masks and shields, however this is the exception.

Although larger private and public industries have suffered, it is the SME's that have experienced the most immediate effects of the pandemic. From an employment perspective, SME's within the industry have had to undertake and implement a wide range of actions. Many SME's have had to utilise workplace relations options with their workforce such as standing down workers and reducing hours of work and pay.

Steps by the industry to remain low risk

We are not a high-risk industry, there is no public access to production sites, administration and sales personnel are operating under work from home arrangements and production areas are well ventilated and well-separated personnel stations. From industry engagement across Victoria and nationally we have developed Printing and Distribution Protocols (copies attached) which all our members and those from several other industry associations have agreed full compliance. Additionally, Australia Post and the Distribution Standards Board support and are signatories to these protocols.

We recognise and value the steps the Victorian government has implemented to stay on top of the current situation and as a collective industry we have unilaterally implemented strong safety measures to protect our employees. We continue to adapt these in line with Government Health guidelines. These protocols include:

> remote offices established to assist people to work from home,
> rotation of manufacturing shifts to minimise interaction of staff,
> increased ventilation of work areas,
> safety equipment, sanitisers and social distancing practices,
> mental health and wellbeing.

As a state and as an industry we face many challenges in the coming weeks and months to ensure we cover all possible contingencies to remain operational and to support economic recovery.

We clearly request the Victorian government, should stage 4 restrictions be implemented, concur the printing industry, where applicable, can remain open to ensure our status as an essential service supply chain provider can remain operational to service Victorians.

We make ourselves available for any further discussions and/or additional information requests.

Yours sincerely,

Kellie Northwood
Chief Executive Officer
The Real Media Collective

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KEY TAKE-OUTS

> The paper, print, publishing, mail and distribution sectors employ 258,999 Australians across 17,756 businesses. An industry value of $18.9BN AUD across metropolitan and regional, skilled, unskilled and contractor arrangements. We are the largest manufacturing employer industry in the country and to protect jobs, we need to remain open.

> Over 2.5M Australians do not have internet connectivity in their homes (ABS, 2018) and more than four million Australians access the internet solely through a mobile connection. In 2019, mobile-only users have an Australian Digital Index Inclusion (ADII) score of 43.7, **some 18.2 points lower than the national average** (61.9) (ADII, 2019).

> People aged 65+ are Australia's least digitally included age group. The ADII score for this age is **19.5 points lower** than the most digitally included age group (people aged 25-34 years) (ADII, 2019).

> Those on a disability pension and living with a disability are **9.9 points lower** than the national average (ADII, 2019).

> Australians with low levels of income, education, and employment are significantly less digitally included. Australians in Q5 low-income households have a **30.5 points lower** score than those in Q1 high-income households (ADII, 2019).

> Indigenous Australians living in urban and regional areas have low digital inclusion (55.1, or **6.8 points lower** than the national average) (ADII, 2019).

> There are substantial differences between Australians living in rural and urban areas with digital inclusion being 8.1 points higher in capital cities (63.8) than in country areas (55.7) (ADII, 2019).

> ACCC Scamwatch January 2020 figures report Mail/Letterbox fraud costing Australians $108,683 compared to a staggering $4,284,669 across Digital channels – in a period of fear and misleading messages being communicated to Australians the Letterbox is a channel of strength and trust (ACCC, 2020).

> We are a highly sought-after media channel and reach more Australians than any other - Letterbox - addressed and unaddressed reaches 24.4M Australians daily. Magazines delivered direct to Subscribers reach 6.3M Australians and that's before secondary reading and sharing in the home (TRMC, 2020). Aus.gov.au/whatsapp, whilst a good digital initiative, only has 482,000 Australian registrations at the time of writing this piece (ABC, 2020).

> Established media channels have stronger readership, higher trust (in a time where well-sourced and credible information is paramount) and wider reach than other digital channels.

AUSTRALIAN PAPER, PRINT PUBLISHING & LETTERBOX INDUSTRY

SNAPSHOT

KEY FIGURES

ANNUAL TURNOVER:

**$18.9BN
(AUD)**

EMPLOYEES:

258,999

NO. OF BUSINESSES:

17,756

INDUSTRY REPRESENTATION:
The industries represented above include paper, print, publishing, mail and distribution, all represented under The Real Media Collective in partnership with Australasian Paper Industry Association and the Australian Forest Products Association. The Real Media Collective membership represents $15.88BN of the $18.9BN industry.

INDUSTRY OUTPUTS INCLUDE:
Books, Magazines, Home Delivery Packaging, Government (Federal, State, Local) Notices and Communications, Medical Packaging and Labelling, Food Packaging and Labelling, Community Notices, Signage, Catalogues, Envelopes, Finance and Insurance Essential Notices, Transactional mail and more.

RELATED INDUSTRIES INCLUDE:
Marketing, Design, ATL Media, Communications, Newspapers and more.

EMPLOYMENT BREAKDOWN BY SECTOR

60,820
of which
18,000
are direct employees.

38,761
DESIGN (30%) + PRINT

4,287
PUBLISHING

155,131
POSTAL SERVICES, MAIL PROCESSING & LETTERBOX DISTRIBUTION

258,999
TOTAL AUSTRALIANS EMPLOYED

INFORMATION PRINTING PROTOCOLS AUSTRALIA

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic sweeping across the globe is an unprecedented time and information is being developed in a fluid and changing environment.

To that end, The Real Media Collective, representing the largest print manufacturing footprint across Australia through our membership, has developed printing protocols to ensure a commitment from industry to safety for workers and the wider Australian community against COVID-19 whilst producing and distributing printed collateral for all Australians.

Further we have engaged broader industry to these protocols across related services industry associations, seeking their committed compliance.

PRINTING SAFETY PROTOCOLS DURING COVID-19 ISOLATION PERIOD

The following procedures are standards that are to be implemented across all commercial print operations as an essential service supply chain provider during COVID-19 isolation and lockdown periods as the best safety standards across the sector.

1. Staff that are unwell will not attend work.
2. Staff who are isolating with vulnerable people will not be able to attend work.
3. Staff who are isolating with people that have recently returned from overseas will not be able to attend work.
4. Staff will be encouraged not to carpool to work.
5. Staff numbers reduced to minimum levels to ensure two (2) metre distancing can be maintained at all times. This will be monitored.
6. All staff are required to sign in each day manually with a manager or swipe their own card or other touchless sign-in technologies to avoid the use of time clocks.
7. Staff will need to declare fitness for work.
8. The majority of shifts are split with no overlap, where safe to do so.
9. Shift numbers are maintained at a minimum and to maintain workplace safety.
10. Break times will be staggered so that distancing is maintained and there is no over-lap between crews.
11. All non-operational staff will work from home
12. No visitors are permitted to the premises.
13. All essential deliveries/distribution have been advised of the process for making contactless deliveries/pick-ups.
14. Company cleaning will continue at an increased level using hospital grade products.
15. Hygiene products including soap/water, hand sanitiser, wipes, gloves and masks are available to all staff on site and they have been instructed in their correct use.

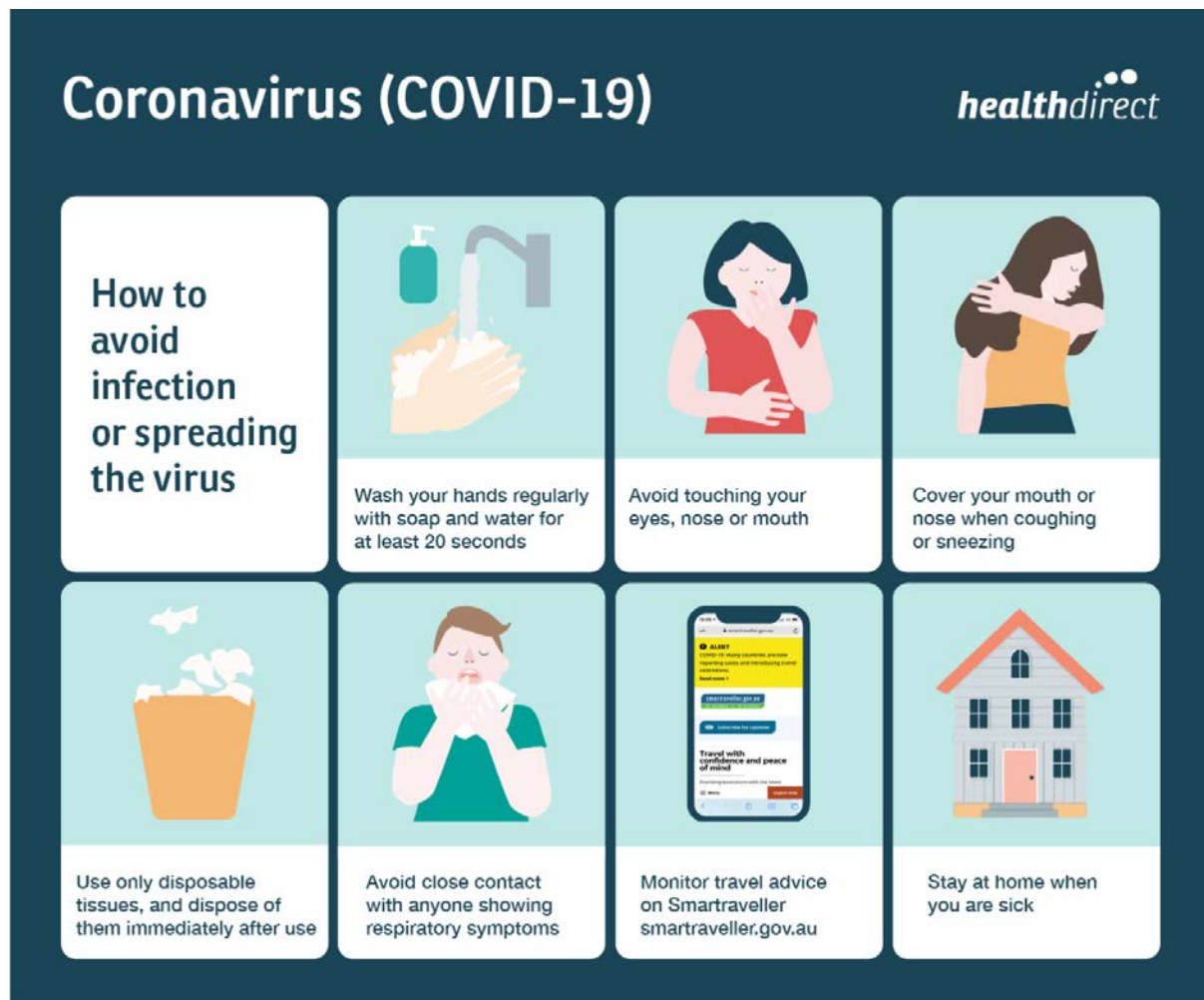16. Staff have been made aware of the Ministry of Health requirements for Personal Protective Equipment.
17. COVID-19 hygiene posters are located in all work areas.
18. Staff will be updated on a regular basis on any changes to requirements.
19. Businesses may implement safety routines in addition to those highlighted to further protect their staff.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic sweeping across the globe is an unprecedented time and information is being developed in a fluid and changing environment.

To that end, The Real Media Collective, representing the Letterbox Distributors, working with the Distribution Standards Board, the self-regulatory standard for Letterbox Distribution across Australia has developed deliverer protocols to ensure a commitment from to safety Australians against COVID-19 whilst distributing printed collateral to letterboxes.

DELIVERER SAFETY PROTOCOLS DURING COVID-19 ISOLATION PERIOD

The following procedures are standards that are to be implemented across all distribution to letterbox operations as an essential service supply chain provider during COVID-19 isolation and lockdown periods as the best safety standards across the sector.

1. Deliverer to isolate/treat as per Government Health guidelines.

2. Deliverers who are isolating with vulnerable people will not be able to perform contract.

3. Deliverers who are isolating with people that have recently returned from overseas will not be able to perform contract.

4. Deliverer to cease all distribution if any coronavirus symptoms outlined under Government Health guidelines perpetuate and seek immediate medical advice.

5. Should a Deliverer become symptomatic or confirmed as coronavirus positive, Deliverers should identify if there is any possible cross infection and fully comply with Health Department guidelines.

6. Deliverers are to reduce any interaction with households to minimum levels to ensure two (2) metre distancing can be maintained at all times.

7. Deliverers are encouraged to deliver in isolation or with family household members only.

8. If a Deliverer becomes symptomatic and has a back-up person (who is not infected), back-up person may take over the operation. Network/Area resource to support where required.

9. Deliverers are to abide by Government Health guidelines;

    a. Wash hands regularly, for 20 seconds,
    b. Avoid touching your eyes and mouth,
    c. Cover your nose and/or mouth when coughing or sneezing,
    d. Use only disposable tissues, and dispose of them immediately after use,
    e. Avoid close contact with anyone showing respiratory symptoms,
    f. Stay at home when you are sick.

10. If there is no back-up Deliverer in place – Network/Area support to fill the role of Deliverer contract.

11. Where feasible (metro areas), infected Deliverer volume re-directed to neighboring Distributor shed for collection by revised Deliverer/s after twenty-four (24) hours in holding for possible COVID-19 surface stability risk.

12. Deliverer to seek medical clearance prior to return.

WHAT HAPPENS IF AUTHORITIES ASK ME WHY I AM DISTRIBUTING?

As a distributor you are operating as an essential service supply-chain provider. Letterbox distribution includes essential service notices across community services, education, health, government, supermarket and pharmacy notices and more.

Additionally, distribution from collection to distribution is contactless and under a defined list of protocols. Further information, should you be stopped should be forwarded to the Distribution Standards Board – dsb@thermc.com.au.