



# Seasonal Workers Health Management Plan Direction—agribusiness and fisheries employers and labour hire companies FAQs

The public health direction—[Seasonal Workers Health Management Plan Direction](#)—is effective 12:01 am on Tuesday 5 May 2020 until the end of the declared public health emergency in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19).

## 1. How will the new requirements protect regional communities from the spread of COVID-19?

This framework allows agribusiness and commercial fishing to access the seasonal workforce necessary to maintain production, while also protecting regional communities and workers from the spread of COVID-19. The five elements of the framework are:

- Stronger border protections—requiring workers from COVID-19 hotspots to self-quarantine for 14 days before starting work
- Mandatory health management plans—agribusinesses, accommodation facilities and transport service providers for seasonal workers must have a health management plan to manage preventing the transmission of COVID-19 among workers and the community
- Complying with health obligations—everyone has an obligation to keep Queensland as safe as possible by following the public health directions
- Stronger compliance—additional officers are being authorised under the *Public Health Act 2005* to undertake compliance
- Locally-led solutions—working with Local Disaster Management Groups to develop local solutions to address accommodation, transport and workforce supply issues.

## 2. Why are new requirements being placed on agribusinesses and commercial fishers?

The Queensland Government recognises the importance of the agriculture and fisheries industries in Queensland and is committed to providing support during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Many agribusinesses and commercial fishing operations are reliant on employing seasonal workers during peak production periods such as planting and harvesting. During these periods, worker turnover can be high, with new people starting at the workplace frequently.

Seasonal workers often move from region to region as the planting, harvest and processing demands change. As the seasonal workforce moves between regions it is critical to minimise the potential risk of spread of COVID-19 to the communities they travel and reside in temporarily.

Every agribusiness and commercial fishing operation has a responsibility to manage the health risks of COVID-19, both for their communities and for their employees while at work. Workplace health management plans are a risk-based way for agribusinesses to identify their health and safety obligations in relation to COVID-19 risks and plan for how these risks will be mitigated.

The new requirements come into effect from 12:01 am Tuesday 5 May 2020.

## 3. Do I need to submit a workplace health management plan?

Workplace health management plans are required for all agribusinesses and labour hire providers who have seasonal workers:

- [Workplace health management plan template](#)
- [Industry guideline: COVID-19 risk mitigation for food businesses](#)



Additional guidance material can also be found on the [Safefood Queensland website](#).

A seasonal worker is a person who travels to or within Queensland for work as it becomes available, often requiring them to move and stay in temporary accommodation. Seasonal workers can be a person who has come from overseas to travel and work temporarily in Australia, or an interstate resident seeking work in Queensland, or a Queensland resident working away from home.

Examples:

- a) If all of your employees live locally and return to their permanent place of residence at the end of each shift, a workplace health management plan is recommended but not mandatory.
- b) If your business employs anyone from outside Queensland, or on a Seasonal Worker Program, Pacific Labour Scheme or Working Holiday Maker visa stream, you must submit a workplace health management plan.
- c) If your business employs Queensland or Australian residents staying in temporary accommodation that is not their permanent place of residence (e.g. someone from Cairns who has travelled to Bowen for agricultural or commercial fishing work) you are required to submit a workplace health management plan.

The workplace health management plan should be submitted to [covid.plans@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:covid.plans@health.qld.gov.au).

The Queensland Government will continue to work with industry to support agribusinesses in the development of workplace health management plans. You can contact an Agricultural Coordination Officer via [info@daf.qld.gov.au](mailto:info@daf.qld.gov.au) or by calling 13 25 23.

#### **4. I contract a labour hire company to source my seasonal labour, do I still need a workplace health management plan?**

Yes. As with all workplace health and safety requirements, the safety of all workers on your property ultimately sits with you. However, there may be some aspects of the workplace health management plan you do not need to develop as these responsibilities lie with the labour hire company (e.g. keeping records of the employee's previous work and accommodation history for the previous 14 days prior to commencing work on the site). It is recommended you obtain a copy of the labour hire company's workplace health management plan for your own records.

#### **5. I'm an agribusiness labour hire provider. Do I need a workplace health management plan?**

Yes. As with many workplace health and safety requirements, labour hire providers have certain responsibilities towards the health and safety of their employees. However, there may be some aspects of the workplace health management plan you do not need to develop as these responsibilities lie with the agribusiness (e.g. separating work stations to increase physical distancing between workers, increased cleaning of bathrooms and break areas, etc.). It is recommended you obtain a copy of the workplace health management plan for each agribusiness you are providing labour for, and reference them in your own workplace health management plan.

#### **6. How long do I have to prepare and submit my workplace health management plan?**

Workplace health management plans are mandatory for agribusinesses employing seasonal workers from the date of commencement of the [Seasonal Workers Health Management Plan Direction](#) (effective 12:01 am Tuesday 5 May 2020). You must already have a workforce health management plan submitted to Queensland Health if you are sourcing workers from interstate. It is recommended you develop and submit your workforce health management plan as soon as possible.



## 7. Where do I submit my workplace health management plan and when will I hear if it has been approved?

Completed workplace health management plans must be signed and submitted to Queensland Health at [covid.plans@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:covid.plans@health.qld.gov.au). You will receive a confirmation email from Queensland Health when your workplace health management plan is received.

Workplace health management plans are not formally approved by Queensland Health, however you may be contacted if further information is required or visited by an officer authorised under the *Public Health Act 2005* to audit compliance against the plan.

## 8. I have previously submitted a workplace health management plan. Do I have to revise and resubmit my plan based on these new templates and guidelines?

The workplace health management plan template and guidelines have been improved based on feedback from agribusinesses, this includes the clarity of the templates, tips and advice to assist with plan development. If you believe the additional information does not change measures and response actions in your current plan, you do not have to resubmit your plan to Queensland Health.

## 9. What records are required to be kept as part of the workplace health management plan?

The workplace health management plans require agribusinesses, commercial fishing operations and labour hire companies to keep records of all seasonal workers. This information will be critical to assist Queensland Health should contact tracing for a positive COVID-19 case be required.

The following information is to be kept for all seasonal employees:

- a) The name and contact information of all seasonal workers, including accommodation address.
- b) Work and accommodation history for the 14 days prior to commencing work at your facility, including self-quarantine compliance if relevant.
- c) Daily records of each worker's presence/absence of COVID-19 symptoms.

There is no mandatory time period that records must be kept. However, it is recommended you retain copies of each worker's records for a minimum of 14 days after they have left your employment.

## 10. How do I apply for an exemption from the Border Restrictions Direction?

The [Border Restrictions Direction](#) provides for the Chief Health Officer to give certain persons an exemption from the requirement to self-quarantine if they consider:

- there are compassionate or other grounds such that self-quarantine would lead to an unusual or disproportionate hardship for the person; or
- the person is essential for the proper functioning of State; or
- other exceptional circumstances exist that merit the person not being required to self-quarantine.

It is likely that such exemptions would only be given where the risk of COVID-19 transmission is unlikely because of business arrangements, or where the business was inadvertently captured beyond the intent of the policy.

Learn how to [apply for an exemption](#).

Read more [information on the direction](#) including FAQs.

## 11. Can I be exempted from the requirement to have a workplace health management plan?

The Chief Health Officer may give an exemption from the requirement to have a health management plan, if the Chief Health Officer considers it is not reasonably necessary to contain the spread of COVID-19 due to the particular business arrangements, or if other exceptional circumstances exist.



## 12. I have workers coming to Queensland from interstate. What documentation do I have to provide to assist their crossing the border into Queensland?

Workers must demonstrate they have already secured agribusiness or commercial fishing work prior to entering Queensland. Employers should provide interstate workers with a formal letter or email confirming employment and commencement date.

The confirmation letter should also contain:

- the worksite address, company name and contact phone number
- a statement that the employer has submitted a workplace health management plan with Queensland Health
- address of accommodation, if this is to be provided or arranged by the employer
- address of self-quarantine (if relevant), if this is to be provided or arranged by the employer.

Workers should also be advised they may be required to provide evidence of their location for the 14 days prior to entry. Evidence may include accommodation or transaction receipts that can demonstrate a clear timeline outside of a COVID-19 hotspot area. Insufficient evidence may result in workers being issued a self-quarantine notice by Queensland Police Service. Without this information to support their entry in Queensland, workers may be refused entry by Queensland Police Service border officers.

## 13. Do I have to quarantine new workers prior to them commencing work?

Queensland Chief Health Officer Public Health Directions require self-quarantine for:

- a) people who have been outside Australia in the previous 14 days; and
- b) employees working in agriculture or commercial fishing businesses entering Queensland who have been in a [declared COVID-19 hotspot](#) within the past 14 days.

Workers who have been in a declared COVID-19 hotspot who have self-quarantined prior to coming into Queensland will need to be able to provide adequate documentation of self-quarantine from an interstate health authority. Workers from areas not declared a COVID-19 hotspot do not need to self-quarantine.

Agribusiness workers entering Queensland will be required to provide proof they have not been in a COVID-19 hotspot if requested by the Queensland Police Service. Evidence may include accommodation receipts, statutory declarations, other receipts or transaction evidence that demonstrates a consecutive timeline outside the COVID-19 hotspot area.

## 14. Who is responsible for providing/paying accommodation costs for workers required to self-quarantine before commencing work?

If workers have been in a declared COVID-19 hotspot within the past 14 days, they will be required to self-quarantine, at their own expense. Self-quarantine may occur within Queensland, or prior to crossing the border if adequate evidence of self-quarantine inside a COVID-19 hotspot can be provided from an interstate health authority. If appropriate supporting evidence cannot be provided, workers entering Queensland will be issued a self-quarantine notice at the border. In this instance, self-quarantine accommodation must be organised by the worker prior to being allowed entry to Queensland.

A worker may come to an agreement with their employer to be reimbursed for the cost of self-quarantine accommodation. This is not a government requirement and is a private matter between employer and employee. If you have appropriate accommodation facilities at the worksite, self-quarantine may be completed there. Self-quarantining workers must not leave their accommodation unless for an emergency, even if they do not feel sick, and cannot work while they are self-quarantining.

Find out about [self-quarantine requirements](#).



## 15. Can workers in self-quarantine work if social distancing can be achieved in the workplace (i.e. working in the field picking or pruning)?

No. Workers required to self-quarantine must stay inside their accommodation unless it is an emergency. Find out about [self-quarantine requirements](#).

## 16. Can employers require that all new workers have a COVID-19 test prior to commencing work?

To manage the risk of exposure of COVID-19 in your workplace you should check all employees for the presence of COVID-19 symptoms every day prior to the start of each shift, and enforce social distancing rules and increased personal hygiene such as frequent hand washing.

In Queensland a person should be tested for COVID-19 if they have:

- a fever (greater than 38°C), or
- a history of fever (such as night sweats or chills), or
- acute respiratory symptoms (such as cough, sore throat or shortness of breath).

The person undergoing testing should self-isolate until test results are available.

Find out about [testing criteria](#)

## 17. What do I do if a worker shows symptoms of COVID-19?

If a worker shows symptoms of COVID-19:

- a) Immediately isolate the ill person and provide them with a facemask if available.
- b) Identify and immediately isolate any other workers who have had contact with the ill worker.
- c) **Contact your local health service provider or contact 13HEALTH (13 43 25 84) for further advice.**
- d) Thoroughly [clean and disinfect](#) all surfaces and materials used by the ill person and the people they had contact with.

## 18. If a worker becomes ill with suspected COVID-19, do I have to shut down my workplace?

Your workplace health management plan should outline the steps you will take if a worker shows symptoms of COVID-19. Implementing your workforce health management plan should allow you to continue operating your agribusiness once immediate response measures have been completed. Queensland Health will advise if there are any further measures you should implement to further protect your workers.

It is not possible to be definitive about what actions will be required should a case or suspected case emerge at a workplace. The response will depend on factors such as:

- how long the person was at the workplace
- what activities the person undertook in the workplace
- what contact the person had at the workplace
- the likelihood or not of contamination of the workplace
- measures in place in the workplace to prevent cross contamination and to maintain social distancing.

This will be determined by the local public health unit. Contact tracing and management advice will be provided by the local public health unit. Identified close contacts of a case will be required to self-quarantine for 14 days after exposure to a case. Other people who are not assessed as close contacts will not require quarantine. Testing is generally only undertaken for people with symptoms.

Where testing is required of contacts in the workplace, it will be expedited as rapidly as possible. Queensland Health is focussed on rapid response and detection as this is critical to prevent further spread of the disease. It is in the interests of the business to be as thorough as possible in preventing likely spread of disease, and responding to any potential spread in the workplace as this will minimise impact on the workplace and preserve the reputation of the business.



## 19. Will these requirements change how I source my seasonal labour?

These new health provisions are in place to try and minimise any workforce disruption due to COVID-19. People looking for employment in agriculture or commercial fishing industries should not move from their current location unless they have already secured employment. They should also not simply show up on farms seeking employment, but rather to use recruitment platforms such as [Harvest Trail](#) or [Harvest Labour Services](#) to secure work. It is recommended employers plan early for their seasonal workforce needs to ensure they can secure appropriate labour.

## 20. Can social distancing requirements be relaxed if other measures are in place, for example masks, personal protective equipment, frequent hand washing?

Social distancing is a key strategy to minimise the spread of COVID-19 amongst your workforce. The workplace health management plan template and checklist acknowledge that personal protective equipment (PPE) or physical separation barriers such as perspex screens may be considered to reduce the distance between workers if social distancing cannot be maintained. Risk mitigation measures that may allow a reduction in social distancing requirements should be detailed in your workplace health management plan.

Read the COVID-19 [risk mitigation for food businesses guidelines](#).

Additional measures can also be employed to make social distancing easier, such as separating workers into groups that do not interact, and dividing the workspace into different zones to further reduce opportunities for the mixing of work groups.

## 21. Can employers continue to provide accommodation to their workers?

Employers can continue to provide accommodation for seasonal workers. Employers should include in their workplace health management plan the measures in place in accommodation facilities to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 among workers and the community.

## 22. I have provided an offer and letter of employment for a seasonal worker coming into Queensland from interstate, but they have not yet arrived at my farm. Do I need to tell anyone?

If you are concerned that a seasonal worker may have entered Queensland when they were not entitled to, you can contact Policelink on 131444. If the person was coming from a COVID-19 hotspot, the Queensland Police Service will be able to undertake any necessary compliance checks to ensure they are self-quarantining.

## 23. What help is available to complete the health management plan?

The Queensland Government will continue to work with agriculture industries to support agribusinesses in the development of workplace health management plans. You can contact an Agricultural Coordination Officer via [info@daf.qld.gov.au](mailto:info@daf.qld.gov.au) or by calling 13 25 23.

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