

Engaging with remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities: *Preparing for summer 2020-21 checklist*

This checklist aims to assist mine sites and companies to update COVID-19 Management Plans to reflect circumstances that often arise during summer, including staff holiday leave and increased community and tourist travel. It also highlights factors associated with the COVID-19 pandemic such as changing border and area restrictions.

The MCA and Queensland Resources Council have jointly prepared this checklist for member use. It is intended to provide prompts and guidance only, and is neither exhaustive nor mandatory.

The term 'site' is used to describe exploration, development and mining sites as well as companies generally.

Context

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander COVID-19 Advisory Group developed a [comprehensive national plan](#) to support public health actions and responses during the COVID-19 pandemic. The national plan reinforces the importance of locally-led and culturally-safe arrangements.

The plan identifies specific considerations in a COVID-19 context, including highly mobile populations, higher visitor flow (including FIFO/DIDO) and existing higher chronic disease burden and health and socio-economic inequalities.

Factors arising during the summer months (including the holiday season) may require special consideration in site and company COVID-19 Management Plans. Factors include:

- increased community travel as individuals and families visit family for seasonal holidays
- increased domestic tourism may mean more visitors to remote and regional areas
- key staff (site and company as well as health, government and community personnel) may take leave
- the wet season limiting access to communities, affecting the flow of goods and services. Industry often supports delivery of goods and services to communities, however health and hygiene protocols mean some arrangements have changed.

Early preparation, informed by community engagement, will support ongoing vigilance.

Prompt questions

Understanding the changing environment and risk factors

- When was the COVID-19 site risk assessment and management plan last updated?
- How do the risk assessment and management plan reflect the following?
 - Risks to communities from operational activities, particularly remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
 - Risks to operations (including personnel) from community activities (the factors above may provide prompts

- What input is required for an update?

This could include input from all or some of the following areas in your company: health and safety, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement, social performance and community relations, operations, human resources and site maintenance (especially those that may undertake off-site maintenance) teams.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and contractors, especially those living in remote communities, can provide valuable input about factors that may require special consideration.

- What external individuals, groups and organisations could help understand changing risks?

This could include:

- Traditional Owner and Indigenous organisations
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land councils, health providers and community organisations
 - Government agencies
 - Emergency services agencies
 - Disaster/pandemic/management committee/groups
- What health, community, social, operational and environmental factors are arising or may arise over summer which change the risk profile informing the site COVID-19 Management Plan? These could include:
 - Increased community travel for seasonal holidays
 - Increased domestic tourism
 - Key staff on leave, including those involved in community engagement and health planning
 - Changed arrangements for delivery of essential goods and services to communities
 - Wet weather impacts on road and flight access.
 - What health, hygiene and other measures should be changed or introduced?

Continuity during staff leave

- What arrangements are in place to ensure site staff can be easily and quickly contacted by company and external stakeholders if required?
- How have emergency response and COVID-19 plans been updated to reflect staff leave?
- Are contact details for Aboriginal health, community organisation, government and other partners current? Will contact details change if their key staff take leave?
- How will changing risks and public health measures, including remote and regional travel restrictions, be monitored, particularly if usual staff are on leave?
- With key staff on leave are appropriate arrangements in place for the care, supervision and instruction of Aboriginal cadets, trainees, apprentices and graduates?

- Are support mechanisms required to assist with cross border applications (as relevant) and protocols for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders living/working in cross border communities?

Increased visitation

- Are security, surveillance and appropriate controls in place to prevent unauthorised tampering/interference of remote, isolated or unmanned assets?

Issues escalation

- How will critical issues be escalated while key staff may be on leave?
- What arrangements are in place to support timely, relevant and tailored communications as needed?

Supporting community pandemic responses

- How will the site's ability to provide community support change over summer?
- What new support may communities need over this period?
- How has the site engaged with Traditional Owners, communities, organisations and government agencies regarding possible changes?

MCA Communities resources

Starting in March 2020, the MCA – in consultation with Aboriginal health experts and state chambers – developed [tailored resources](#) to assist companies to minimise transmission risks while maintaining essential services and safe operations.

The Resources Sector National COVID-19 Response Protocols are central to these resources. The protocols include specific obligations to support community-led responses to keep Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations and communities safe from COVID-19.

Other resources include:

- A guide to assist mine sites and companies to implement the protocols in different social contexts
- A health response framework and flowchart to help companies to support community responses across the four pandemic phases identified in the COVID-19 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Populations Plan
- A framework to assist mine sites and companies to transition for easing of remote area travel restrictions
- A Communities Checklist to inform broader regional engagement.



RESOURCE INDUSTRY

COVID-19



Useful links

- [National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation COVID-19 information](#)
- [Department of Health COVID-19 advice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and remote communities](#)
- [Minerals Council of Australia COVID-19 – Communities resources](#)
- [Queensland Resources Council Indigenous Communities website](#)