

Protecting yourself from coronavirus

Information for Health Workers



This interim guidance is based on what is currently known about coronavirus (COVID-19). The Tasmanian Government will update interim guidance as needed and as additional information becomes available. This interim guidance is to help everyone plan for community transmission of coronavirus in Tasmania. There is **much to learn about its transmissibility, severity, and other features of the disease.** We want to help everyone prepare their response to this public health threat.

A State of Emergency has been declared in Tasmania. Strict border restrictions are in place until further notice, these restrictions took place as of 12:01am Saturday 21 March 2020.

All travellers are required to quarantine for 14 days unless they meet essential traveller or exemption criteria and have received official communication stating that they are exempt.

This fact sheet provides further guidance on Tasmanian border restrictions for **public and private health workers** on the existing exemption categories and the process for seeking exemption from quarantine requirements.

Important: Every health care worker seeking an exemption from quarantine must complete an application form.

Current exempt categories

Health Services:

- A clinician in relation to healthcare **who is ordinarily a resident in Tasmania** and who is requested by the Secretary of the Department of Health, or his or her delegate, to return to Tasmania to present for duty in Tasmania.
- A clinician in relation to healthcare who is requested by the Secretary of the Department of Health, or his or her delegate, to present for duty in Tasmania to perform, during the period in which the person will be present in Tasmania, duties unable to be appropriately performed by a person ordinarily resident in Tasmania.

An emergency service worker:

- A paramedic, or an officer of Ambulance Tasmania within the meaning of the *Ambulance Service Act 1982*, who is returning to Tasmania as soon as practicable after providing medical transport to a patient or who is returning to Tasmania while providing medical transport to a person;

- A paramedic, or an officer of Ambulance Tasmania within the meaning of the *Ambulance Service Act 1982*, **who is ordinarily a resident in Tasmania** and who is requested by the Commissioner of Ambulance Services, or his or her delegate, to return to Tasmania to present for duty in Tasmania.

Further information about these exemptions:

- These exemptions only apply to clinicians, which means health professional workers including medical, nursing, midwifery and allied health professionals.
- These exemptions also only apply to Tasmanian residents, or interstate residents requested or approved by the Secretary to perform healthcare duties in Tasmania during this State of Emergency.

Process to make an application

To apply, complete the attached application form and email it to: health.exempttraveller@health.tas.gov.au

You should fill out the application form at least 24 hours prior to your arrival in Tasmania.

Important: Your exemption will only be granted for the purposes of carrying out the health services in your initial application. If you wish to do any additional services, you will need to reapply for an exemption for those additional services.

How will my application be assessed?

Each individual must complete a separate application form and each case will be assessed on its merits by the Secretary or Secretary's delegate. Sufficient information must be provided to enable an assessment to be made.

Applications must disclose any risk factors applying to persons seeking exemption, including their recent travel history, possible contact with persons exposed to COVID-19 and any other relevant information.

The decision on the application will consider how essential the person is to the health system in Tasmania.

What do I do once I fill out the form?

If you have arrived in Tasmania without an exemption, you are required to isolate yourself until such time that you are advised by the Secretary or Secretary's delegate that an exemption has been granted by the Secretary of Health.

You will receive a notification from the Secretary or Secretary's delegate advising of the decision on your application and any further quarantine instructions that you must follow

Important: You must not present for work until you have received notification from the Secretary or Secretary's delegate approving your exemption from quarantine.

If your application is approved, you must use Personal Protective Equipment as per the requirements for the type of work you are engaged in, or as directed by the Tasmanian Director of Public Health. You must also practice with a high degree of caution and practice hand hygiene and social distancing whilst conducting your essential business.

Important: When you are not carrying out approved work duties you should uphold quarantine standards for 14 days from arrival in Tasmania including staying at home or in your hotel and strictly apply social distancing and hygiene requirements. Do not go to public places, including schools, childcare, university, shops, or public gatherings except to purchase life essentials. Only people who usually live with you should be in the home. Do not see visitors.

Additional exempt categories – further information

Organ Donation Retrieval, Medical Retrieval

- Individuals working with interstate retrieval teams, including air ambulance retrievals and organ retrieval teams visiting the state to harvest organs.

It is noted that, if approved, precautions will be specified as mandatory to minimise interactions with local residents/health care workers, such as infection control procedures, use of electronic transfer of patient records and handover documentation.

Longer stay visitors/returning local health care workers

- Frontline healthcare workers in professions considered to be a priority by the applicant's employing health organisation or the Department of Health. Priority professions (depending on working destination) include medicine, nursing and midwifery, paramedicine and pharmacy.
- Other front-line healthcare workers where there is an immediate need to commence work to preserve service continuity.

This could include radiation therapists, radiographers, medical scientists, anaesthetic technicians and allied health professionals.

Students on clinical placement

- Allied health professional students **ordinarily residents in Tasmania** where placement is an essential requirement for approved (accredited) program of study.
- Students undertaking immediate workforce entry will need to be managed to mitigate risk to other staff, patients and the general community such as minimal interactions with staff and patients (especially vulnerable patients) for 14 days, strict infection control procedures, out of work hours isolation from the general community.