

## **FRAMEWORK FOR COVID-19 IN THE RESOURCES SECTOR**

### **PURPOSE**

Worker health and safety is the resources sector's top priority and the sector has world-leading protocols in place to ensure the health of its workforce. Industry continues to respond proactively and swiftly to developing risks posed by the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19).

The resources sector is critical to the state and the national economy. The industry is a significant employer, purchaser and taxpayer.

Over 240,000 people are directly employed in Australia's resources industry, with over 100,000 employed in Western Australia. More broadly, more than 1.1 million people are employed and supported in the resources sector and supply chain (with most in regional Australia).

The economic contribution of mining and its supply chain to Australia's economy is around 15%. The resources sector paid \$212 billion in tax and royalties to federal, state and territory governments in the decade to 2017-18. In Western Australia, the resources sector contributes 40% of WA's gross value add; with \$6.8 billion in royalties accounting for 21% of state revenue.

The industry is a critical factor in kickstarting the global economic revival. Australia's resources export earnings totalled \$290 billion in 2019 (59% of total exports).

The document seeks to propose a range of arrangements to enable the resources sector to meet the necessary workforce requirements it needs to continue to operate during the COVID-19 crisis, while importantly supporting community safety (taken together, the Framework).

### **OBJECTIVE**

The overarching Framework is to:

1. support the safety and health of the resources sector workforce
2. to ensure that the resources sector does not impact the regions and communities it operates in and does not undermine public health efforts, and
3. to maintain operations and production wherever possible for the benefit of the industry, workers, communities and suppliers that the industry supports

The Framework has been developed by the Western Australian Government (Government) and industry (as represented by the Chamber of Minerals and Energy Western Australia) to guide efforts in the resources sector in the state.

The Framework is intended to reinforce and operate concurrently with any State of Emergency Declarations and Public Health Act emergency declarations issued by the State Government. For the avoidance of doubt, this includes restrictions on borders or movement.

[The Framework is being submitted by the Western Australian Government for consideration by the National Coordination Mechanism (NCM) as announced by the Prime Minister on 5 March 2020. The NCM is to coordinate activities across the Commonwealth, state and territory governments as well as industry to ensure a consistent national approach in this critical sector and its supply chains, especially with respect to the movements of the workforce.]

## **FOCUS OF THIS FRAMEWORK**

Consistent with Australia's strategic approach to emergency management and the Australian Health Sector Emergency Response Plan for COVID-19, the Framework acknowledges the importance of managing of all hazards within an ongoing cycle of activities in the three areas of: Prevention and preparedness; Response; and Recovery.

The Framework applies initially to all activities within Western Australia in the mining, minerals and oil and gas industry onshore and offshore of WA (including facilities in Commonwealth waters), [and subject to approval by the NCM, nationally.]

The availability and mobility of the sector's workforce will be critical to ensuring continuity of production and exports. The nature of the sector's production, logistics and safety systems require ongoing and specialist management to ensure system stability and flexibility. Major hazard facilities, in particular, operate on safety critical management systems, with lower tolerances to flexibly ramp up and down.

## **KEY REQUIREMENTS**

The Framework establishes the key requirements that the resources sector will have in place in consultation with the Government.

The resources sector commits to have in place detailed policies and procedures to deliver on the intent and objectives of the Framework.

To reiterate, the Framework operates in the context of any public health restrictions and the industry supports the broader implementation of those arrangements for the community. The Framework does not affect the movement of goods and services related to the industry.

Workers health and safety is paramount, the industry will ensure workers are protected from undue exposure to COVID-19 and have in place the health protocols and services to be able to respond if a worker is infected.

The Framework specifies key requirements to be included in the resources sector approach in order to operate while any restrictions are in place.

These include:

*Supporting the industry's workers*

- a. **(WA Jobs and FIFO workers)** Resources companies commit to ensuring that the number of out-of-state FIFO workers are for site based critical roles only. Operators remain committed to, where possible, more local WA jobs – including as critical backfill in a constrained scenario.
- b. **(Information for workers)** Resources companies commit to provide regular updates to workers on the spread of COVID-19, strategies to avoid contracting it, ways to support colleagues and their families, and the arrangements contained in this Framework.
- c. **(Mental Health)** Resources companies and industry representatives acknowledge that this is a difficult and stressful time for the industry's workforce. The sector is already proactive in addressing mental health and wellbeing and therefore well placed to support workers at this time. Companies continue to ramp-up the wide variety of supports activities in place to support the mental health and wellbeing of their employees.
- d. **(Equipment)** Resources companies must ensure that workers have access to the necessary health and safety advice and equipment to prevent the spread of the disease (e.g. hand washing facilities sanitisers, etc.) and protect themselves from contracting it (e.g. hygiene facilities and social distancing measures etc.). Please note access to PPE is highly restricted, as it is being prioritised nationwide for healthcare and frontline workers.
- e. **(Point of contact)** Each resources company will nominate a contact person for their workers to get more information about the respective company's efforts under the Framework.

*Travel & work protocols*

- a. **(FIFO transit protocols)** Resources sector projects will be allowed to continue to rotate essential FIFO personnel from other Australian States through to operational sites, transiting through Perth airport where required (based on strict guidelines and protocols).
  - These FIFO personnel will be allowed to enter and depart on dedicated charter aircraft, where charters are possible, that leaves from Australian Capital Cities or major regional centres and arrives at specific mine sites, oil and gas facilities and regional airports (including public airports), with transit through Perth where required. Where charter flights are not possible, arrival to site via commercial flights will be required but will be under strict protocols enacted by the companies (eg pre-boarding testing).
  - All FIFO personnel from interstate must go through stringent check in procedures before boarding aircraft. For example, questionnaires, employer declarations and temperature checks.

**FOR ENDORSEMENT (as at 24/03/2020)**

- Dedicated FIFO flights will not allow passengers to travel on the aircraft unless they meet the definition of essential or critical resources sector workers. They will be exclusively for interstate FIFO workers. Segregation of FIFO passengers from the public will be maintained at airports to the extent possible, in liaison with airport operators.
  - The charter flights must have physical distancing on all planes.
  - Industry representatives will work with resources companies to undertake a 'needs analysis' and, if necessary, adjust shift rosters to ensure minimum number of FIFO charter flights into the state.
- b. **(FIFO testing)** Upon arrival at mine sites or oil and gas facilities, relevant pre-work checks, such as temperature measuring, must occur before Interstate FIFO staff are allowed to enter site.
- c. **(Classification of FIFO workers)** FIFO workers entering the state for essential resources sector work are to be considered "essential workers" and exempt from the mandatory 14-day isolation period.
- d. **(Temporary relocation)** Resources companies may offer interstate FIFO critical personnel the option of being based in WA during this period.

*Prevent and protect workplaces from infection*

- e. **(Symptoms testing)** Resources companies must incorporate symptoms testing and assessment to identify early warnings and presentations (e.g. temperature checks at beginning and end of shift).
- f. **(Testing capacity)** The industry will have in place large scale pathogen COVID-19 testing at mine sites, as capacity allows, ensuring this does not put an unnecessary strain on the public health system.
- g. **(Government rules)** Industry must enforce the government's rules in respect of overseas travel and positive case close contact (e.g. that any worker who has been overseas or been in contact with someone with COVID-19 will be in self-isolation for 14 days)
- h. **(Sanitation)** High sanitation must be practised on all sites. At any point, the Government can query and make recommendations with respect to sanitation at a site.
- i. **(Distancing)** Site operators must implement procedures to ensure physical and social distancing is practised on all sites and this is to be applied except where for safety reasons a task cannot be carried out. Workers at sites must be provided with information on how to implement physical or social distancing.

**FOR ENDORSEMENT (as at 24/03/2020)**

- j. **(Group events)** Group events like meals and start-ups must be staggered to significantly reduce people numbers in one place.
- k. **(Health professional support)** Each mine site or oil and gas facility must have a trained health professional and be supported with training to manage the initial stages of situations where a suspected COVID-19 case presents. Contingencies for the availability of health professionals will be in place.

*Responding to positive tests and evacuation*

- l. **(Site quarantine)** Every single mine site and oil and gas facility must have dedicated isolation areas.
- m. **(Special Disease Management)** Every site must have an Infectious Disease Management Plan. Every site must have an appointed Infectious Disease Manager.
- n. **(Risk assessment and mitigation)** Based on current epidemiology, resources companies must provide a list of workers that fit into highest risk categories as identified by the Chief Health Officer or their delegate (ie. older and underlying health issues) and ensure there are appropriate mechanisms in place in the event of infection.
- o. **(Evacuation – mild or medium)** Resources sector operators must have in place evacuation plans as part of their Infectious Disease Management Plan for mild or medium presentations. These could include, for example, that companies and industry have special charter aircraft on standby where available to evacuate mild and medium cases of COVID-19 to appropriate destinations including medical facilities.
- p. **(Evacuation – potentially acute or acute)** Resources sector operators must have in place evacuation plans as part of their Infectious Disease Management Plan for potentially acute or acute presentations. These could include, for example, that companies and industry will transport any acute cases of COVID-19 to the relevant health or hospital facility through a specialist service, for example, the Royal Flying Doctors Service.

*Public health and managing community interactions*

- q. **(Minimise impact on communities)** To reflect the resources companies commitment to minimise their impact on the regional and remote communities where they operate, companies will put in place arrangements to maintain separation between their activities at mine sites and oil and gas facilities with

communities.

- r. **(Self-isolation from general public)** Any workers leaving a mine site or oil and gas facility and entering the general WA community will be required to follow a Special Procedure (articulated by the respective companies) depending on whether they are visiting:
- Remote and regional communities near mine (e.g. Newman) – the Special Procedure may include separating workers from the community except for a small, specified set of interactions.
  - Regional hubs (e.g. Karratha) – the Special Procedure may include requiring workers to agree in writing before visiting that they will practice social distancing and report if they begin to experience COVID-19 symptoms as well as record their location.
  - Rest of the state – the Special Procedure may include requiring workers to agree to report if they begin to experience COVID-19 symptoms and to undergo Symptoms Testing as specified in (j.) above.
  - Other states or territories: in consultation with other jurisdictions, the Special Procedure may require individuals to self-isolate at home on return, allowing them to leave their home/residence for the purpose of returning to work (and subject to protocols stipulated in the Framework).
- s. **(Support for Indigenous and regional communities)** Resources companies and industry representatives are considering making significant financial and in-kind contributions to regional communities and remote Indigenous communities for health care, testing and treatment on an as-needs basis.
- t. **(Engagement)** Companies will also engage with and consult with local community leaders on the best ways to achieve (v), (w.) and (x.) above.
- u. **(Campaign)** industry will contribute to a public health campaign to aim to reduce the spread of COVID-19 especially in remote and rural communities (defined above) and regional hubs (defined above).

#### *Monitoring and Reporting*

- a. **(Reporting)** The industry is committed to provide daily reports to the Government of any positive COVID-19 cases, evacuations, recoveries and current caseload. The industry will also provide further reporting as required by the Implementation Plan.
- b. **(Government validation)** The Framework is submitted to the Government for their input and advice and ultimately validation. The Framework can be refined as needed by the Government (and specifically the Chief Health Officer or their delegate).

- c. **(Contact person)** The industry shall nominate a representative to act as the central point of contact for this Framework with the Government.

## **GOVERNANCE & IMPLEMENTATION**

The Framework has been developed in consultation with the Government and industry.

The Framework shall be implemented by resources companies and overseen by the Government.

An Industry Implementation Plan will be developed and agreed by the Government and industry within five [5] business days following the agreement of the Framework.

The Framework is intended to guide responses by resources companies. Their policies and procedures can be escalated or strengthened based on advice by the Government and specifically the Chief Health Officer or their delegate.

With reasonable notice, the resources sector is committed to cooperating with and implementing the Government's guidance.

For the avoidance of doubt, this Framework seeks to apply a risk-based approach based on scientific evidence and follow applicable local and international health authority guidance to enable the continued operation and production of a state and nationally significant industry.