

SA firms set to help Vics

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Thomas Foods well placed to assist

MAJOR South Australian companies and operators are ready to step up to calls for assistance as the Victorian economy slips into a severe round of COVID-19 restrictions.

As part of Victoria's stage four restrictions, sweeping industrial and business closures are being implemented across the state, leaving only essential services operating to supply medical needs, food, power and communications.

Experts predict the sixweek lockdown period could wipe up to \$9bn from the national economy.

South Australian Centre for Economic Studies executive director Michael O'Neil, pictured, said the response from Victorian consumers would determine the impact on South Australian producers, suppliers and other businesses.

"One of the things about the economic relationship between South Australia and Victoria is it's a two-way relationship, and a lot will depend on how the Victorians react to the restrictions," he said. "Are they going to go

madly stocking up on things? There's an intricate relationship with food producers in South Australia and then of course there's things like Kimberly-Clark and toilet paper.

"It might put a lot of pressure on South Australian food producers and other suppliers, and increase opportunities as well, to get stuff over there quickly."

On Monday, Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews announced abattoirs and meat processing facilities across the state would be restricted to two thirds of their normal production from Friday.

Several Victorian abattoirs remain temporarily closed after being linked to a significant number of cases.

Thomas Foods International chief executive Darren Thomas said his company could accommodate more meat processing work if needed: "We have capacity and stand ready to assist should farmers and operators interstate be seeking alternative processing arrangements."

Flinders Ports chief executive Stewart Lammin said the facility could process more cargo if more restrictions were implemented in Victoria or elsewhere in the country.

"Beyond ports, there are clearly internal supply chain challenges unique to each state," he said.

"But, if necessary, South Australia's ports could assist Victoria's ports to facilitate the transit of cargo. Through the container terminal in Adelaide and our regional ports, we have the infrastructure and capacity to keep Australia's imports and exports moving."