



Frequently Asked Questions for workplace HSRs

Queensland  Council of Unions

COVID-19
FACT SHEET

FAQs for Health & Safety Reps

Frequently Asked Questions

The following information has been provided for Health & Safety Reps to help you respond to questions from your work group and workplaces. It has been sourced from various Queensland Government advices.

As the situation is rapidly changing we encourage you to stay up to date with official information provided on government websites such as:

- [Workplace Health and Safety Queensland](#)
- [Queensland Government](#)

BORDER CLOSURES

- **What will happen with the Qld border closure for Fly In Fly Out (FIFO) workers?**

Queensland residents can always return home. An assessment of whether a person needs to be quarantined may be required if they are returning home from a high transmission area into Qld.

[More on the latest information on Queensland border restrictions.](#)

- **I'm working in northern NSW Monday to Friday but returning home of a weekend. Will I be allowed to return over the border and under what conditions?**

If the town/area you are working in became a high transmission area for the virus and you are travelling into a low transmission area, then quarantine would apply.

The biggest concern is the community spread transferring to Qld e.g. with southern state's school holidays starting and that creating difficulties for the Qld health system. For example, people holidaying in the Whitsundays and an outbreak occurs as a result and where the hospitals may not be as well-equipped or have the necessary capacity.

Border restrictions provide for the continuation of essential goods and services for Queensland.

Any person who arrives in Queensland (via air, sea, rail or road) from another State or Territory from 26 March 2020 must self-quarantine for 14 days, unless they are an exempt person. Even if a person is an exempt person, they must self-quarantine if they have travelled in the last 14 days to particular areas of Australia, which

Information on:

- Border Closures
- Social Distancing
- Supply of face masks & PPE
- Closure of schools
- Older and At Risk Workers
- Possible Treatments



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For further information, contact the QCU via:

Email: info@qcu.asn.au

Phone: (07) 3010 2555

Post: 5/16 Peel Street, South Brisbane Qld 4101

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will be decided by the Chief Health Officer.

The requirement to self-quarantine if a person has been to a hot-spot also applies to Queensland residents returning to Queensland. If you are a Queensland resident returning from any other place in Australia that is not declared a COVID-19 hotspot they will not have to enter self-quarantine.

Exempt persons include those living outside Queensland who provide critical services to Queensland including:

- National and state security
- Essential health services
- Emergency services
- Transport of goods or freight including food
- Critical maintenance/repair to critical infrastructure in Queensland
- Construction, mining, energy, agribusinesses
- Federal, state and local government workers who are required to enter Queensland to perform official duties.

Employees performing critical services can apply for an entry pass.

There are also general compassionate grounds for exemption and exemption for border communities. [Please refer to full details on the Qld Government website on Queensland border restrictions.](#)

SOCIAL DISTANCING

• What is social distancing and how long will it apply for?

Social distancing means that people should remain at least 1.5 metres apart from others. Within an internal workplace, measures should also be in place that restrict the number of people to a maximum of two people per every 4 square metres.

It is expected that social distancing will be in effect for 6 months.

• What happens when a workplace cannot physically offer the required space to ensure social distancing at work?

Workplaces that continue to remain open should use their best endeavours to apply social distancing measures i.e. the 1.5 metre and 4 square metre rule should apply for any indoor workplace or space. There should only be 2 people in a 4 square metre space.

Where there are physical restrictions that mean this rule cannot be applied in a workplace, HSRs should work with management to adopt control measures applying the hierarchy of controls.

For example:

- if workers are unable to be appropriately isolated from each other, restrict the numbers of workers able to be present at any one time in a specific workplace area

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- introduce alternating shifts of people working from home with those in the work area (week on week off)
- redesign the way work is undertaken so the physical restrictions no longer apply

SUPPLY OF FACE MASKS AND PPE

- **What is deemed as an 'essential' workplace and is priority given to specific essential workplaces for the provision of PPE such as face masks?**

National decisions are being made on what constitutes an essential service and further information will continue to be forthcoming. However, current advice is that surgical masks should only be available for a person if they are sick. Well people do not need a mask but need to maintain the 1.5 metre and 4 square metre rule. If people are sick they are expected to stay out of the workplace in their own home.

- **Will there be more hand sanitiser available to support workplaces?**

The Commonwealth, state and territory governments have been in discussions to improve the current supply chain and find alternate sources of production. However, soap and water is considered the best and safest option. Sanitiser is second best when soap and water no available.

CLOSURE OF SCHOOLS

- **What is the situation with Queensland schools?**

The Queensland Government has just announced that an additional five (5) Student Free Days will be in place next week, from Monday 30 March to Friday 3 April inclusive for all Queensland schools. This means that while schools will remain open, the Term 1 break will start early for students and they will not attend school next week, unless they are children of essential workers or vulnerable children.

Essential workers are those that must currently continue to attend their workplace during this difficult time. This includes early childhood and school staff. Schools are asked to provide supervision for children of these workers if they attend your school next week.

The Student Free Days have been provided to allow schools opportunities to plan for continuity of student learning in the event that the education sector needs to move to flexible and remote learning at the commencement of Term 2.

School staff will be expected to be in attendance at their normal school location next week, unless they fit the category of vulnera-

Useful Organisations



Queensland Health & Safety Reps Support Service

Contact Service Coordinator
Damien McGarry on:
(07) 3010 2555
info@hsrsupport.org.au
www.hsrsupport.org.au



Workers Psychological Support Service

Contact the WPSS by calling
1800 370 732 between 9AM to
5PM, Monday to Friday or by
email info@wpss.org.au
www.wpss.org.au



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ble staff and have discussed this with your Principal or supervisor. Vulnerable staff who are well but not attending their school are required to undertake their planning and preparation work from home.

In some indigenous communities different arrangements may be in place next week and regional staff will support school communities where this is the case.

State schools will be formally closed for the Term 1 break from the end of Friday, 3 April. Staff will return to work on Monday 20 April unless health advice determines otherwise.

OLDER AND AT RISK WORKERS:

- **Given the risks for older workers should they remain in the workplace?**

In general, higher risk workers should not be in public workplaces such as schools. It is expected that workers aged under 60 years will contract the virus but 80% will have a very mild case (although they will still be a risk of spreading it). Workers over the age of 60 who have a chronic health factor should take steps to minimise the risk such as working from home.

TREATMENT

- **What's happening with a vaccine?**

The University of Queensland is currently working on a candidate vaccine and the best case timeline is development for a trial in 12 months. It is currently being tested on animals and will then be trialled on humans to test its effectiveness at prevention.

There are also trials underway of antiviral agents but no successes yet. The key to slowing or reducing the spread is therefore social distancing measures but this will mean the pandemic will take a long period to pass – 6 months.



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