

# A message from the

## Department for Energy and Mining



Sunday 29 March 2020 18:45 pm

### UPDATE FOR SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S RESOURCES SECTOR

Dear Resources and Energy Colleagues

As the national COVID19 containment effort develops, it is clear there are difficult decisions needed to achieve these three imperatives:

1. COVID19 infection control,
2. maintenance of state/nationally significant industries and operations, and
3. continuity of industries and operations and/or positioning for future recovery for businesses of all sizes.

Building on the advice in previous updates, I want to reinforce again that it is critical that all operations begin to:

- cease all unnecessary movements to/from operating sites,
- drastically reduce, and ideally eliminate, reliance on interstate travel and stabilise workforces on-site for sustained periods, and
- enact shift-change quarantine plans for inbound workers to protect your sites.

Restrictions on interstate travel arrangements are expected to tighten further in coming days, including for FIFO/DIDO workers. Western Australia has clearly signalled its intentions in relation to cross-border travel.

Businesses of all sizes working in key industry sectors must establish how to continue operations with a static workforce.

Non-essential movements that result in unnecessary exposure pathways must stop.

"Essential" or "Critical" roles in this context means 'the minimum workforce required to allow site operations to continue in the coming months'. This means services that without which the operation will cease or production will reduce by more than 50 per cent, OR will be unable to meet their priority statutory requirements. With few exceptions, this includes operations (including well-operations essential to supply chains), major projects under construction and ongoing provision of power to the grid. It does not include mineral exploration other than in exceptional circumstances.

This means operation and project owners must conduct a complete review of all operations and contractor/subcontractor engagements to ensure total compliance with relevant national COVID19 protocols.

DEM has for example received queries from a range of companies providing services to the sector such as aerial surveys, food and beverage support and consulting work, seeking exemptions for interstate travel for their staff. DEM wants these businesses to continue to support essential services, and - as a critical capability for our sectors - to weather this storm.

These businesses are urged to strategise, internally and with their employers or lead operation, and determine what is essential, and how potential exposures - on production sites, within regions and across state lines - can be all-but-eliminated from their approach to delivering that work. New approaches are required to minimise the risk of infection. If those exposures cannot be dramatically reduced or reduced to zero, then in the interests of the sector and the broader community that work should not continue at this time.

This is a direct challenge to industry to actively manage these exposure risks across the business. The fundamental questions to be answered in developing a new strategy:

- Is this work optional or business critical to continued operations of energy and mining operations?
- Can risk be mitigated through modified work practices?
- Should practices be deferred rather than risk new exposures to sites and communities?



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Other than in exceptional circumstances, which require an application for specific exemption, exploration activities do not satisfy the criteria for exemption for interstate FIFO/DIDO workers.

Information provided to the department suggests that delivering product to overseas customers is becoming difficult. Producers will already be preparing for bottlenecks across export chains, and planning for cash flow disruptions. Any suggested measures government could take to assist with these matters will be welcome.

As of Friday, 29 companies in SA across the mining, oil, gas and energy sectors had submitted plans to SAHealth for review. There are many more that haven't and they are again urged to put plans in place, ensure they are consistent with the MCA/ APPEA national protocols, and submit them immediately to SA Health along with contact details. You are obliged to manage your contractor's adherence to your policies.

Your industry and your workers and contractors have the Department's utmost support during this time. Please continue to advise DEM, by email to [martin.reid@sa.gov.au](mailto:martin.reid@sa.gov.au), of any measures government can take to assist you at this time. I am personally committed to keeping lines of communications open.

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