

Guidelines for quarantine of Pacific Labour Scheme and Seasonal Worker Programme workers in an industry-led regional facility in Queensland

These guidelines concern workers recruited by Approved Employers under the Australian Government's Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS) and Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP) (now consolidated under Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM))—and required to undertake mandatory quarantine in Queensland, in an industry-led regional quarantine facility.

This option is limited to workers originating from those PLS/SWP countries that have the lowest Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) risk profile and are approved by the Queensland Chief Health Officer. The profile may include but is not limited to an effective in-country testing regime with sufficient capacity, no or very low number of known COVID-19 cases and incidences of community transmission, and sufficient arrangements to minimise the risk of exposure to travellers from other nations en route to Queensland. Workers are required to undertake a mandatory 14 day period of quarantine at an approved industry-led regional facility to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19 to the community.

The risk that workers directed to quarantine in an industry-led facility will have COVID-19 is low compared to general international arrivals who may come from countries with a higher COVID-19 risk profile and are therefore directed to government-managed quarantine accommodation. Quarantine at an industry-led regional facility will not displace repatriating Australian citizens or permanent residents from government-managed quarantine accommodation.

In this context, 'industry-led' means the quarantine arrangements are developed and implemented by industry, and industry is responsible for meeting the cost. Nevertheless, the Queensland Government will be providing significant support to the delivery of these arrangements. However subject to the approval of the Queensland Government, specifically the Chief Health Officer, Queensland Government agencies will monitor the implementation of the arrangements. No cost or cost recovery can be sought from the Queensland Government, including if quarantine requirements change in response to public health circumstances.

These guidelines broadly outline acceptable arrangements for an industry-led regional quarantine facility and how the health of the community will be protected. They are not intended to address every situation. These guidelines may be periodically reviewed and may change without notice in response to public health circumstances. Approved Employers must comply with current guidelines.

Responsibility for quarantine at an industry-led regional facility

1. The Approved Employer of some or all workers who will quarantine at the facility must apply to operate and manage the quarantine of all workers at the facility. A single Approved Employer must assume responsibility for the entire facility at a time.

If the facility is proposed to be operated by several Approved Employers in sequence (e.g. an Approved Employer will manage quarantine of their workers at the facility and then vacate it so another Approved Employer can manage quarantine of their workers at the facility), then arrangements for the transfer of responsibility between the Approved Employers will need to be included in the International Quarantine Plan (IQP), including contingency for any delay in the release of workers from quarantine. Transfer of responsibility can only occur once the facility has been vacated by all workers and after it has been thoroughly cleaned.

PLS/SWP International Quarantine Plan for an industry-led regional facility

2. The facility can only be used for quarantine of workers if a PLS/SWP International Quarantine Plan for quarantine of workers at the facility has been endorsed by the Queensland Chief Health Officer or delegate, and a recruitment proposal for the workers has been approved on behalf of the Queensland Government.

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) will arrange consultation regarding the International Quarantine Plan and recruitment proposal with relevant Queensland Government agencies.

DAF will also arrange consultation regarding the International Quarantine Plan with the relevant local government. However, an Approved Employer proposing a regional quarantine facility is encouraged to make earlier contact with their local government, especially about the adequacy of the arrangements to address possible community concerns about the location and operation of a quarantine facility in the area and to ensure that the facility complies with all the relevant local government laws (including local council building approvals).

3. Information about industry-led regional quarantine facilities and proposed industry-led regional quarantine facilities may be publicly released, including on the advice of the relevant local government.

This differs to on-farm quarantine where information about sites is kept confidential to avoid attracting interest in the sites which could compromise the quarantine arrangements.

4. The plan must detail all systems and arrangements for the quarantine of the workers, including, but not limited to:
 - a. transfer of workers to the facility,
 - b. separation measures between cohorts,
 - c. security arrangements,
 - d. details of the accommodation, including:
 - i. a site and accommodation map,
 - ii. food delivery and preparation arrangements,
 - iii. cleaning and sanitising regimes including procedures, schedules and materials used,
 - e. daily activities and support, including:
 - i. activities, including training and induction or other paid work,
 - ii. support for the social, cultural and religious needs of the workers, and
 - iii. language services.

It is desirable for the workers to undertake activities while in quarantine that will assist them with the work for which they have been recruited. For example, workers could undertake training and induction while in quarantine and be paid for undertaking these activities.

Consideration should be given to maintaining physical distancing and avoiding contact and/or highly aerobic team sports.

Paid work and arrangements to accommodate workers' interests will support their mental and emotional wellbeing and may reduce the risk of worker non-compliance with the plan.

The Approved Employer must ensure that workers are aware of, and can access, external support during quarantine such as the Pacific Labour Facility 24-hour hotline (1800 51 51 31 or email welfare@pacificlabourfacility.com.au) or the Seasonal Worker Programme information line (02 6240 5234 Monday to Friday 9 am – 5 pm only) or 1800 51 51 31 after hours or seasonalworker@dese.gov.au.

5. If the Approved Employer will be operating the facility for longer than one 14 day quarantine period, the plan may be submitted in two parts which may be endorsed separately: Part A - ongoing arrangements for operation of, and quarantine of workers at, the facility; and Part B - details and arrangements specific to a cohort of workers who will quarantine at the facility.
6. The Approved Employer responsible for the operation of the facility must ensure compliance with Part A of the International Quarantine Plan.

Ensuring compliance with the plan includes ensuring any service providers the Approved Employer engages, or anyone else (including the Approved Employer of other workers quarantining at the facility) who they allow to be involved in matters covered by Part A of the plan, comply with the plan and at all times minimise the risk of spread of COVID-19 associated with the quarantine of the workers.

A letter of consent from the facility owner must be included in the application.

7. If the Approved Employer responsible for the operation of the facility is not the Approved Employer for a cohort of workers who will quarantine at the facility:
 - a. Part B of the plan must be endorsed by both the Approved Employer responsible for the operation of the facility and the Approved Employer of the quarantining workers; and
 - b. the Approved Employer of the quarantining workers is responsible for ensuring compliance with Part B of the plan.
8. The Approved Employer responsible for the operation of the facility must ensure both Part A and Part B of the plan include detail on how the workers will be inducted into the quarantine arrangements, including translation of information where necessary.

The Approved Employer responsible for the operation of the facility and Approved Employer of the quarantining workers must ensure that workers, and those who may interact with them during the quarantine period, are aware of and can access interpreting and translation services, such as Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National: 131 450). An interpreting service will assist in achieving compliance where a worker is displaying COVID-19 symptoms and must be given complex instructions about isolation where English is not their first language.

Note that where the Approved Employer responsible for the operation of the facility or the Approved Employer of the quarantining workers is providing instruction/information/training at work it is their duty under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 to provide, so far as is reasonably practicable, the information, training and instruction in a way that is readily understandable by any person to whom it is provided.

General requirements for quarantine at a regional facility

9. A regional quarantine facility must be situated in a place remote from or inaccessible to the general community.

For example, a facility at some distance from the nearest town, back from the road and with no close neighbours would be most suitable.
10. The perimeter of the quarantine area must be fenced. Security for the facility must include CCTV monitoring (with response capability) and/or patrols by a private security provider at all times.
11. The total number of workers proposed to quarantine at a regional quarantine facility at one time must be greater than 30¹.
12. Workers must quarantine in a cohort of no more than 80 workers for the quarantine period.

Approved Employers should give consideration to separating workers into smaller cohort numbers to minimise the risk of larger groups of workers requiring transfer to hotel quarantine in the instance of a positive case of COVID-19.
13. Only workers who arrive on the same flight may be quarantined together as a cohort.
14. Adequate supervisors must quarantine with each cohort. Supervisors cannot be workers arriving in the quarantine cohort. Supervisors must have a thorough understanding of the facility and quarantine arrangements and capability to promote, facilitate and monitor worker compliance with the arrangements.

¹ The number of workers that can be quarantined at a regional quarantine facility at one time can now be less than 30. Please enquire with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries on 13 25 23 before lodging an application.

Supervisors would typically manage the day-to-day needs and activities of the cohort within the quarantine area on behalf of the Approved Employer responsible for the operation of the facility. There must be at least two supervisors for each cohort.

15. Cohorts must be quarantined in separate parts of the facility which cannot generally be accessed by any person from outside the cohort. Cohorts must not share recreation areas or amenities and there must be no contact between cohorts. Separate emergency assembly points will be needed for each cohort.

Careful consideration must be given to maintaining workers in their cohorts. Discrete cohorts will be critical to the successful implementation of this option.

16. Each cohort must remain spatially separated from all other persons during the quarantine period, including facility staff, suppliers and service providers who are not embedded with the cohort. Physical barriers must be provided between areas used by separate cohorts to eliminate any physical contact between individuals and/or common surfaces. Barriers must also be sufficient to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 through airborne means.

For example, full height walls could be used to separate cohorts indoors provided air cannot circulate between the separated areas. Full height walls or two rows of chain link fencing separated by at least 3 metres could be used to separate cohorts within outdoor areas. A single chain link fence is not acceptable.

17. Facility staff who are not in quarantine with the workers but may enter the quarantine area (e.g. to deliver food), and other service providers supplying a quarantine service, must comply with the testing requirements under the *Seasonal Workers International Quarantine Plans and Checklist Direction* (or its successor). These testing requirements vary depending on the workers vaccination status.

Examples of service providers supplying a quarantine service include persons providing:

- a. *medical care to a quarantined person*
 - b. *pathology providers taking a swab for COVID-19 testing from a quarantined person*
 - c. *security services at the facility who enter the quarantine area*
 - d. *transport providers contracted by the Approved Employer responsible for the operation of the facility.*
18. Each worker in quarantine, and any persons quarantining with workers, must be tested for COVID-19 at intervals currently required by the *Seasonal Workers International Quarantine Plans and Checklist Direction* (or its successor). A copy of all COVID-19 test results must be provided to the local Public Health Unit within 24 hours of receipt by the Approved Employer. Workers, or persons quarantining with the workers, who refuse to submit to a COVID-19 test may result in the entire cohort being subject to another 14 days of quarantine.

The current testing regime for workers and supervisors under quarantine is one test as soon as possible after arrival at the facility and then again on days 5 and 12 of the quarantine period.

Arrangements must be made with a private pathology provider to undertake testing onsite and provide the test results in a format acceptable to, and easily able to be provided to, Queensland Health.

19. If, during the quarantine period, a worker or a person who has had close contact with a worker becomes a probable or confirmed case of COVID-19, (as diagnosed by a medical practitioner), the following persons are to be notified immediately:
 - a. Local Public Health Unit
 - b. Department of Agriculture and Fisheries
 - c. Workplace Health and Safety Queensland
 - d. Department of Education, Skills and Employment or the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (for the Seasonal Workers Programme or Pacific Labour Scheme respectively).

Following approval of the International Quarantine Plan, DAF will provide the Approved Employer responsible for the operation of the facility with details of appropriate contacts in the Queensland Government agencies for making the notification.

Note that the requirement for a notification to Workplace Health and Safety Queensland reflects that if a worker was undertaking paid activities at the facility, and was diagnosed as being COVID-19 positive, then it would be 'arising out of the conduct of the business' and 'the carrying out of work is a significant contributing factor'.

20. The plan must include arrangements for isolating workers (or any persons quarantining with them) who test positive for COVID-19. They must remain in isolation and act in accordance with directions issued by the local Public Health Unit (or emergency officers appointed under the *Public Health Act 2005*).

A positive case of COVID-19 must be transferred to hospital under the direction of the local Public Health Unit. Any persons considered to be close contacts of the case will be required to undertake 14 days quarantine in a government nominated facility.

Applicants and Approved Employers are strongly advised to consider what contingencies will be available in the event of a case of COVID-19 being detected during the period of quarantine.

There is no guarantee that government nominated hotel accommodation will be available at the time. The remaining workers may therefore be directed to remain at regional facility beyond the initial the initial 14 day period. This may result in delays for future cohorts scheduled to occupy the facility. For this reason It is advised that a period of 14 days is completed between the end of quarantine of one cohort before the arrival and quarantine of the next cohort commences.

21. The plan must include provisions for meeting the general and emergency medical needs of workers and those quarantining with them. Approved Employers must engage a local registered Medical Practitioner and establish arrangements for responding to illness and/or injury through telehealth consultation or onsite visit. The relevant Hospital and Health Service are provided with details of the quarantine arrangements during the application assessment process.

A letter must be provided from a registered medical practitioner prior to the arrival of the workers, confirming the willingness of the practitioner to provide telehealth and in-person health care for the workers in quarantine as appropriate.

22. The plan must include arrangements for record keeping about the health of the workers during the quarantine period, including details of all health checks and COVID-19 tests undertaken and the results. Records must be provided to DAF and other relevant agencies as required.

Australian law requires that personal information is collected and stored in a way that assures its security and is only utilised for the purpose for which it was collected. Approved Employers responsible for the operation of the facility are strongly advised to become familiar with these obligations and those relating to the release of personal information. If in any doubt, legal advice should be sought.

23. The plan must outline measures to prevent transmission to suppliers and service providers who may need to enter the facility.

For example, minimising entry by suppliers and service providers, demarcating specific entry points, ensuring quarantined workers are not present in the area while the supplier or service provider is present, specified delivery protocols, emergency access protocols, and provision of Personal Protective Equipment.

24. The plan must include comprehensive record keeping about suppliers and service providers who may need to enter the facility.

25. The quarantine period ends after whichever is the latest of:

- a. 14 days or more from the date of arrival in Queensland as stated in the quarantine direction issued by an emergency officer appointed under the *Public Health Act 2005*; and

- b. authorisation for release of the cohort from quarantine issued by an emergency officer appointed under the *Public Health Act 2005*.

Where quarantine directions for the workers are due to expire and all the necessary negative test results have not been received or a worker is showing symptoms of COVID-19, the emergency officer appointed under the Public Health Act 2005 may issue further quarantine directions.

If one or more workers in a cohort contracts COVID-19 during the quarantine period, then the quarantine period for everyone else in the cohort would generally be extended for a further 14 days since the last contact with a positive case of COVID-19.

Requirements for travel to Queensland and transfer to the facility

26. Workers must be recruited from a country which the Queensland Chief Health Officer is satisfied has a low COVID-19 risk profile, (e.g. reliable testing regime/capacity, and low number of known cases). Workers must have been in that country for 14 days or more immediately prior to traveling to Queensland.
27. A worker must not travel if they: have COVID-19; have previously had COVID-19; have symptoms consistent with COVID-19; have been in close contact with a person with COVID-19 in the last 14 days; or have been outside the country they have been recruited from in the past 14 days.
28. A worker must comply with all Chief Health Officer directions and approvals relevant to their temporary residence in Australia.

Note that pre-boarding requirements currently apply to international flights, including a questionnaire and temperature checks.

29. Workers must travel on dedicated flights, (e.g. chartered for this purpose) direct from the recruitment country to Queensland and not transiting any other countries. Alternatively, workers may travel on commercial flights if they are only transporting passengers from countries which the Queensland Chief Health Officer is satisfied have a low COVID-19 risk profile and are not transiting any other countries, (e.g. travelling from a low COVID-19 risk country direct to Queensland or travelling from a low COVID-19 risk country via another low COVID-19 risk country and then on to Queensland without transiting any other countries).
30. Arrangements for processing of workers at the arrival airport, including maintaining their separation from other persons, must be negotiated with the airport operator and various Federal and State agencies. The Approved Employer must provide detailed information about each worker, including quarantine manifests and arrival declarations. The Queensland International Arrivals Registration must be completed before their arrival.

On arrival, Australian Border Force and the Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment Biosecurity Officers (Australian Government) will complete border processing of the workers and Queensland Police Service officers will typically issue quarantine notices and Queensland Health undertake temperature checking. These arrangements are standard for international arrivals, but resourcing will need to be mobilised and arrangements agreed for processing these workers, especially for flights arriving at regional airports. DAF will assist with arranging these discussions. The Approved Employer responsible for the operation of the facility or the Approved Employer of the quarantining workers will generally need to ensure supervisors are present to guide the workers through the airport while remaining distanced from other persons.

For flights arriving at Brisbane and Cairns international airports, there are precedent arrangements that may be suitable, and it is generally preferable to delay the detailed discussion of arrangements with the relevant agencies until approval has been given for a recruitment on a particular date.

For flights arriving at any other airport, early discussion about capacity to resource flight arrivals and possible arrangements must occur and may be required to be addressed in the plan.

Having a charter flight direct from a Pacific nation arrive in Queensland at a regional airport may minimise the potential for contact with international travellers from higher COVID-19 risk countries and deliver workers closer to the quarantine place. However, currently Queensland international border reception arrangements only extend to Brisbane and Cairns international airports, and there may be limited capacity to provide health checks and other services at regional airports. Approved Employers should confirm that the Queensland

Government agencies have capacity to support arrivals at a particular regional airport if it is proposed to be used.

Note also that the approval of the National Passenger Processing Committee (NPPC), a Commonwealth Government body, is required for international flights with more than 10 travellers arriving at all Queensland airports except Brisbane and Cairns. Applications must be submitted 10 business days before the flight. More information is available on the website of the Australian Border Force: <https://www.abf.gov.au/entering-and-leaving-australia/aircraft-requirements>, or you can contact the NPPC at: nppc@abf.gov.au.

31. A domestic charter flight from the arrival airport to a closer regional airport must be organised if the distance from the arrival airport to the facility cannot be safely undertaken by road without scheduled stops. The regional airport and charter flight operators must be pre-briefed about their role in maintaining the quarantine of the workers.

Where workers initially arrive at Brisbane, there are precedent arrangements for transfer to a domestic charter flight leaving from the international terminal while remaining separated from all other persons. DAF can assist with arranging discussions about these arrangements between the airlines, airport corporation and relevant Federal and State agencies.

Domestic charter flight crew will be subject to surveillance testing in accordance with the Seasonal Workers International Quarantine Plans and Checklist Direction (or it's successor). The charter flight provider would also need to have a transport plan and be endorsed by the Department of Transport and Main Roads (DTMR).

32. Workers must be transported direct from the airport to the quarantine facility without scheduled stops. If a vehicle is required to make an unscheduled stop, workers are to remain inside the vehicle as much as practicable and physical distancing is to be maintained while outside the vehicle. The plan must include specific measures to minimise risks of transmission during road transport of workers during the transfer to quarantine and how the needs of the workers will be met during the journey. Drivers will be required to undertake surveillance testing for COVID-19 in accordance with the *Seasonal Workers International Quarantine plans and Checklist Direction (or it's successor)*. The charter bus provider would also need to have a transport plan and be endorsed by the Department of Transport and Main Roads.

Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads can assist with advice on traffic conditions for selected road transport routes from the airport to the quarantine place.

Transport providers must be pre-briefed by the Approved Employer on their role in maintaining the quarantine of the workers at all times.

Compliance monitoring, enforcement and oversight

33. On arrival in Queensland, each worker will be issued with a quarantine direction by an emergency officer appointed under the *Public Health Act 2005* directing them to quarantine. A translation of the health direction may be provided on request.
34. A quarantine direction will also be issued (either at the airport or facility depending on where they will join the cohort) by an emergency officer appointed under the *Public Health Act 2005* to any persons, such as supervisors embedded with the cohort, who will be quarantining with the workers.
35. The Approved Employer responsible for the operation of the facility must immediately report any breaches of the International Quarantine Plan to the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries who will escalate the issue to the Local Public Health Unit.

Following approval of the International Quarantine Plan, DAF will provide the Approved Employer responsible for the operation of the facility with details of appropriate contacts in the Queensland Government agencies for making a report. These agencies will inform the Queensland Police Service where appropriate.

36. The International Quarantine Plan must include consent for emergency officers appointed under the *Public Health Act 2005* to enter the property without notice during the 14 day quarantine period to ensure the plan is being complied with and effectively enforced.

Officers from DAF and partner agencies, who have been appointed as emergency officers under the Public Health Act 2005, will regularly visit the facility to oversee the enforcement of the International Quarantine Plan. They may bring other persons into the facility to assist them with monitoring compliance.

37. Consequences of a breach of the International Quarantine Plan could include penalties for non-compliance with a health direction under the *Public Health Act 2005*. Where appropriate, enforcement action may also be taken against individual workers. Workers may also be directed to quarantine at another place at full cost to the Approved Employer, for the remainder of the quarantine period, or an additional 14-day quarantine period. Breaches may also result in suspension of endorsement of the International Quarantine Plan for the facility.

Costs

38. All costs associated with quarantine of the workers are the responsibility of the Approved Employer responsible for the relevant aspect of quarantine of the workers as agreed between the Approved Employer responsible for the operation of the facility and the Approved Employer of the quarantining workers. These costs cannot be recovered from workers.

If the Approved Employer responsible for the operation of the facility is not the Approved Employer of the quarantining workers, the Approved Employer responsible for the operation of the facility may wish to ensure they can recover all costs they may incur from the Approved Employer of the quarantining workers.

39. The Approved Employer responsible for the operation of the facility must arrange and meet the cost of any health checks and COVID-19 tests required, except those health checks conducted by government agencies on arrival at the airport. The cost of health checks and COVID-19 tests forms part of the quarantine costs and must not be recovered from workers.
40. To the extent they are not covered by the worker's health insurance, the Approved Employer of the quarantining workers must meet any costs of the transfer of a worker to, and care provided at, a health facility.
41. The Approved Employer of the quarantining workers must meet the full cost of hotel quarantine if, due to a breach of the International Quarantine Plan workers are directed to hotel quarantine for the remainder of the quarantine period, or an additional 14-day quarantine period.
42. The Approved Employer of the quarantining workers may be required to pay a charge covering some or all of the costs of Queensland Government support for the recruitment including, but not limited to, a charge to cover costs associated with mobilising resources for health management and compliance monitoring during the quarantine period especially if the workers are not scheduled to spend the majority of their time working in Queensland. These costs must not be recovered from workers.

For persons who are interested in becoming the Approved Employer responsible for the operation of a facility, the next step is to complete Part A of an application for quarantine at a regional facility in Queensland. An application form is available which will guide them through what needs to be in their application, including their International Quarantine Plan. When they have developed a draft International Quarantine Plan, it is highly recommended they call DAF's Customer Service Centre on 13 25 23 to arrange a meeting with an assessment team member to discuss the proposed plan and help make sure all the necessary information has been included.