



Case Study: Melbourne Abattoir

Industry: Abattoir
Company Size: 400 staff
Location: Melbourne West

When this Melbourne Abattoir decided to implement a program of Workplace drug and alcohol testing, they approached Pathtech because of our ability to support an in-house testing program. They soon realised that Pathtech's full end-to-end approach offered much more. We subsequently provided the company with assistance in the development of a comprehensive drug and alcohol testing policy, guidance on achieving independent accreditation, training in the proper use of testing devices, as well as the testing units themselves – Breathalysers and DrugWipe devices for saliva based drug testing.

From a family-owned butchery to a full-scale meat processing enterprise, this large abattoir located in Melbourne West handles every aspect in the chain; from slaughter to transport of the 10,000 finished units handled per day.

The company employs between 350-400 staff operating a single shift, which commences around 4:00am and runs until production is complete. Meat processing involves a number of high-risk duties and hazardous equipment, so safety is paramount in this environment.

With a focus on continual improvement, the company reviews procedures and processes regularly to ensure the highest possible production and safety standards are met. It was recently decided to implement a formalised workplace drug and alcohol testing regime and the OH&S and Risk Manager was charged with determining the best path for the development and execution of both policy and program.

Outsourcing the process to a specialist service provider was initially considered but, once it was discovered that it was possible to undergo training and attain the necessary accreditation to conduct the process in-house, it became the obvious choice.

"Bringing the process in-house was logical," says the company's representative, "We operate as a lean business, so we aim to maximise efficiencies where and when possible.

"Besides the obvious cost-benefits, undertaking our own testing gives us much more control over the process. It's also more responsive – in the event of a safety incident or if there is suspicion that an employee may be under the influence, we can act immediately. The fact that testing is carried out by a trusted and familiar face also makes it less daunting," he says.

Pathtech was selected to assist with the process from the development stage.



“We did have a general policy in place and staff were always aware that this was the case, but we never really put it into practice. Pathtech provided a lot of guidance in this area and helped us develop a fully-fledged policy, which incorporates everything from the testing procedures through to next steps in the event of a positive result. Everything is very clearly defined, there are no grey areas and everybody knows where they stand as a result,” says the representative.

Testing will be conducted on a random basis across the entire staff, with the aim to test at least once a month.

“It’s our intention to make it truly random,” says the representative, “so it may occur on two consecutive days, or weeks apart. We’ll also obviously test the event of a safety incident, a near miss or suspicion of use.”

The company opted for saliva testing as the preferred method after considering other options.

“There are so many reasons for choosing saliva testing,” explains the company’s rep, “not the least of which is the fluid handling aspect. There are also privacy issues – we wanted to avoid making it uncomfortable for our team. Using the saliva devices is quick and simple and there are no additional requirements, such as taking temperature readings or matching results to pH cards.

“The other important factor is detection times. My understanding is that the window using urine testing is much wider. I only need to ensure everyone on the team is fit for work at any given time. I’m not interested in delving into the private lives of our employees and what they do on the weekend, I just want to provide a safe workplace and meet the company’s obligations,” he says.

“Pathtech guided us from beginning to end; they help us develop the policy, provided substantial training in the use of the devices and referred us to the Drug & Alcohol Institute for accreditation. The whole process was extremely simple. The upshot is a program that not only ensures the safety of our workers and helps minimise avoidable workplace accidents, but also guarantees that there will be no issues from a legal defensibility point of view. We couldn’t be happier with the outcome,” he says.