

Waste and recycling in Queensland

COVID updates

(as at 25 May 2020)

The Department of Environment and Science manages waste and resource recovery under the provisions of the *Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011*.

As the situation with COVID-19 continues to evolve, it is important that you regularly check for updates to the information provided in this fact sheet.

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

The situation surrounding COVID-19 is changing rapidly, and Queensland Health is maintaining online resources to inform and assist people in reducing the risks associated with COVID-19.

On 29 January 2020, the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services made an order declaring a public health emergency in relation to coronavirus disease (COVID-19) across all of Queensland. The order will be in place until 17 August 2020, but may be extended. The Chief Health Officer has published a number of directions to assist in containing, or responding to, the spread of COVID-19 within the community.

For more information:

Chief Health Officer public health directions: <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/system-governance/legislation/cho-public-health-directions-under-expanded-public-health-act-powers>

To subscribe to Public Health Direction updates: <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/news-events/newsletter>

Waste management as an essential service

It is recognised that the waste management and resource recovery sectors provide important community and business services.

Waste generated and disposed in Queensland

The Non-essential business, activity and undertaking Closure Direction (No.5) issued on 9 April 2020 lists those non-essential businesses, activities or undertakings that must not operate in Queensland during the period of the declared public health emergency.

Waste management and recycling activities are not listed in the direction, and therefore may continue to operate in compliance with other directions and orders in effect.

Waste generated and/or disposed outside of Queensland

The Border restrictions Direction (No.4) issued on 10 April 2020 provides that any person in Queensland with specialist skills critical to maintaining key government services, industries or businesses (including a person responsible for waste and recycling management) is an exempt person for the purposes of undertaking their duties.

Entry into Queensland for essential travel is only permitted to persons who are exempt and who have a Queensland Entry Pass. It is recommended that Queensland residents who are transporting waste interstate and re-entering Queensland also apply for an entry pass. A separate application is required for each individual and all travellers must be eligible for an exemption.

Inter and intra-state tracking requirements for regulated wastes remain in effect.

For more information:

Non-essential business, activity and undertaking Closure Direction (No. 5): <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/system-governance/legislation/cho-public-health-directions-under-expanded-public-health-act-powers/non-essential-business-closure-direction>

Border restrictions Direction (No. 4): <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/system-governance/legislation/cho-public->

[health-directions-under-expanded-public-health-act-powers/border-restrictions](#)

Application for a Queensland Entry Pass: <https://www.qld.gov.au/border-pass>

Waste facilities in Queensland

The Queensland Government is working closely with local governments and the waste and resource recovery sector to ensure that waste management and resource recovery services are able to continue safely.

For the period of the declared public health emergency, local governments and private waste operators may make decisions on a site-specific or operation-wide basis as appropriate to protect the health and safety of employees and members of the public.

Decisions may include closure of or changed access arrangements to facilities including “tip shops”, transfer stations, landfills, container refund points and recycling centres.

Operators may also make changes with regard to operating hours or conditions of entry; or may temporarily suspend or change particular services such as hard waste kerbside collections and kerbside recycling services.

Where facilities are open to the public, Councils will need to ensure that activities at their sites are operating in accordance with Queensland Health advice and guidelines, including the implementation of measures including those around including social distancing, additional hygiene requirements and contactless payment.

Waste management and worker health and safety

While the risk of COVID-19 transmission when handling waste is likely to be low there are measures that can be taken to minimise the risk to workers when carrying out their duties.

Waste handlers should continue to observe safe work practices and employers should provide workers with appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and information and training on why and how to use the equipment, including appropriate cleaning or disposal options.

WorkCover Queensland provides information for workers and employers regarding simple hygiene practices that can be used to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory infections in the workplace. This information includes details and links relating to self-quarantine; preventing the spread of infection; personal protective equipment; and workers' compensation.

The Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning has established a supply matching request to assist businesses who may be finding it difficult to obtain vital materials and supplies.

For more information:

WorkCover Queensland information relating to workplace risk management:

<https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/news/2020/coronavirus-covid-19-workplace-risk-management>

Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning Manufacturer's Supply Matching Request form: <http://dsdmip.qld.gov.au/index.php/industry/industry-support-dsd/manufacturer-s-supply-matching-request-form/view/form>

Waste collection for businesses and the retail sector

In March 2020 the Queensland Government passed legislation to enable waste collection from retail and other commercial businesses to be undertaken more frequently and outside normal collection hours. The amendments provide for a blanket declaration for relief from development approval conditions for essential businesses, such as supermarkets and chemists, and allow for any person to seek relief from development approval conditions or other operating constraints through an application to the state.

Any changes to collection operating hours due to a Public Health Direction or COVID-19 impacts will be subject to a site-by-site assessment. Until such time as an application has been made waste collection operators should undertake operations on a business-as-usual basis for serviced sites.

Waste collection for households

Household waste collection is the responsibility of the relevant local government. The Queensland Government is not aware of any current disruptions to household waste collection, however residents should check with council for updates.

Waste collected from domestic sources is not classified as clinical waste and is not required to be collected by a regulated waste transporter, tracked or treated.

Container refund scheme

Container Exchange (COEX) is the not-for-profit organisation appointed by the Queensland Government to run Containers for Change, the Queensland container refund scheme. COEX has implemented business continuity measures to help maintain accessibility to the service and assist customers and container refund point operators including introducing additional bag drop services.

In addition, container refund point operators have adjusted their sites to ensure they are observing Federal and State Government regulations around physical distancing and personal and workplace hygiene.

Although some container refund points have closed temporarily as a result of COVID-19, COEX is maintaining up to date information about container return locations on their website.

For more information:

Containers for Change: <https://www.containersforchange.com.au/qld>

Container Exchange: <https://www.containerexchange.com.au/> or phone 13 42 42

Clinical waste

The Queensland Government has produced a fact sheet relating to waste management for health facilities and waste contractors. This fact sheet provides recommendations for healthcare facilities and waste contractors with regards to the management of waste generated in the care of people with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infection.

Clinical waste will be managed as usual, with waste to be collected, tracked and treated as regulated waste.

For more information:

Fact sheet – Waste management for health facilities and waste contractors:

<https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19/information-for/industry-and-businesses/resources-and-fact-sheets-for-industry/waste-management-for-health-facilities-and-waste-contractors>