

## Northern Border Update: Changes to cross border travel + Ag exemption

### Border Region Residents

[Border Restriction Direction 37](https://www.health.qld.gov.au/system-governance/legislation/cho-public-health-directions-under-expanded-public-health-act-powers/border-restrictions) was issued overnight, and is available on the Qld Health website at <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/system-governance/legislation/cho-public-health-directions-under-expanded-public-health-act-powers/border-restrictions>

Under this direction movement between NSW and Qld is substantially curtailed, and a border zone resident who has not in the preceding 14 days been in a COVID-19 hotspot outside of the border zone may enter and remain in Qld for the following essential purposes:

- to obtain food or other essential goods or services for the personal needs of the household or other household purposes, which cannot reasonably be obtained within New South Wales; or
- to obtain medical care or supplies or other health care services which cannot reasonably be obtained within New South Wales; or
- to obtain a scheduled COVID-19 vaccination which cannot reasonably be obtained within New South Wales; or
- to perform essential work that cannot be done from home, or to provide emergency volunteering; or
- for children of essential workers or vulnerable children, and an adult that may transport the child, to attend face to face schooling or to attend a childcare facility, or
- to provide assistance, care or support to a family member or to fulfil other caring responsibilities; or
- to fulfil an obligation relating to shared parenting or child contact; or
- for children under 18 years who do not live in the same household as their biological parents or siblings or one of their parents or siblings, continuing existing arrangements for access to, and contact between, parents and children and siblings; or
- in the event of an emergency situation

Essential workers are defined as:

- a medical practitioner or other prescribed health practitioner; or
- a pathology collection worker, including a pathology courier; or
- an aged care or disability worker, where considered essential to maintain continuity of care for aged care recipients or people with disability; or
- by an emergency health services or emergency services worker; or
- national defence, state security or police worker; or
- a freight or logistics operator; or
- an emergency infrastructure worker; or
- air crew or maritime crew; or
- by an emergency volunteer; or
- by a disaster management worker; or
- by a critical infrastructure worker; or
- by a tradesperson or construction worker for essential or emergency construction or essential or emergency repairs only; or
- a person endorsed by the chief executive of a Queensland Government agency as an essential worker

Please note:

- Workers covered by the above definition of essential work do not need to be endorsed under the new exemption process for 'other essential workers'
- the Border Restrictions Direction amends the definition of 'essential work' to clarify that essential work is only what is performed by the specific types of workers listed in that definition – the list of workers in the Direction is exhaustive
- two categories have been inserted into the definition of 'essential work' for the purposes of movement between the border zone:
  - a pathology collection worker, including a pathology courier
  - an aged care or disability worker, where considered essential to maintain continuity of care for aged care recipients or people with disability
- medical practitioners or and other prescribed health practitioner remain within the definition of essential work, and include a person registered to provide the following services:
  - dental (including the profession of a dentist, dental therapist, dental hygienist, dental prosthetist and oral health therapist);
  - medical;
  - medical radiation practice;
  - midwifery;
  - nursing;
  - occupational therapy;
  - optometry;
  - paramedicine;
  - pharmacy;
  - physiotherapy;
  - podiatry;
  - psychology;
  - services as a registered NDIS provider under an agreed NDIS plan.

### **Exemptions**

- There are exemptions available for essential workers to come from NSW to Queensland but who are not listed in the Direction, though approval will only be granted if it can be proved that the need to cross the border is for critical reasons ie that the work to be undertaken is so essential that without that worker, the facility or industry may be unable to continue, and that there is no one else in Queensland or NSW who can undertake the function or role.
- The decision on exemption will always consider whether the work can be performed remotely, or whether the critical worker can instruct someone on the ground from a remote location.
- Applications for exemption will need to be made through the existing Queensland Health exemption portal, with new arrangements uploaded at 1am this morning. The portal is available at:
  - DIRECT: <https://healthserviceportal.health.qld.gov.au/hdsp>
  - Or VIA: <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19/current-status/public-health-directions/exemptions>
- FAQs will be available in coming days for industry, including guidance on the criteria Qld authorities will be using to decide on applications for exemption.

- Qld authorities will aim to provide a response to the applicant within 72 hours, however, applicants may experience delays of up to five days for processing due to anticipated high demand.

### **Essential worker vaccine requirements**

- Essential workers will only be allowed to cross the border for work if they have had their first dose of a WHO-COVAX approved vaccine.
- They must carry proof of vaccination. This can be the MyGov records accessible by an app on your phone, or the card you are issued at the vaccination centre.
- If people haven't received their first vaccine they will be turned around at the border.
- This applies to Queenslanders travelling into the New South Wales border zone to undertake essential work, as well as New South Wales border zone residents who are travelling to Queensland for essential work.
- The vaccine requirements do not apply to freight and logistics operators operating under the agreed freight protocols.

### **Agricultural Workers**

A revised Agricultural Workers Class Exemption was also issued overnight, and is attached for your information. This new class exemption replaces the previous class exemption which expired last night and will continue to 30 November 2021, unless amended or revoked. There are limitations to who can use the class exemption and additional restrictions have been applied by Qld Health to minimise risk of COVID-19 transmission under the increased threat of the Delta variant. The class exemption only applies to certain workers residing in the NSW / Qld border zone, and people from outside this zone in NSW will need to abide by additional restrictions vide Border Direction 37, and may apply for entry using the exemption processes above.

The class exemption:

- is restricted to farmers and agribusiness workers residing in Queensland and the New South Wales border zone
- includes a schedule of specific types of workers of farmers and agribusiness workers to which the exemption applies:
  - farmers with contiguous farms dissected by the Queensland–NSW border
  - farmers with one or more active farm production sites
  - specialist farm machinery operators for time-critical agricultural operations such as planting, fertilising, spraying and harvesting.
  - specialist agronomists providing time-critical crop production advice
  - specialist technicians, including maintenance and repair, for agriculture activities such as agricultural production storage
  - specialist veterinarians and critical support technicians to prevent significant adverse animal welfare outcomes only where an animal cannot practicably be transported for treatment.
- requires evidence of a negative test in the last 7 days and continued 7-day testing cycle; and evidence of at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccination having been administered
- requires compliance with stay-at-home quarantine rules for 14 days, and you can only leave your private residence for a select number of reasons including: performing essential farming or agribusiness work where the work is of a nature that cannot reasonably be performed from the person's place of residence; to obtain food or other

goods; to exercise outdoors; to obtain a COVID-19 test or vaccination. In addition, anyone subject to the stay-at-home requirements may have up to 2 visitors per day to their home.

The class exemption does not cover someone who has been to an interstate exposure venue or is a close contact of someone who has, anyone with a confirmed COVID-19 case or has COVID19 symptoms or has travelled outside of the border zone in a COVID-19 hotspot, unless 14 days have passed.

Businesses and farms must put into place a quarantine management plan, keep records of any close contacts and workers must only travel directly to and from farm and/or place of residence. If you require further information, please contact DAF by email: [info@daf.qld.gov.au](mailto:info@daf.qld.gov.au) or call 13 25 23.

### **Freight**

Arrangements for freight workers remain unchanged, and freight and logistics operators moving between Queensland and the NSW border zone in the course of their duties must comply with surveillance testing requirements in the agreed freight movement protocol, and the relevant protocols in the relevant state (for Qld this includes having a current Qld F Pass for entry, but does not require COVAX). Those freight and logistic operators who are residents of the border region and who are looking to cross the border under the ag workers exemption (Z Pass) or as essential workers (X Pass) must comply with the conditions of those passes, including carrying evidence of having received at least one COVAX.

Dedicated freight COVID-19 testing sites have opened at the BP Service Station at Ballina and Caltex service station in Goondiwindi and are open 24 hours per day, seven days per week. The testing sites will support regional freight drivers in meeting their mandatory testing requirements under the relevant protocols.

Key links of interest are likely to be

- Information on cross border travel plus detailed Q&A  
<https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19/current-status/public-health-directions/travelling-to-queensland> People should contact the Queensland Covid hotline 13 42 68 for further information
- Information on the Ag class exemption  
<https://www.business.qld.gov.au/industries/farms-fishing-forestry/agriculture/coronavirus-support/border-restrictions-agriculture> If you require further information on this please contact If you require further information, please contact DAF by email: [info@daf.qld.gov.au](mailto:info@daf.qld.gov.au) or call 13 25 23.
- Information on accessing exemptions is here  
<https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19/current-status/public-health-directions/exemptions>