

Guidelines for 'hotel' quarantine of PLS and SWP workers in Queensland

This option involves allowing workers recruited under the Australian Government's Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS) and Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP) by Approved Employers in Queensland to enter Queensland via conventional (hotel or other Government-nominated accommodation) quarantine.

On completion of the quarantine period, the workers would pose no greater community transmission risk than Australians who had been repatriated via hotel quarantine or other seasonal workers moving around Queensland.

Risks for seasonal workers generally are currently managed under the *Seasonal Workers Health Management Plans Direction*. Specifically, employers and transport and accommodation providers must have a health management plan that meets the Chief Health Officer's requirements.

Note that demand for conventional quarantine for Australian nationals and permanent residents returning from overseas is currently high, and thus there is little opportunity to support recruitment of PLS and SWP workers via hotel quarantine. This reflects the National Cabinet decision that priority must be given to supporting the repatriation of Australian nationals and permanent residents.

A small pilot cohort may be accepted under these Guidelines to clarify the pathway so it is well understood and can be used more extensively when there is a reduction of other demand for conventional quarantine. Arrivals during the pilot would be within the existing cap on international arrivals.

Quarantine on arrival in Queensland

1. Workers may arrive in Queensland on standard commercial flights or charter flights.
2. On arrival, workers will be taken to conventional quarantine which is supervised by the Queensland Police Service.

Note that if a worker was diagnosed as being COVID-19 positive while in hotel quarantine, then it would not be considered by Workplace Health and Safety Queensland to be an incident 'arising out of the conduct of the business' where 'the carrying out of work is a significant contributing factor'.

3. Workers accommodated together in pairs in the recruitment country may be quarantined together in pairs on arrival in Queensland.

This may reduce the cost of quarantine for the Approved Employer. However, the Approved Employer should consider that a pair will be confined in close quarters for an extended period and ensure both workers consent to the arrangement.

4. Approved Employers must ensure workers have immediate practical assistance when they are discharged from quarantine, including transport to their further accommodation and workplace.

Work health and safety

5. The Queensland Government would support recruitment plans under this option only if the Approved Employer had lodged a suitable health management plan with Queensland Health, and there was no record of non-compliance with the plan.

Every Queensland agribusiness that employs seasonal workers must already have a health management plan under the Seasonal Worker Health Management Plan Direction to manage the risk of COVID-19 in the workplace.

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This should be lodged with Queensland Health at: covid.plans@health.qld.gov.au. Compliance monitoring is the responsibility of Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and Workplace Health and Safety Queensland enforcement officers who are authorised as emergency officers under the Public Health Act 2005 as per current arrangements.

Every provider of accommodation and transport to seasonal workers must already have a health management plan under the Seasonal Worker Health Management Plan Direction to manage the risk of COVID-19 in the workplace. This should be lodged with Queensland Health at: covid.plans@health.qld.gov.au

6. Where directed, an Approved Employer must undergo a work health and safety systems audit and on-site hazard inspection by a Workplace Health and Safety Queensland inspector before workers commence work.
7. Any redeployment to another Approved Employer would be subject to the other Approved Employer complying with the Seasonal Workers Health Management Plans Direction or its successor (in addition to Australian Government approvals that may be required).

Costs

8. All costs associated with this option will be the responsibility of Approved Employers.
9. Approved Employers must arrange to meet the hotel quarantine costs incurred by workers.

Section 362MD of the Public Health Act 2005 makes a person required to quarantine liable to pay the fees prescribed for the quarantine. Currently, invoices are issued to this person after the end of the quarantine and must be paid within 30 days. The Approved Employer will need to provide assistance to the worker to ensure these invoices are paid within 30 days. This may include information they can provide on how the invoices should be directed to ensure they are received promptly.