

Dear Approved Employers

Message from the Department of Home Affairs regarding bridging visas

The Australian Government recognises the exceptional and unprecedented circumstances currently impacting employers and temporary visa holders in Australia.

The Australian Government is working on solutions for Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP) and Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS) participants, whose visas are expiring.

In the meantime, please advise workers whose visas are expiring and who cannot return home due to border closures to apply for a Bridging Visa E (Subclass (050)) online via ImmiAccount - <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/getting-a-visa/visa-listing/bridging-visa-e-050-051/subclass-050>.

Please note:

- this visa can only be applied for once the worker's current substantive visa has expired and should be made as soon as possible following the expiry of their current visa; and
- an 8503 waiver is not required to apply for this visa.

This bridging visa can include work rights.

If you have any questions or you would like to bring specific cases to the Department of Home Affairs attention please contact: specialist.entry@homeaffairs.gov.au.

IMPORTANT: To enable the Department of Education, Skills and Employment to keep across the workers who are being placed on the Bridging Visas, **please ensure you complete an incident report in SWP Online and use the incident type "Coronavirus (COVID-19) Bridging Visa"**, including the relevant Recruitment Plan number and the name(s) of the worker(s).

Advising Labour Sending Units of returning workers

In consideration of COVID-19, and to ensure the Pacific Island Countries and Timor-Leste can appropriately assist any returning worker to meet the country's isolation requirements, please **advise the relevant Labour Sending Unit** of the names and return details **before** they return to country at least 48 hours before they are due to fly would be appreciated.

Contract Management Teams

The Contract Management Team and Regional Contract Management Team are currently working both in the office and remotely. So that your queries are responded to quickly, it is important that you call the Seasonal Worker Information line on 02 6240 5234 or alternatively use messages in SWP Online. Both the Seasonal Worker Information line and SWP Online are monitored and your inquiry will be responded to as soon as possible. If you call your Contract Manager directly and they are working remotely, you risk your call not being answered, however, if you call the hotline your call will be answered and if your Contact Manager is working remotely they will be notified of your call and they will call you back as soon as possible.

COVID-19 - Food availability & Australian supermarkets

Currently Australia is experiencing high levels of demand for food in supermarkets across the country and this demand has impacted a number of common food staples such as rice, pasta, flour, tinned foods and hygiene items such as toilet paper and cleaning products.

To assist seasonal workers and alleviate any anxieties, the department asks Approved Employers to assist seasonal workers with their shopping. Where possible, aim to stagger workers' days off so they can access the shops at different times regularly each week. It would also be helpful to explain to workers that there is still food available in supermarkets, however, it may not be food that they are used to cooking and eating and that this is a situation occurring across Australia. Even though they may see empty shelves in supermarkets there is no need to be concerned as there is plenty of food for everyone.

For more information and to assist you with those conversations with seasonal workers, the AustralianFarmers, an online community powered by the National Farmers' Federation has released a campaign that may answer some common questions: Please see: [AustralianFarmers](#).

The Pacific Labour Facility - Information and support for you and your workers

The Pacific Labour Facility is producing regular updates and social media video messages to support workers and employers during this uncertain time. We encourage you and your workers to follow our [Facebook](#) page so you can stay up-to-date and share the information being posted. There is also a range of information resources available on our [website](#).

See below some information and a video that you can share with your workers.

Important messages for workers:

While there are cases of COVID-19 in Australia, there is a network here to support workers during this time. This includes employers, the Pacific labour mobility team, and an online network via Facebook. Remember:

- Your work contract in Australia includes health insurance.
- Australia has an established healthcare system with good medical facilities.
- To help protect your friends and community wash your hands, cover your mouth if you cough or sneeze, and avoid large gatherings.
- We encourage you to follow the labour mobility [Facebook](#) page to stay up to date and be part of our online community.
- We are a community and we are here to support you. This [video](#) provides some helpful tips.

For further information

If you have any questions, please contact your Contract Manager or alternatively, you may wish to email us: SeasonalWorker@dese.gov.au.

SWP Information Line (02) 6240 5234 Monday to Friday - 9am - 5pm (AEST) (excluding public holidays)	Critical Incidents and Emergencies 1800 515 131 Monday to Friday before 9am or after 5pm (AEST) (or any time on a weekend or public holiday)
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Kind regards

Seasonal Worker Programme Team

Australian Government | Department of Education, Skills and Employment

Phone: (02) 6240 5234 | email: SeasonalWorker@dese.gov.au