



## **Changes to seasonal worker directives and guidelines**

Approved Employers (AEs) who wish to bring workers into Queensland under the Pacific Labour Scheme and Seasonal Worker Programme (PLS/SWP) are now subject to additional requirements, as outlined in the [Seasonal Workers International Quarantine Plans and Checklist Direction](#) (effective 24 August 2021) and must be included in the International Quarantine Plan (IQP) completed by the Approved Employer.

There are additional layers of protection for workers who support the quarantine facilities and local communities through surveillance testing, using both nose-throat swabs and saliva testing. There are also differences between surveillance testing requirements for vaccinated and unvaccinated workers. Quarantining workers who refuse to be tested will be required to quarantine for a further period of 14 days.

Transport operators must have an endorsed transport plan and quarantining workers will need to wear facemasks when moving to or from the quarantine site.

During quarantine the PLS/SWP employers do not need to follow the seasonal worker checklist as the risks are managed under the IQP. However, after the quarantine period agribusinesses who employ seasonal workers need to adopt the seasonal worker checklist, which includes the use of the Check-In Qld app and following a work health and safety risk management framework to outline how the risk of COVID-19 are being managed.

A table outlining the changes is available on [DAF's PLS/SWP engagement hub](#) in the latest news section.

## **Establishment of Pacific Australia Labour Mobility**

The Australian Government recently announced the PLS and SWP programmes would now be under the umbrella of the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) programme. Visit the PALM [website](#) for more information.

## **Three sites approved as industry-led regional quarantine facilities**

The introduction of the *Seasonal Workers International Quarantine Plans and Checklist Direction* has enabled the introduction of industry-led regional quarantine facilities for the PLS/SWP.

On Friday 3 September 2021, the Grantham site in the Lockyer Valley was the first approved as an industry-led regional facility. Previously it has operated as an on-farm quarantine facility and can accommodate cohorts of 240 workers.

Two other sites at Dimbulah (near Mareeba) and Clare (near Ayr) have also been approved as industry-led regional facilities. The Dimbulah site will accommodate 160 workers and the Clare site can accommodate 46. More cohorts are scheduled to quarantine at these industry-led regional facilities prior to December 2021.



The introduction of industry-led regional quarantine facilities for PLS/SWP workers provides another option to bring in agricultural workers to Queensland to help alleviate pressure on the industry.

### **Christmas quarantine arrangements**

Employers need to be mindful of the following timeframes for recruitments between now and 2022.

**A no-flight arrival period will operate from 6 December 2021 until 10 January 2022 (inclusive) i.e. last flight is 6 December 2021 and first flight in 2022 is 11 January. This will ensure that any cohort that enters quarantine by the 6 December will be able to leave quarantine no later than 23 December.**

### **Recruitment proposals and plans: between October to early December 2021**

For Approved Employers (AEs) who need workers to arrive in Australia up to early December 2021:

- submit your recruitment proposals as soon as possible
- submit recruitment plans at least 10 weeks before desired arrival date
- state and territory CHO approvals and recruitment plans must be approved at least five weeks before planned arrival date.

### **Recruitment proposals and plans: late December 2021 to late January 2022**

For AEs who want workers to arrive in Australia between late December and 31 January 2022, the following timelines will apply:

- submit recruitment proposals by 13 October 2021
- submit recruitment plans (for approved proposals) by 10 November 2021.

The Chief Health Officer (CHO) and PLS/SWP approval must be received by 17 November 2021 to allow adequate time to recruit and prepare workers for the period.



### **Consideration of smaller cohorts of workers**

The national COVID-19 situation has led to a 'blackout' on hotels as a quarantine option for incoming PLS/SWP workers.

It is likely to last through to November 2021, and beyond. On-farm and industry-led regional facility quarantine is still available.

To date only cohorts of between 30–80 workers could quarantine at one site, potentially disadvantaging smaller agricultural enterprises. Smaller cohorts with a minimum of 15 workers can quarantine to serve up to two locations within a 30-minute drive of each other.

In addition, industry-led regional quarantine facilities can include multiple small groups quarantining together.

Applications for smaller cohorts (minimum 15 workers per cohort) can be supported if there is sufficient compliance capacity within the area nominated.

To date there has been no incidence of COVID-19 in any of these workers.

Prior to submitting a PLS/SWP application for smaller cohorts please contact DAF on 13 25 23 or email [info@daf.qld.gov.au](mailto:info@daf.qld.gov.au).

### **Inclusion of Kiribati and Tuvalu in the list of PLS/SWP low-risk Pacific nations**

In early September 2021, the Queensland CHO agreed to the inclusion of two additional Pacific nations—Kiribati and Tuvalu—in the list of participating low-risk nations.

Previously, the PLS/SWP workers have predominantly been drawn from the four Pacific nations of the Solomon Islands, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu.

The addition of Kiribati and Tuvalu to source low-risk workers from the Pacific nations will provide further worker options for the Queensland agriculture industry in the lead up to Christmas.

PLS/SWP workers are not currently permitted entry into Queensland from Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste, due to their COVID-19 status.

### **First seasonal workers for St George**

In a first for remote regional areas of Queensland, 34 seasonal workers from Tonga have completed their on-farm quarantine arrangements and are now harvesting onion and garlic crops.

Department of Agriculture and Fisheries General Manager Peter Donaghy said getting the seasonal workers to St George was supported by the hard work of many in the community.



“Being able to successfully and safely accommodate seasonal workers in remote areas is of great importance to industry as we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, though maintaining public health is the highest priority and there are stringent conditions and a strict compliance regime in place,” Mr Donaghy said.

“Representatives from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Queensland Health, the Darling Downs Public Health Unit, the South-West Hospital and Health Services, the Federal Government, the Balonne Shire Council, and the approved employer Australian National Pickers Pty Ltd have worked collaboratively to overcome a number of issues to make on-farm quarantining in St George a reality.”

### **Vaccinations**

Vaccination is still the top priority to help keep Queenslanders as safe as possible from COVID-19. Combined with COVID safe behaviours, vaccines give us the best chance of keeping our community and businesses open and doing more of the things we enjoy.

New vaccine hubs are also being set up daily throughout the state, including for walk-ins. Check the [location list](#) to find a location near you. You can also use the federal [Vaccine Clinic Finder](#) to find a participating GP or pharmacy.

Resources for employers to discuss vaccination with their workers are available at our [DAF vaccination engagement hub](#).

By being vaccinated against COVID-19, we will minimise the risk of business lockdowns and disruption to service delivery and employment, and protect our families, colleagues, and community.

The COVID-19 vaccine is free for everyone in Australia, even if you are not an Australian citizen or permanent resident. This includes people without a Medicare card, overseas visitors, international students, migrant workers and asylum seekers.

### **Add-on skills training**

Add-on Skills Training is funded training available for AEs to offer workers first aid, basic English and basic computing skills. AEs can send an email to [training@pacificlbourfacility.com.au](mailto:training@pacificlbourfacility.com.au) to receive the relevant forms and a walk-through of the process.

The [program](#) will be relaunched and the new model will open up the possibility of subsidy for a wider range of training, but include some co-contribution from AEs and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.