



Supporting remote communities during COVID-19

Update 8 – 25 August 2020

Context

The MCA is pleased to share its eighth stakeholder bulletin outlining recent minerals industry actions to support remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community plans to stay safe from COVID-19.

This bulletin provides an update on arrangements for workers, including certain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers, who may be particularly vulnerable to severe illness from COVID-19.¹ Industry moved quickly at the pandemic's outset to establish working from home and special leave arrangements for vulnerable workers.

Supporting the safe return of vulnerable workers to workplaces

The minerals industry values the incredible contributions of its highly skilled workforce. Work is also often an important part of a person's identity, community and daily life. For these reasons, some companies are pleased to be welcoming back to site and workplaces vulnerable workers where local public health conditions and measures allow.

The MCA understands that:

- Many vulnerable workers in Queensland, the Northern Territory, Western Australia and South Australia are progressively returning to workplaces, subject to local public health measures and strict health and hygiene arrangements. Arrangements are made on a case-by-case basis
- Local measures, including by local land councils, are informing arrangements for workers from remote communities. For example, some workers from remote Northern Territory communities are yet to return to on-site work due to local measures.
- Victorian mines are complying with strict restrictions in place to address the state's current COVID-19 outbreak. This means only essential staff at the workplace with specific working from home or leave arrangements for vulnerable workers.
- Site COVID-19 management plans remain in place. These include strict health and hygiene protocols such as temperature testing, fitness for work requirements, physical distancing arrangements and new work procedures.
- Existing procedures mean that companies, together with vulnerable workers, are able to move quickly if local health conditions change.

¹ Department of Health, [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) advice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and remote communities, Department of Health](#), viewed 18 August 2020.



Staying connected during the COVID-19 pandemic

Staying connected helps maintain strong relationships.

During the pandemic, industry has worked to stay connected with Traditional Owners, Indigenous organisations and other community partners via video and teleconferencing, phone calls, emails and social media, where appropriate.

In accordance with the easing of local public health measures in some locations, in-person engagement has recommenced in some regional and urban areas. Where local pandemic management plans and conditions allow, in-person engagement has also recommenced in some remote areas.

The MCA strongly encourages companies to engage with local councils, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health organisations and Traditional Owner groups prior to travel to remote areas.

Companies have reported the following health measures for in-person engagement:

- Physical distancing with a preference for outdoor meetings where possible
- Compliance with recommended indoor limits
- Use of personal protection equipment such as masks and strict hygiene measures
- Fit-for-work requirements for all personnel, including those involved in engagement activities.

The MCA is encouraging members to share examples of engagement, subject to the informed permission of community members and staff.

Recent contributions

Recent [company contributions](#) to local pandemic responses and other host community initiatives include:

- [Newmont](#) has added to its contributions by providing \$25,000 to the WA Women's Council for Family and Domestic Violence, \$25,000 South West Aboriginal Medical Services and \$22,000 to the Warnayaka Art and Cultural Aboriginal Corporation
- New deliveries are being made to north west Queensland schools and students through Glencore's [sponsorship](#) of the Books in Homes program. By 2023, more than 206,000 books will have been provided to students and schools with Glencore's support since 2007
- Rio Tinto and the Old Mapoon Aboriginal Corporation have [pledged \\$1.15 million](#) to the Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service. This will improve health services across Cape York.