

## AU Food processing industry set to face huge Covid fines



It's no secret that Covid 19 has had a huge effect on Australia's food supply chain, but the real threat that has emerged in recent weeks is much closer to the factory floor. With new government regulations mandating that workplaces must now provide records that prove all employees are double vaccinated on demand and in most cases regular negative tests.

Random inspections by police and authorised officers have already begun across Victoria and New South Wales and will continue to be enforced until December 2022. Food processing and handling operations that fail to adequately comply, will face fines in excess of \$100,000 and in the case of workplace deaths there is the risk of jail time if an employer is found negligent.

While this week saw factories in Sydney and Melbourne return to full operation, it could be short-lived as they struggle to manage the large administrative burden that comes with the regular Covid testing and compliance. In some cases, businesses are using old fashioned notebooks or spreadsheets to log testing data. Experts warn, shutdowns or work site illness is likely with substandard systems doomed to fail.

To date Inspections have now occurred at 500 worksites across Australia in food, construction, logistics and supermarket retailers, with fines now totalling \$500m. In the UK and US there are already cases which warn of things to come in Australia. US frozen-foods supplier, Overhill Farms, is facing large fines in California for allegedly failing to protect staff from Covid-19. State government officials are proposing a fine of more than US\$200,000. Legal experts warn employers in Australia can't plead ignorance of the new regulations and are expecting a significant uplift in industrial manslaughter cases, which can carry a maximum sentence of 25 years. Maurice Blackburn employment law principal Giri Sivaraman confirms in a recent [ABC report](#) that Australian companies could be liable if unvaccinated workers spread COVID-19 to colleagues . It's not all doom and gloom however as companies like [Stapleton Family Meats](#) based in Gympie, NSW has seen some early success in managing its 'employees in the food processing environment. "We have to be very stringent on our processes and our record keeping to show that we are providing a safe workplace", Mr Stapleton said in an [ABC interview](#) this week, the ABC reporting that "it's working. So far, none of his staff have been infected with coronavirus".

Managing employee vaccination status and testing need not be a huge administration burden, **vaxxvault** provides employers and their staff with a secure digital record of all staff vaccinations and completed testing in line with government industry requirements. It's accessible to small to medium food processing operations who can ill afford to be shut down for fear of going out of business. **vaxxvault** offers leading edge functionality such as alerts, booster vaccination recording functionality data insights to facilitate business decisions. Most importantly, the data is protected by the highest standards of encryption and is not exposed to the usual IT on premise vulnerabilities of many existing HR and OHS solutions.

To learn more, contact [info@vaxxvault.com](mailto:info@vaxxvault.com) or a demo or visit [www.vaxxvault.com](http://www.vaxxvault.com)