

Victorian guidelines for the entry of workers under the Seasonal Worker Programme and Pacific Labour Scheme

AGRICULTURE VICTORIA

INTRODUCTION

Approved Employers that are Victorian agribusinesses or supporting Victorian agribusinesses under the Australian Government's Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS) and Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP) can apply to the Australian Government for workers under the schemes.

These guidelines outline the process for workers recruited by Approved Employers under the Australian Government's PLS and SWP to enter Victoria via quarantine in Tasmania.

Victoria and Tasmania have agreed to quarantining an initial 1,500 workers from the Pacific Islands in Tasmanian Government designated accommodation in the first half of 2021. The number of PLS and SWP workers able to enter will be subject to Tasmania's quarantine capacity. Under the agreement, workers can only be recruited from Pacific countries that are assessed by the Australian Government Department of Health as medium or low risk of importation of COVID-19 to Australia.

Agriculture businesses that are not Approved Employers but wish to access workers can apply to the Australian Government to become an Approved Employer, or alternatively, they may consider approaching a labour hire company that is an Approved Employer.

QUARANTINE ON ARRIVAL

Restart recruitment proposals

Application and approval processes for the PLS and SWP are managed by the Australian Government. Employers must complete the Australian Government PLS/SWP restart application forms and submit it with COVIDSafe plans and the Victorian Application Form for the entry of workers under the PLS/SWP.

In Victoria, for applications through the PLS related to the meat processing sector, Approved Employers are asked to provide details about how labour shortages are impacting businesses.

For SWP recruitment, SWP Approved Employers must submit the completed application form via the messaging system in SWP Online. The message should be titled Restart Proposal Form and sent to SWP Restart Group.

For PLS Recruitments, PLS Approved Employers must submit the completed application form via email to recruitmentplans@pacificlabourfacility.com.au

Approved Employers are encouraged to work together to bring flights together with workers from the same country of origin to maximize the benefits of the available capacity. This can include workers for both Victorian or Tasmanian businesses.

Each individual Approved Employer needs to submit an application to either the Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE) or the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) for the respective schemes, and where multiple Approved Employers are working together to fill a flight the application should nominate the lead Approved Employer to assist with coordination. Separate applications should be submitted for Victorian and Tasmanian workers.

The Tasmanian Deputy State Controller reviews all applications to enter hotel quarantine in Tasmania.

Conditional approval is subject to review at any time, depending on the latest public health advice.

Quarantine arrangements in Tasmania

The quarantine program will be managed by the Tasmanian Government. Approved workers will transit directly to Hobart via an interstate airport, to complete 14 days in government-designated accommodation.

The workers will need to return a negative COVID-19 test on or after day 10 of their quarantine period in order to be released from quarantine and before entry into Victoria.

All workers returning a negative test are required to exit the accommodation at the end of their quarantine period.

Where there is capacity in the accommodation, workers may be accommodated in pairs. Approved Employers should consider that a pair will be confined in close quarters for an extended period and ensure both workers consent to the arrangement.

Flights

Approved Employers are responsible for arranging flights and have an obligation to work with Victorian and Tasmanian Governments to coordinate the flight schedule to meet operational requirements. It is recommended that Approved Employers work with travel agents who are experienced in coordinating flights from Pacific countries. Flights must include transit via an Australian mainland international airport to complete Australian Government border and customs processes before arriving in Hobart.

Following the quarantine period, Approved Employers need to arrange flights from Hobart to a Victorian airport.

Approved Employers are responsible for all costs associated with the flights.

Post quarantine arrangements

Once the quarantine period is complete, the Tasmanian Government will work with Approved Employers to arrange transport to Hobart airport.

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

Approved Employers must ensure that the workers have the appropriate permits under the Victorian Travel Permit System: <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/victorian-travel-permit-system>

Costs

Approved Employers are responsible for reimbursing a contribution to the quarantine costs to the Victorian Government. This contribution is a set fee of \$2,000 per worker.

It is acceptable for workers arriving under SWP and PLS visas to share hotel quarantine accommodation, up to a maximum of two people per room, but this does not reduce the quarantine fee per worker.

Approved Employers must arrange to meet the quarantine contribution fee, with this invoice to be paid in full within 30 days of the completion of the quarantine period.

Approved Employers are responsible for all costs in connection with further quarantine if any worker tests positive to COVID-19

DJPR is not liable for any costs incurred, by an Approved Employer or their prospective employees, in connection with or resulting from any revised quarantine requirements or other restrictions imposed by any government (State or Federal).

Approved Employers will be required to enter a formal contract with DJPR.

Approval is conditional and subject to review based on the latest health advice

The Tasmanian Deputy State Controller and the Victorian Chief Health Officer reserve the right to review and revoke approvals for any reason (in particular if there is a change in the epidemiological situation in the sending or receiving jurisdiction).

WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY

Approved Employers and host employers are required to complete a COVIDSafe Plan:

<https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/covidsafe-plan>

There are Seasonal Horticulture Guidelines to support businesses that engage seasonal workforce:

<https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-sector-guidance-agriculture-forestry-and-fishing>

The COVIDSafe Plan should be submitted along with the Recruitment Proposal for Approved Employers to the Australian Government.

Authorised officers under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* and WorkSafe may undertake site inspections to ensure employers are operating with a COVIDSafe Plan and are complying with COVIDSafe practices.

These guidelines may be revised at DJPR's absolute discretion, and any such changes may impose additional requirements on Approved Employers.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information about the Australian Government's schemes, visit:

- Pacific Labour Scheme: <https://pacificlabourmobility.com.au/>
- Seasonal Worker Program: <https://www.employment.gov.au/seasonal-worker-programme>

For more information about the Victorian arrangements for the SWP and PLS, visit:

- <https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/crops-and-horticulture/the-big-victorian-harvest/finding-workers-for-your-business>

For more information about Tasmanian quarantine, visit:

- www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au

Privacy

Any personal information provided to DJPR about you or a third party in your application will be collected by DJPR for the purpose of administration. This information may be provided to other government agencies for the purposes of assessing your application. If applicants intend to include personal information about third parties in the application, please ensure that the third parties are aware of the contents of this privacy statement.

Any personal information included in your application will be collected, held, managed, used, disclosed or transferred in accordance with the provisions of the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* and other applicable laws. The Department is committed to

protecting the privacy of personal information. The Department's privacy policy is available by emailing the Department's Privacy Team at privacy@ecodev.vic.gov.au .

Disclaimer

This publication may be of assistance to you but the State of Victoria and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.