

SEFOPE Factsheet: COVID-19: For Employers and Timor-Leste Workers in Australia

The purpose of this factsheet is to provide information to employers of, and Timor-Leste Seasonal Workers in Australia. It aims to assist with employer and worker decision making as COVID-19 rapidly changes border and immigration rules for Australia and Timor-Leste.

Initially SEFOPE would like to communicate with employers who will be the central information point for their growers and workers.

For workers who want to travel home to Timor-Leste

What we know: (as of 25 March 2020)

- There are Border closures internally in Australia which means people need to quarantine when moving between states. Workers transiting overseas within the airport grounds may be able to get an exemption from this requirement
- There are Flight restrictions: currently there is only 1 further confirmed flight from Darwin-Dili on Saturday 28 March
- Timor-Leste may soon enter a state of emergency for 30 days, which means more flights after the 28th March are unlikely during the emergency period
- Please do not book your workers on flights to Darwin without first communicating with the Labour Mobility Coordinator, Cathy Molnar on tls.program.coordinator@gmail.com
- Quarantine in-transit: workers need to obey quarantine rules during transit in Darwin airport and if staying overnight need to obey rules while staying at their hotel. If workers do not comply, fines of up to \$63,000 apply and police are actively monitoring for breaches
- Those transiting via a hotel need to apply for an exemption before travel to Darwin.
- Workers can get food and drink at Darwin airport during transit
- Cost of flights: flights Darwin to Dili have increased in price
- On arrival in Dili: workers need to quarantine for 14 days, see more details below

Impacts of this on Employers and Workers:

- Timor-Leste Workers may still be able to travel home at the end of their contracts, but it will require extra logistic work
- The Australian Government has developed a solution which will allow workers to apply for a new visa to stay and work in Australia with the same employer or possibly a different employer- see details in Annex 1 (Employers have already received this email from DFAT)

SEFOPE requests the following;

1 Employers talk with your growers or workers about the end of Timor-Leste worker contracts

In preparation for a conversation with the Timor-Leste Labour Mobility Coordinator- Cathy Molnar, please answer the following questions:

1. Which jobs (groups) and workers are due to end contract in next 3 months?	
2. Of these which (groups or individuals) would like to return to Timor-Leste?	

3. Which (groups or individuals) would like to stay in Australia if more work is available?	
4. Do you have additional work available for Timor-Leste or other workers? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> roughly how many jobs/ workers will you need over the next 3 to 6 months if no additional workers are able to come from overseas? 	

2 SEFOPE Labour Mobility Coordinator will contact you with a time to discuss your workers

Cathy Molnar, Labour Mobility Program Coordinator (Labour Attache Team)

Email: tls.program.coordinator@gmail.com

Cathy will be the key SEFOPE contact supporting workers in Australia during this challenging time.

3 Ask your workers to stay informed through the SEFOPE website and live chat

Check this website for information- <http://dnee.sefope.gov.tl/> and ask SEFOPE questions through the 'live chat' function. Or email enquiries.lsu.tl@gmail.com

What happens if workers decide to return to Timor-Leste?

Rules on transiting through Darwin and the availability of Air North flights are changing daily, so please email: tls.program.coordinator@gmail.com to find out the latest information

- The current situation for workers transiting at Darwin Airport: Workers must remain in terminal during transit
- Workers need to practice social distancing (stay at least 1.5 metres apart) and other precautions during transit
- Food and drink are available for purchase within the terminal, but it might be useful for workers to bring food packs

Then, all people arriving in Timor-Leste, including Labour Mobility workers, must quarantine for 14 days from when they arrive back in Timor-Leste

Immigration Police and Ministry of Health officials will transport workers via bus from Dili airport to the quarantine facility. No contact with families or other people is permitted on arrival

Workers cannot leave quarantine for 14 days. Ministry of Health workers monitor the health of each person in quarantine and clearance to leave at the end of 14 days will be provided by the Government of Timor-Leste. Anyone who breaches quarantine may be fined and arrested by the police.

Workers need to understand that quarantine is a precaution to stop the spread of the virus in Timor-Leste, it does not mean they have COVID-19.

At the end of quarantine and once permission is obtained, Ministry of Health Officials will contact families to pick-up workers

There is currently misunderstanding, confusion and fear in Timor-Leste communities and potential attacks on quarantine facilities can occur. Workers need to be aware of the following:

- There have been security incidents in Dili following the announcement of a COVID-19 case.
- There is limited availability of testing and infection control facilities

- Critical care for managing people who might become seriously ill is likely to be significantly below the standards available in Australia.
(<https://www.smartraveller.gov.au/destinations/asia/timor-leste>)

Annex 1 | DFAT Update to Employers and Stakeholders- 25 March

Today we would like to share with you measures that are being put in place for workers whose visas are due to expire imminently, are unable to travel home and wish to continue working. For these workers, a bridging visa will be available and in place until more substantive changes come into effect, expected within the fortnight. More information will be provided on this in due course.

- Workers whose visas (SWP and NAWPP) are expiring shortly should apply, with their employers assistance, for a Bridging Visa E (Subclass (050) online via ImmiAccount - <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/getting-a-visa/visa-listing/bridging-visa-e-050-051/subclass-050>.
Please note:
- this visa can only be applied for once the worker's current substantive visa has expired and should be made as soon as possible following the expiry of their current visa; and
- an 8503 waiver is not required to apply for this visa.

Workers in this position can be assured that they will face no adverse consequences from short periods in Australia without a visa. If you have any questions or you would like to bring specific cases to the Department's attention please contact specialist.entry@homeaffairs.gov.au.

Worker Welfare

Should workers fall ill, they will receive the same medical treatment through their health insurance as Australians would receive under Medicare

The welfare of Pacific workers in Australia is at the forefront of all our contingency planning. This information about visa processes is being provided to Approved Employers and we will be supporting them to implement these measures where required. Approved Employers are also receiving regular information on the latest health and travel advice to share with their workers. The Pacific Labour Facility is producing regular updates and social media video messages to support workers and employers during this time. We are encouraging workers to follow the [Facebook page](#) to stay up-to-date and share the information being posted. A range of information resources are also available on our [website](#).

PLS

There are a small number of PLS visa holders who do not hold the full 3 year validity. For those PLS workers, a further PLS visa can be applied for onshore up to the total maximum stay in Australia of 3 years where the worker will continue to work for their current employer. Those employers who are unable to offer their workers, whose visas are to expire, an extended contract and therefore cannot sponsor their workers for a further PLS visa onshore, have been asked to contact the PLF as early as possible to arrange possible redeployment to another approved employer.

DFAT Labour Mobility Team