



Risk Management Plan for Australian Government Agencies for Government worker travel to remote communities

Purpose

This plan has been developed to ensure there are clear and consistent protocols in place to guide decision making within Australian Government Agencies¹ (also referred to as “agency/ies”) prior to approval of Government worker² (also referred to as “worker/s”) travel into remote communities, particularly those with high proportions of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander populations.

First Nations peoples are at a higher risk from severe disease during a pandemic and, in discrete communities, more rapid spread of disease.

This plan provides a risk management approach, and encourages each Australian Government Agency to:

1. apply the following decision process to determine if travel is essential, and
2. agree each worker of the agency will apply the plan in entering a remote community for the purposes of undertaking essential work on behalf of the agency.

As per the Australian Public Service Commission's *Information for workers from Australian Government Agencies, services and programs visiting remote communities*, Australian Government Agencies with essential activities wishing to support Government worker travel to remote communities are encouraged to complete and approve at a reasonable delegate level, their own Risk Management Plan based on this example drafted by the Department of Health and Aged Care in consultation with its Human Biosecurity Officers.

It is up to each agency to decide if it wants to use the Risk Management Plan and to adapt the templates to its own circumstances. The Department of Health and Aged Care can provide assistance with completing this and facilitating advice on request at Indigenous.Ops@health.gov.au. This Risk Management Plan encourages agencies to consider a number of requirements and considerations and also provides a template for individuals to enter their plan for each trip into a remote community. Individuals are encouraged to have reasonable delegate support to demonstrate commitment to adhering to the Risk Management Plan at the agency level.

Remote communities

Remote communities include, but are not limited to, those listed on the [National Indigenous Australians Agency Website](#). Remote communities may also include

¹ This includes all Commonwealth entities and companies subject to the PGPA Act.

² A Government worker is one who is employed by an Australian Government Agency as outlined in (1) above.

those in remote and very remote areas of Australia as per the [Australian Statistical Geography Standard \(ASGS\) Remoteness Structure](#).

The plan may be used to manage risk in communities outside remote/very remote areas as agencies consider appropriate. The plan may not be appropriate for larger regional hub towns in remote areas such as Broome and Katherine. As such, agencies have the responsibility and flexibility to apply this plan as appropriate.

Essential activity

Travel under this plan must only occur if:

1. it is permitted under existing Commonwealth, state or local travel restrictions;
2. on site engagement is necessary to provide the essential activity (an activity should be delivered remotely if possible to achieve the objective of the activity); and
3. the proposed activity is an essential activity that cannot be delayed.

Further information on understanding reasoning for travel is provided <https://www.apsc.gov.au/information-workers-australian-government-agencies-services-and-programs-visiting-remote-communities>.

Essential activities are defined as providing or monitoring delivery of any of the following for the benefit of one or more persons in the area:

- health care, public health, health promotion and health care programs and initiatives, including mental health;
- education and education support;
- services relating to prevention of, or recovery from, family or domestic violence or community unrest;
- services relating to child protection and youth diversionary services;
- policing services;
- emergency services;
- essential services of a kind typically provided by local government, such as rubbish collection;
- services, benefits, programs or facilities that the Chief Executive Centrelink has the function of providing;
- the Community Development Programme (CDP) - the Australian Government's remote employment and community development service;
- services to support economic development and recovery;
- providing correctional services in relation to one or more persons in the area;
- providing funeral services in the area;
- conducting, or taking part in, a sitting of a court or tribunal in the area;
- operating, maintaining, repairing or replacing equipment for providing electricity, gas, water, medical services, telecommunications services or broadcasting services; or other essential infrastructure in the area;
- delivery, distribution and regulatory oversight of food, fuel, mail or medical supplies in the area;
- obtaining medical care or medical supplies in the area;

- delivering a service or conducting a community meeting/forum, consultation, information or planning activity at the written invitation of a community organisation or governance group.
 - Community meetings include Council meetings, Traditional Owner meetings, meetings with community organisations and groups;
- government infrastructure projects, roadworks and road maintenance activities;
- transporting freight to or from a place in the area;
- member of the Australian Defence Force and entering in the course of duty; or
- an exception with permission to enter granted by an authorised Decision Maker.

For Individual Government Worker Travel

Individuals are encouraged to complete a Risk Management Plan with their employer per Attachment A.

Conditions of Risk Management Plan

For the purposes of this plan, the workers of the agency [*name of agency*] entering a remote community, are encouraged to:

- review the relevant jurisdictional workforce vaccination requirement;
- be up to date with their COVID-19 vaccination;
- receive a negative COVID-19 test (through a PCR or Rapid Antigen Test (RAT)) prior to travel or entering remote communities;
- minimise the time spent in the remote community and leave as soon as possible;
- obtain or demonstrate a current influenza vaccination as a condition of travel;
- practice good hygiene, maintain physical distancing and contact-minimisation activities having regard to the worker's circumstances and reason for entering the community;
- consult with leaders of the remote community prior to the proposed visit (including involving First Nations interpreters if required), including about the actions and requirements to protect the community against the potential for transmitting COVID-19, and only proceed with the trip if prior approval is obtained. The National Indigenous Australians Agency's Regional Network can facilitate this process. Your nearest NIAA Regional Office is available on 1800 079 098;
- carry a copy of this plan throughout the course of travel or stay within the community;
- continue to abide by the applicable directions relevant to the jurisdiction;
- carry a surgical mask, in case use of a mask is required when physical distancing cannot be maintained;
- self-monitor for any symptoms, and if the worker becomes unwell, the worker will wear their surgical mask, immediately isolate and call the local medical service for advice (further details available from [How to monitor COVID-19 symptoms | healthdirect](#));
- provide adequate supplies (e.g. own food and other personal needs) for the duration of your stay, including any required accommodation; and

- perform their duties and leave as soon as the worker has finished their duties, minimising contact with families in the homes or buildings that the worker is undertaking work and follow the advice of medical professionals.

Agreement of the relevant or reasonable delegate

I,, am authorised to enter into this agreement on behalf of [*name of agency*].

I agree to ensure the employees of this agency approving and undertaking travel in remote areas comply with this Risk Management Plan.

Declared at: (place) on

..... (day) of (month), 2022.

Signed.....

Attachment A – Risk Management Plan for individual workers of Australian Government Agencies travelling to remote communities

Purpose

This individual plan has been developed to complement the *Risk Management Plan for Australian Government Agencies for Government worker travel to remote communities*.

This plan provides a risk management approach, which encourages each Australian Government worker to:

1. apply the following decision process to determine individual risk prior to travel;
2. agree the plan to be supported by the relevant delegate; and
3. agree the worker will apply the plan in entering a remote community.

Essential activity

Travel under this plan must only occur if:

1. it is permitted under existing Commonwealth, state or local travel restrictions; and
2. on site engagement is necessary to provide the essential activity
(an activity should be delivered remotely if possible to achieve the objective of the activity); and
3. the proposed activity is an essential activity that cannot be delayed.

Additional information of essential activity

Please provide additional information about the essential activity being undertaken within the remote community (this should include date(s), duration, employer):

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Prior to entry

I,, will not enter the remote community unless I meet the below conditions:

- I do not have any of the signs or symptoms of COVID-19 or other respiratory symptoms such as fever over 37.5 degrees Celsius, history of fever (such as night sweats or chills) OR respiratory infection (cough, shortness of breath or sore throat) OR loss of smell or loss of taste;
- obtain or demonstrate a current influenza vaccination as a condition of travel;
- I am not entering the community wholly or partly to engage in an activity that is prohibited or illegal;
- entry is not prohibited under any other law; and
- will minimise unnecessary interactions and promote COVIDSafe practices.

List additional requirements prior to entering the remote community.

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I agree to be screened at the entrance to the remote community or facility where I am visiting if it is required by the community and will not enter if I present with:

- a history of fever (including symptoms of a fever such as night sweats or chills);
- symptoms of acute respiratory illness (including shortness of breath, a cough, sore throat and/or fatigue);
- a fever of 37.5 degrees or above³; or
- am experiencing loss of taste or loss of smell.

³ Note this is recommended as a secondary consideration as people with COVID-19 may still have a normal temperature and many other conditions & medications can cause a higher or lower temperature than normal.

Conditions of Risk Management Plan

For the purposes of this plan, I, as an essential service worker, entering a remote community, will:

- review the relevant jurisdictional workforce vaccination requirement;
- be up to date with their COVID-19 vaccination;
- receive a negative COVID-19 test (through a PCR or RAT) prior to travel or entering remote communities;
- minimise the time spent in the remote community and leave as soon as possible;
- practice good hygiene, maintain physical distancing and contact-minimisation activities having regard to my circumstances and reason for entering the community;
- carry a copy of this plan throughout the course of my travel or stay within the community;
- record the name, time and place of those I have interacted with as part of my travel;
- if in transit, I will not stop in a community without necessary reason;
- ensure physical distancing requirements are met in transit, including during travel to/from the remote area, e.g. in vehicles;
- continue to abide by the applicable directions relevant to the jurisdiction;
- carry a surgical mask and if unwell wear it immediately or wear when physical distancing cannot be maintained;
- self-monitor for any symptoms (if possible, measure my temperature daily, with equipment to be supplied by my agency) and if I become unwell, I will immediately isolate and call the local medical service for advice;
- provide adequate supplies (e.g. own food and other needs) for myself if only staying for one day, and if for more than one day, I have been provided accommodation arrangements; and
- perform my duties and leave as soon as I have finished my duties.
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Agreement of the relevant or reasonable delegate

I,, am authorised to enter into this agreement on behalf of the agency,

I agree to ensure the workers undertaking travel are aware of their obligations and compliance with this Risk Management Plan.

Declared at: (place) on

..... (day) of (month), 2022.

Signed:

.....

Agreement of the relevant individual

I,, agree to the above conditions.

Declared at: (place) on

..... (day) of (month), 2022.

Signed:

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