



**Wide Bay Public Health Unit
Wide Bay Hospital & Health Service**

4 April 2020

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: Farm, Caravan Park, Hostel & Backpacker Accommodation Infection Control Awareness and Planning for Coronavirus (COVID-19)

In partnership with North Burnett Regional Council, officers from the Wide Bay Public Health Unit will be undertaking site visits to key accommodation premises including “on farm” accommodation next week commencing Tuesday 7 April 2020. You are receiving this letter, as your farm/premises may be visited as part of this program. The COVID 19 situation is evolving rapidly and as we move forward it is imperative that we are prepared.

The primary purpose of these visits is to increase your awareness with regard to COVID 19 modes of transmission and provide practical advice to you on how you can mitigate risk to yourself, your staff and ultimately your business. We believe that this is an important initiative given the elevated risks of COVID 19 for people working and living in close proximity.

Please note that the site visits are for infection control risk mitigation purposes only and not for any regulatory compliance activity. During these visits Environmental Health Officers will assess risks associated with accommodation, ablutions (shower/toilets), kitchen facilities, communal areas and sanitation generally as well as provide advice and education on how to mitigate risk.

Its appreciated that all sites are different and therefore each site will be assessed on a site by site basis underpinned by key principles of infection control and risk mitigation. However, the most practical advice for preventing the spread of a virus is:

- To practice and advocate regular hand washing (ensure adequate supplies are available; erect hygiene posters);
- Cough and sneeze etiquette (sneeze or cough into a tissue or your elbow);
- Use and have ample hand sanitiser in convenient locations;
- Avoid contact with others if unwell (staff to stay home);
- Have a cleaning/sanitising plan in place (i.e. all door handles and contact services sanitised every hour);
- Measures in place to screen new arrivals for COVID-19 risk factors (e.g. recently arrived in the North Burnett area, a close contact of confirmed case or showing relevant symptoms);
- Plan in place to isolate persons who may become unwell;

- Re-assess your occupancy levels (to enable safe social distancing).

Response/Management Plan

Now is the time to ensure you have an appropriate response/management plan in place. Your plan will need to consider a range of issues, including but not limited to the following:

- *Do you have adequate hand washing facilities including running water, soap, paper towel and hand sanitiser available for staff and guests?*
- *Is there adequate cleaning and disinfection schedules in place.*
- *What are your first steps if infection is suspected when a guest or staff member presents with symptoms (fever, a cough, sore throat, tiredness or shortness of breath)?*
- *Does your facility have the ability to isolate guests in a separate area with designated bathroom facilities (do you have the ability to manage guests who have been directed to go into self-isolation?)*
- *Do you need to reassess your occupancy level at this time to ensure social distancing?*

Your implementation of infection control awareness and preparation is an important action. Relevant factsheets and posters will be provided during the site visits. Further copies can be obtained from the Australian Government and Queensland Health websites.

Please be aware that advice and information is continually updated. The most current information is found on the Australian Government website:

<https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert>

<https://www.health.qld.gov.au/clinical-practice/guidelines-procedures/diseases-infection/diseases/coronavirus>

https://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0021/2475120/handwashing-12-step-guide.pdf

Seasonal workers, backpackers and the hostels that house them are crucial to economic and social future of our area and we must ensure that the critical services you provide continue. So, in planning around this issue, please consider, what would be the implications for your business if there was a COVID-19 outbreak within your facility. With your help and vigilance, we can mitigate the risk of this occurring.

I appreciate this is a very difficult time and I commend your efforts in helping to build a resilient, safe and caring community. If you wish to discuss this letter, please do not hesitate to contact the Wide Bay Public Health Unit on 07 4303 7500 or email EH_Widebay@health.qld.gov.au. For specific health advice regarding COVID-19, I recommend you contact Queensland Health on 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84).

Yours sincerely



Wayne Ingall
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Wide Bay Public Health Unit