

Information Update : COVID-19 requirements for support staff for PLS/SWP workers in on-farm or regional facility quarantine, Pacific Labour Scheme and Seasonal Worker Programme

Pandemic-related workforce issues have challenged food and fibre supply chains across Australia. As one of the initiatives to assist the state’s agricultural sector with labour supply, the Queensland Government is participating in the recommencement of the Australian Government’s Pacific Labour Scheme and Seasonal Workers Programme (PLS/SWP). These programmes source workers from Pacific nations with no or low Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) risk.

The PLS/SWP for Queensland offers three options for quarantine: on-farm, industry-led regional facilities and hotel. Queensland was the first state to introduce on-farm quarantine.

Q: What is an on-farm facility or regional facility?

An on-farm facility or regional facility means a facility that accommodates quarantined persons operating under an endorsed international PLS/SWP quarantine plan.

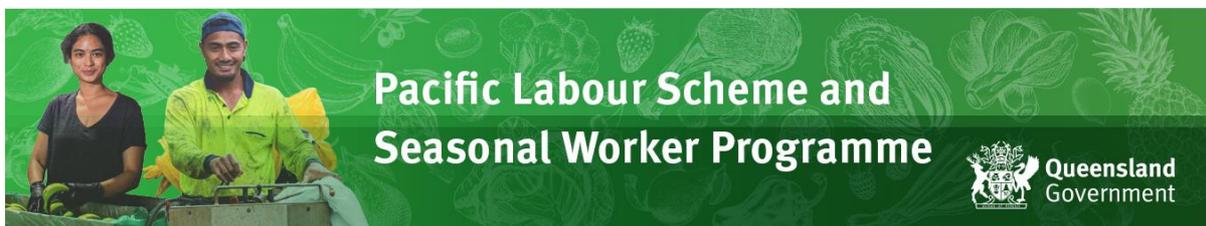
Q: Who is an on-farm or regional facility worker?

An on-farm or regional facility worker is any individual, including an employee, volunteer or contractor that performs a service at an on-farm facility or regional facility. Services include:

- Health – for example providing medical care to or taking a swab for COVID-19 testing from a quarantined person.
- Maintenance or repairs contractor – for example fixing an electrical malfunction within the quarantine facilities.
- Any other services identified in the endorsed international PLS/SWP quarantine plan or other requirements approved by the Chief Health Officer.

Q: What are surveillance testing requirements and why are they necessary?

Surveillance testing is regular COVID-19 testing required for some high-risk workplaces, such as people who provide services or do work of any kind that requires them to be physically present. For example, at on-farm or regional quarantine facilities. Surveillance testing requirements will apply to transport workers (including anyone who transports PLS/SWP workers to or from on-farm or regional facilities during the quarantine period), maintenance and repairs contractor or medical practitioner.



According to the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) there are benefits in testing asymptomatic people who work in environments that have a high risk of COVID-19 transmission. This includes people who provide quarantine services at on-farm facilities or regional facilities or transport services for PLS/SWP workers. Large-scale testing of asymptomatic people in areas that are not high risk is not supported.

Q: How often do I have to get tested?/Who has to be tested?

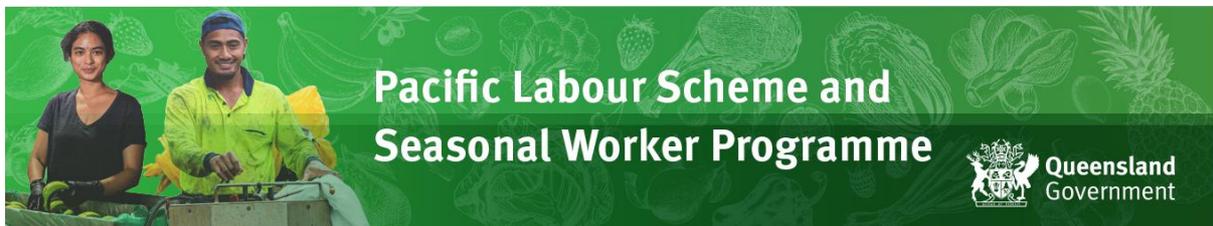
The following workers must follow the testing requirements for COVID-19: **On-farm or regional facility workers**

- On-farm or regional facility workers who have started the vaccination process must:
 - have a throat and deep nasal swab test and be screened for COVID-19 with a saliva test within 7 days after their first shift
 - have a saliva test each shift
 - provide evidence of starting the vaccination process when asked by an emergency officer.
- On-farm or regional facility workers who have not started the vaccination must have a:
 - throat and deep nasal swab test and be screened for COVID-19 with a saliva test within 7 days after their first shift
 - throat and deep nasal swab test on a rolling 7 day testing cycle
 - saliva test each shift.
- Both vaccinated and non-vaccinated on-farm or regional facility workers must have a throat and deep nasal swab test if they will be away for 7 days or more. They must be tested at least every 7 days until 14 days have passed since their last shift.

You must continue this surveillance testing until you stop working at the premises or it no longer provides quarantine accommodation.

Maintenance and repairs contractors or medical practitioners

- Maintenance and repairs contractors or medical practitioners who have to enter an on-farm facility or regional facility must comply with the surveillance testing requirements outlined above if told to do so by an emergency officer.



Transport operators

- Transport operators who have started the vaccination process who service a domestic charter bus, coach or flight with PLS/SWP workers during their quarantine period must have a:
 - throat and deep nasal swab test and be screened for COVID-19 with a saliva test within 7 days of transporting PLS/SWP workers.
- Transport operators who have not started the vaccination process must have a:
 - throat and deep nasal swab test and be screened for COVID-19 with a saliva test within 7 days of transporting PLS/SWP workers
 - throat and deep nasal swab test on a rolling 7 day testing cycle until 14 days have passed since they transported PLS/SWP workers

If you develop [COVID-19 symptoms](#) or have been directed to isolate by an Emergency Officer, you must :

- seek medical attention immediately
- [get tested](#) for COVID-19
- isolate until you receive a negative test result and have no symptoms.

You can get medical attention by calling:

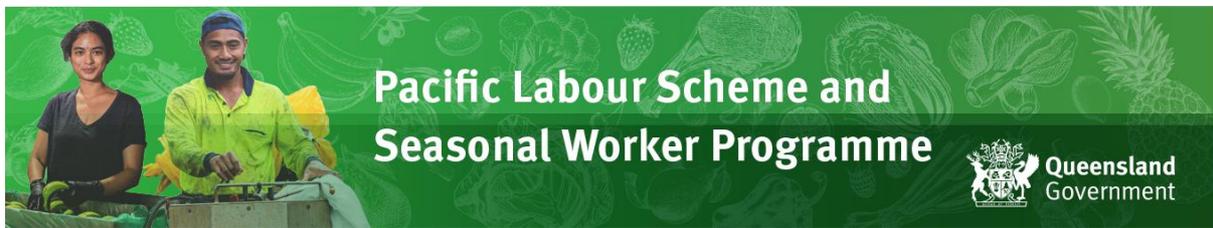
- your usual doctor, who will advise you of next steps
- 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84)
- Triple zero (000) in the case of an emergency

Q: Do I have to wait to be tested if I develop symptoms?

No. If you experience [symptoms](#), no matter how mild, between your regular tests you must [get tested](#) immediately and isolate. You cannot attend your workplace until you receive a negative result and no longer have symptoms.

Q: Do I have to get tested if I have not provided quarantine services in the past 14 days?

People providing quarantine services at on-farm or regional facilities do not have to get a throat and deep nasal [COVID-19 test](#) or saliva test if they have not provided quarantine services in the past 14 days.



Q: What should I do if I miss my routine test?

If you were unable to have a saliva test for a shift because testing wasn't available before, during or after your shift, you must let your employer know and arrange a make-up test.

If you have not started the vaccination process and you are unable to attend testing times for your throat and deep nasal swab that are available onsite, you can visit a [fever clinic](#).

When you're attending a [Queensland Health COVID-19 testing facility](#), you should identify yourself as a quarantine facility worker. This will allow you to be tested, even if asymptomatic, and you will be prioritised for testing.

If you have not started the vaccination process you must not go back to work at the on-farm or regional facility until you have completed your 7 day throat and deep nasal swab test.

Q: How will I receive my results? How long will it take?

Results are usually available within a couple of days after the test was taken.

If the result is positive, you will receive a call from a public health doctor or nurse who will tell you what to do next.

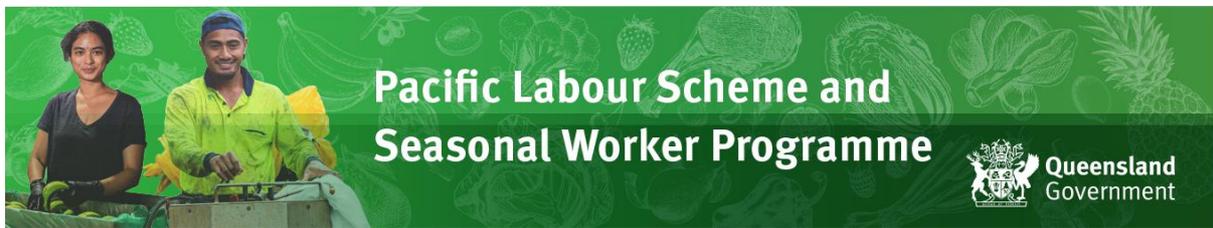
If the result of your throat and deep nasal swab is negative, you will be contacted by public health clinical support staff, this may be by phone or by SMS.

You will not be notified of the results of your saliva test, unless it is positive.

Q: Can I still go to work while waiting for my test results?

If you are not experiencing any symptoms you can keep working while you wait for your test results. You do not have to isolate at home.

If you have any [COVID-19 symptoms](#), no matter how mild, you must isolate until you have received a negative test and have no symptoms.



Q: What happens if I test positive?

If your test is positive, it is important that you isolate from others. If your clinical condition is such that you require hospital care, you will be transferred for isolation in hospital and further care. If you live with others, they must quarantine.

Find out more on [what happens if you test positive to COVID-19](#).

Q: If I have to quarantine while I wait for my results, will I still be paid?

You should speak to your employer as they will be able to advise on their human resource policies regarding payment when quarantining.

Q: Will the people I live with have to quarantine/get tested too?

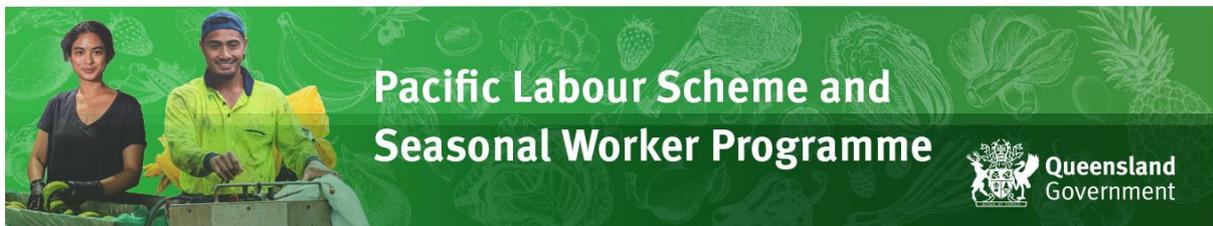
No. People you live with will only have to get tested if they develop [COVID-19 symptoms](#) or come into contact with someone who has tested positive.

Q: Does the amount of contact I have had with people who are quarantining (or things they have touched) matter?

No. On-farm or regional facility workers or transport workers who provide a service or do work of any kind, must comply with on-farm and regional facility worker surveillance testing requirements even if they have not had any direct contact with quarantining workers.

Q: Can I visit a hospital, residential aged care facility or disability accommodation service if I am waiting for the result of my test?

If you are still waiting for your routine test results and you do not have any [COVID-19 symptoms](#) you can visit a hospital, residential aged care facility or disability accommodation service. You must follow all instructions outlined in the [Aged Care Direction](#), [Disability Accommodation Services Direction](#) and [Hospital Visitors Direction](#).



Q: Why is mandatory testing important now?

We have seen an increase in the number of community acquired COVID-19 cases in Australia and globally the number of COVID-19 cases has also increased. As a result, there has been an increase in the number of returning travellers testing positive to COVID-19.

Testing of workers who are at a higher risk of coming into contact with someone with COVID-19 will increase the safety of staff, their families and the community.

This measure is a recommendation of the Australian Health Principal Protection Committee (AHPPC) and delivers another layer of protection on top of the excellent infection control measures Queensland has already.

Q: Who do I speak to if I have more questions?

Please speak to your employer who can direct you to further resources and discuss the requirements of surveillance testing.

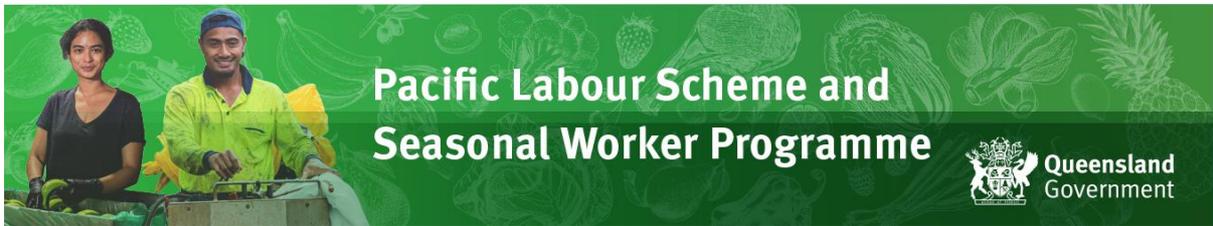
Q: How will I be notified of testing requirements?

Your employer will use their own communications methods to notify you of testing requirements.

Q: What happens if I refuse to be tested? Will I be fired if I refuse to have a test?

You cannot return to work at an on-farm or regional facility if you don't get tested every 7 days with a throat and deep nasal swab (if you have not started the vaccination process) and if you don't have a saliva test as soon as available at your next shift. If you do return to work without getting tested, you may be given an on-the-spot fine of \$1,378, a court-imposed penalty of up to \$13,785 or 6 months' imprisonment.

If you do not wish to be tested, you should speak to your employer about alternate work arrangements.



Questions about saliva testing

Q: What is saliva testing and how does the saliva test work?

Saliva testing is a test that uses the saliva from your mouth to test for COVID-19.

The test is painless and simple. It may be collected by a healthcare worker or you may be asked to collect it yourself under supervision from a healthcare worker.

Saliva testing is only able to detect the presence of COVID-19 in the saliva, a positive test may mean you either have COVID-19 or it may show evidence of a previous COVID-19 infection. The test is not able to detect other respiratory viruses, or drug substances, or whether you are pregnant.

The test can be conducted daily without any side effects.

Q: Does the saliva test detect anything other than COVID-19 (alcohol, other medications, recreational drugs, pregnancy)?

No. Saliva testing only tests for COVID-19. The test is not able to detect other respiratory viruses, or drug substances.

How accurate is saliva testing?

Q: If I have a saliva test and develop symptoms later in the day or the next day, what should I do?

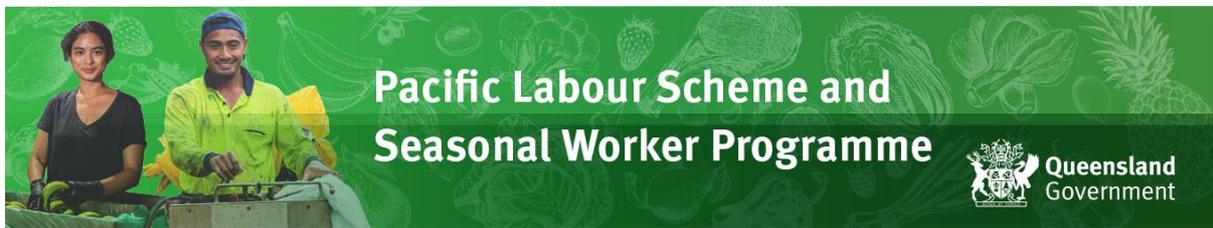
If you experience [symptoms](#), no matter how mild, between your regular tests you must [get tested](#) immediately and isolate. You cannot attend your workplace until you receive a negative result and no longer have symptoms.

Q: Does saliva testing hurt?

No. The saliva testing is painless, not invasive and takes about one minute.

Q: What are the risks with frequent saliva testing? Will my mouth get sore? Are the chemicals safe to have every day?

There are no risks associated with frequent testing.



Q: What happens if I test positive from a saliva test?

If you test positive to COVID-19 from a saliva test, you will have to isolate immediately. You will have to have a throat and deep nasal swab test to confirm the result of the saliva test. The throat and deep nasal swab remain the best test for anyone with symptoms because it is more accurate. At this time, the saliva test is only used as a screening test for some people without symptoms who need frequent testing (people who are asymptomatic). A Queensland Health representative will contact you and will tell you what to do if this happens.

Questions about the vaccine

Q: What does it mean to have started the vaccination process?

To have started the vaccination process means you must:

- have received one dose of COVID-19 vaccine; and
- receive a second dose of the vaccine when required; and
- have notified the on-farm or regional facility of your vaccination.

Q: Can I continue to work if I haven't received my first dose? / Can I continue to work if I have received my first dose but haven't had my second dose in the appropriate time?

You may continue to work at an on-farm or regional facility if you have not started the vaccination process, but you will have to be tested for COVID-19 more regularly.

Q: I need to provide evidence I have been vaccinated, how can I do this?

You can use your immunisation history statement as evidence. This is available from the Australian Government through:

- the [Australian Immunisation Register](#)
- [myGOV](#)
- the Medicare mobile app.

For more information see the [Australian Government](#) website.

Questions about enforcement

Q: Are there penalties if I don't comply?

Yes. If you don't comply you may be given an on-the-spot fine of \$1,378 for individuals and \$6,892 for corporations, a court-imposed penalty of up to \$13,785 or 6 months' imprisonment.

UPDATED: 3 September 2021

