



Agriculture Coordination Group update – 4 November 2020

The last Agriculture Coordination Group (ACG) meeting was held on Wednesday 7 October 2020.

COVID-19 information and support initiatives for the agriculture, fisheries and forestry industry are published at [Business Queensland](#).

Queensland border restrictions for agribusiness, food manufacturing and commercial fishing workers

- Border Restrictions Direction (No. 17) came into effect as of 1am, Tuesday 3 November 2020. This direction replaces the Border Restrictions Direction (No. 16).
- Residents of New South Wales, except those in the 32 [Local Government Areas](#) which have been declared hotspot in greater Sydney, will be allowed to enter Queensland. However, Victoria will still be regarded as a hotspot.
- People who have been in a COVID-19 hotspot in the last 14 days will only be able to enter Queensland if they are a returning Queensland resident, a new Queensland resident or under an essential activities' exemption. More information [here](#).
- If an area of Australia is removed from the list of COVID-19 hotspots, a person may enter Queensland as soon as the area is no longer a COVID-19 hotspot, even if the person had been in the COVID-19 hotspot in the 14 days prior to their entry to Queensland.
- The class exemption for farmers and agribusiness workers that commenced on 22 August 2020 remains in place until 11.59 pm on 31 December 2020 unless otherwise advised.
- Transporters of freight and logistics—the validity of a Queensland Border Declaration Pass has been extended from 7 days to 14 days.

Labour shortages in agriculture initiatives

- Labour availability remains a key focus for DAF and we continue to address workforce shortages using a multipronged approach using local solutions through our Queensland Agriculture Workforce (QAWN) network; #pickqld to attract working holiday makers and displaced Queenslanders into agriculture; the Back to work in agriculture incentive scheme; and the trial of the Pacific Labour Scheme and Seasonal Worker Programme.
- At the economy-wide level, the Queensland labour market is recovering from the COVID disruption with employment up 1.3% in Queensland in September and official unemployment at 7.7%. For agribusinesses, this means that whilst more people are actively looking for work, there is increased competition for workers.

For the latest information on coronavirus (COVID-19), please visit:
covid19.qld.gov.au – for COVID-19 response information and advice
health.qld.gov.au – for health advice
business.qld.gov.au – for business and industry advice

- In relation to visa holders, supply continues to tighten. Working holiday maker numbers in Australia are down over 50% from March to October 2020 to 63,668 persons.
- As of the end of September, Queensland accounted for the largest proportion of Seasonal Worker Programme participants with over 2,300 people.
- DAF is continuing to monitor labour market factors to assist industry meet labour needs as we move through the summer harvest and into the winter 2021 harvest.

#pickqld campaign

- The #pickqld campaign is progressing well with steady growth in social media and search engine advertising performance—Google and Facebook are the primary source sites for the #pickqld website.
- The #pickqld website's 'jobs by season and location' section is undergoing further development. This content will soon be searchable, with the ability to show conditional results (e.g. show me the types of seasonal job opportunities available in the Burdekin in January).
- We are listening to industry feedback and reviewing updates to the #pickqld website which includes hostel and other accommodation options for seasonal workers.
- The campaign has achieved some positive outcomes, with displaced workers travelling to regional Queensland for seasonal work after seeing some of the campaign's advertising.
- The current #pickqld placement will continue until 31 December 2020, with a second burst of advertising activity planned for April - May 2021.

Back to work in agriculture incentive scheme

- A pilot incentive scheme to encourage Queenslanders to meet short-term labour shortage demands in agriculture. The pilot initially to be focused on the Wide Bay Burnett and Darling Downs.
- The scheme will provide incentives of up to \$1500 for eligible employees to assist with costs associated with travelling and staying in remote locations.
- Employees can work with more than one employer but must provide the necessary evidence from the employer to prove eligibility for the scheme.
- The scheme commenced on 2 October 2020.
- Guidelines and further information are available at daf.qld.gov.au/agbacktowork.

QAWN initiative – Local action

- Six QAWN officers are placed with industry bodies in key growing areas around Queensland.
- A seventh officer will be placed in the Central Highlands on an interim basis from November 2020 until June 2021, when the current agriculture workforce network finishes.
- Local initiatives are being developed by these officers and funding has been made available by DAF to enable their delivery in collaboration with industry groups and local governments.
- A key focus is to encourage, place and keep Queenslanders in agricultural work.

- Current initiatives/proposals include the development of localised marketing of jobs, development of internet landing pages and media campaigns, support for delivery of pre-employment training, and the development of transport solutions to enable locals to get to farms.
- To promote the work of the QAWN officers, DAF will look at improving its web presence and profile the officers on social media and in the monthly Ag News.

Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS) and Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP)

- The Queensland Chief Health Officer has approved the release of [guidelines](#) to manage the quarantine and other arrangements for PLS and SWP workers.
- Queensland is conducting a managed four-week recruitment trial, to monitor the effectiveness of the quarantine options.
- The PLS / SWP working group led by DAF has informed how the trial could best occur in Queensland. A sub-group led by the Approved Employers Association has prioritised and coordinated recruitments across the four flights.
- DAF is currently coordinating the assessment of applications and is liaising closely with state and federal agencies.
- A webinar was held on Wednesday 14 October 2020 from 11am-12.30pm to go through the PLS/SWP guidelines with industry groups and stakeholders. There were 93 attendees, which was a great turnout.
- Further information and the guidelines can be found [here](#).

Business continuity planning resources

- The BCP webinar series is available [here](#). You can download the resources and templates to support business continuity planning.

Disclaimer: While every care is taken to ensure the accuracy of this information, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) does not invite reliance upon it, nor accept responsibility for any loss or damage caused by actions based on it.

