Qld mobilises state’s manufacturing sector to fight COVID-19

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JOINT STATEMENT

Premier and Minister for Trade
The Honourable Annastacia Palaszczuk

Treasurer, Minister for Infrastructure and Planning
The Honourable Cameron Dick

Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing
The Honourable Glenn Butcher

Assistant Minister for Health
Ms Nikki Boyd

The Palaszczuk Government is mobilising Queensland’s multi-billion-dollar manufacturing sector to deliver the state’s Personal Protective Equipment for front-line health and essential workers, including face masks, hand sanitiser and ventilators.

The Premier visited Brendale healthcare manufacturer Aspen Medical today, which has received government support and is now producing two million face masks per month.

The factory will be capable of producing four million masks a month by mid-October.

Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk announced her government had set a target that 25 per cent of all PPE bought by the Queensland Government would be made in Queensland and a new PPE testing facility would be established at Meadowbrook.
"COVID-19 is the biggest challenge we’ve ever had to face and it’s far from over,” the Premier said.

"While our immediate priority is making sure we’re keeping our frontline health professionals safe with the PPE supplies we currently have, it is also critical that we build supplies for the future.

"That means we’re protecting Queenslanders against future pandemics but we’re also increasing local manufacturing which is critical for our economic recovery and creating jobs.

"COVID-19 has shown just how important it is we eliminate supply chain risks and firmly establish domestic production capacity for these vital products and equipment right here in Queensland.”

Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure and Planning Cameron Dick said the ability to mobilise the state’s manufacturing sector in the fight against the pandemic was a strength of the Palaszczuk Government.

"We’re able to call on this industry to deliver what Australians need because this government continues to invest heavily in Queensland manufacturing and Queensland jobs,” he said.

"In the past, PPE used in Australia has been imported because we have not had the manufacturing industry required to meet demand and before COVID-19 only five per cent of Australia’s medical masks were produced in Australia – at a small factory in Shepparton Victoria.

"By backing our manufacturing sector, Queensland has more capacity to respond to crises like this pandemic.”

Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing Glenn Butcher said there was a suite of actions outlined in the Queensland Government’s Directions Statement for Personal Protective Equipment and Other Essential Products released today.

"We want to support our local manufacturers to produce the accredited PPE, thereby minimising our reliance on overseas suppliers. Queensland manufacturers are more than capable of creating these critical supplies right here in Queensland" Minister Butcher said.

"We’ve already made a head start with the Essential Goods and Supply Chain Program (EGSCP) announced in May this year.

"To date, we’ve received 61 registrations of interest for this program with businesses seeking to manufacture essential goods like masks, face shields, sanitizers, ventilators and gloves as well as supply chain services such as accreditation and testing.”

Assistant Minister for Health and Member for Pine Rivers Nikki Boyd said Aspen Medical expected 35 new full-time jobs would be created in the first year of operation.

"By so pleased we’ve been able to back a local manufacturing company with government support under the $150 million Industry Attraction Fund,” Ms Boyd said.

"The company has invested approximately $2 million to purchase cutting-edge machines to produce three-ply and N95 face masks, to fit out the factory and commission the machinery to not only support Queenslanders but also to help contain the spread of COVID-19 in some of the worst-affected hotspots in Victoria and New South Wales.

"In the future the company will look to expand its manufacturing capabilities across other product lines for both the domestic and export markets.

“Having a manufacturing plant like this in our community is great for Pine Rivers locals, not only is it instrumental in fighting coronavirus, manufacturing is vital for jobs growth in the northern suburbs.

"That’s why manufacturing is an important plank in the government’s economic recovery plan – to create jobs and stimulate our economy by investing in an industry with huge potential for the future in Queensland.”

Founder and Executive Chairman of Aspen Medical Glenn Keys AO said Aspen Medical Manufacturing manufactured over a million ‘other type’ masks in June and has recently ramped up production of the more clinical N95 masks.

“Our Queensland facility will produce PPE to the highest Australian standards and ultimately source all raw material from within Australia,” Mr Keys said.

Aspen Medical was founded in 2003, operates across Australia, the Pacific, the United States, Europe, Africa and the Gulf region and employs more than 3000 highly trained professionals.

It was named as the joint winner of the Exporter of the Year at the 2018 Australian Export Awards in addition to winning the Health and Biotechnology category.