

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the North Stradbroke Island Workers Assistance Scheme?

The North Stradbroke Island (NSI) Workers Assistance Scheme (WAS) is intended to assist affected workers find alternative employment, preferably in the local area, and support the ongoing economic viability of the NSI community.

The WAS came into effect when the North Stradbroke Island Protection and Sustainability and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2015 was passed in May 2016. Assistance under the WAS was originally available for eligible affected Sibelco workers for a five-year period to May 2021. In January 2021 an extension to the WAS was approved to provide more equitable access to workers made redundant after 1 January 2020. The WAS now ceases on 30 June 2022.

The Queensland Government has allocated up to \$5 million for the WAS to assist affected workers transition to alternative employment.

What assistance is available to affected workers under the WAS?

The WAS comprises the following elements:

- job search support
- training and skills support
- access to financial advice
- housing assistance
- commuting subsidy
- small business mentoring
- income supplementation
- dislocation assistance
- employer wage subsidy.

Employers who hire an affected worker will be eligible for a wage subsidy, once the affected worker has been employed for six months.

A full time Employment Services Manager (ESM) has been appointed, and will divide their time between the NSI and the mainland, to assist affected workers.

See the summary of assistance table for further information.

Who is eligible for assistance under the WAS?

Assistance under the WAS is available for Sibelco workers who are made redundant at Sibelco's operations on NSI (including the Pinkenba processing plant) as a result of the cessation of sand mining on NSI and who work to the end of their employment contract.

Sibelco permanent full time and part time workers can access all assistance elements under the WAS (eligibility requirements apply),

Casual and contract workers can access all assistance elements under the WAS (eligibility requirements apply) except income supplementation and dislocation assistance.

Partners of eligible Sibelco workers are also eligible for the assistance elements of job search support and training and skills support (conditions apply).

Affected workers are encouraged to contact the ESM to discuss their career options and availability of assistance under the WAS. For further information visit desbt.qld.gov.au/employment/transition-programs/north-stradbroke-assistance or contact the ESM via email nsiwas@desbt.qld.gov.au or call 0478 405 423.

When can affected workers apply for assistance under the WAS?

Job search support, training and skills support, financial advice and small business mentoring are available to affected workers, prior to and following retrenchment. Any time off work to access services prior to the retrenchment will need to be negotiated with Sibelco.

Partners of affected workers can access job search support and training and skills support, prior to and following retrenchment of the affected worker.

Housing assistance, commuting subsidy, income supplementation and dislocation assistance are available to eligible affected workers following confirmation of retrenchment from Sibelco.

See the summary of assistance table for further information.

The WAS ceases on 30 June 2022 regardless of whether or not a cap or maximum timeframe has been reached. Applications for assistance and relevant claim forms must be submitted for approval by 30 June 2022 and remain subject to assessment of worker eligibility and needs, at the discretion of the ESM.

Affected workers are encouraged to contact the ESM to discuss their career options and assistance available under the WAS. For further information visit desbt.qld.gov.au/employment/transition-programs/north-stradbroke-assistance or contact the ESM via email nsiwas@desbt.qld.gov.au or call 0478 405 423.

I am still employed by Sibelco, can I access any support or financial assistance under the WAS?

Yes. Eligible affected Sibelco workers whose redundancy is pending, may access job search support, training and skills support, financial advice and small business mentoring prior to retrenchment. Any time off work to access services prior to the retrenchment will need to be negotiated with Sibelco. Other assistance elements can be accessed following confirmation of pending retrenchment from Sibelco.

See the summary of assistance table for further information.

What other support is available to affected workers?

In addition to the assistance available under the WAS, affected workers can also access the following Australian Government services:

- Sarina Russo Job Access provide jobactive services on NSI. To make an appointment, call 13 15 59.
- To find your local jobactive provider on the mainland visit jobsearch.gov.au. Retrenched workers can register directly with a jobactive provider to receive employment assistance.
- For advice on jobactive call 13 62 68 or visit employment.gov.au/jobactive.
- For advice on services offered by the Department of Human Services call 13 28 50 or visit humanservices.gov.au.

What is the role of the Employment Services Manager (ESM)?

A full time ESM has been appointed, and will divide their time between NSI and the mainland, to assist affected workers. The ESM is available as the first point of contact for affected workers regarding assistance available under the WAS.

The ESM will:

- deliver job search and training and skills support;
- support delivery of the housing assistance, commuting subsidy, income supplementation, dislocation assistance, financial advice and small business mentoring, including submitting applications;
- provide information on the types of Queensland Government and Australian Government assistance available to workers;

- support affected workers with recognition of prior learning and/or qualifications;
- provide referrals to a range of services;
- provide initial verification of applications and submit applications for processing, and;
- engage case managers, if required, to work on an individual basis with affected workers.

For further enquiries relating to assistance under the WAS or to commence discussions with the ESM, please email nsiwas@desbt.qld.gov.au or call 0478 405 423.

Who can I contact for further information on the WAS?

For detailed guidelines, application forms and supporting documents, visit desbt.qld.gov.au/employment/transition-programs/north-stradbroke-assistance.

Affected workers are encouraged to contact the ESM to discuss their career options and assistance available under the WAS. Contact the ESM via email nsiwas@desbt.qld.gov.au or call 0478 405 423.

How do I apply for assistance under the WAS?

Affected workers must submit complete applications for assistance by 30 June 2022 to the ESM in the first instance. The ESM will undertake an initial review of applications to ensure eligibility requirements are met and all supporting documentation is included. The ESM will forward completed applications to the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (DESBT) for processing of payments, where applicable.

Application forms and supporting documents are available at desbt.qld.gov.au/employment/transition-programs/north-stradbroke-assistance.

When will I receive my financial assistance?

Applications for assistance will be assessed to ensure all eligibility requirements under the WAS are met, all necessary information is included and that relevant supporting documentation is attached and complete.

Payment of assistance (where applicable) will be made to the bank account nominated on the application form within 14 days of the application and supporting documentation being submitted by the ESM to the DESBT.

Job search support will be delivered by the ESM to affected workers. This may involve contracting third parties to provide individualised support services to affected workers.

Payment for any approved training will be paid directly to the training provider, on receipt of a valid invoice to the DESBT.

Will financial assistance under the WAS impact my Commonwealth Support Payments?

Any potential impact on Commonwealth Support Payments will depend on individual circumstances.

The Australian Government has advised that the receipt of financial assistance under the WAS may impact eligibility for Commonwealth Support Payments (either in full or in part).

It is the responsibility of the affected worker to make enquiries with Centrelink prior to submitting an application for financial assistance. The affected worker in consultation with Centrelink should determine the impact of any payment under the WAS on their Commonwealth Support Payments and decide if applying for WAS financial assistance is in their best interest. The ESM is unable to advise on these impacts.

The Department of Human Services can provide further information and assistance. Please call 13 28 50 or visit humanservices.gov.au to obtain further advice.

Job search support

What job search support services will be available?

The ESM will deliver the job search support services element of the WAS and provide immediate, direct and tailored services to support affected workers find alternative employment. Funding is available (up to \$2,000 per worker) for individualised job search support.

Support includes:

- career counselling;
- job referral;
- resume writing;
- interview skills; and
- literacy and numeracy skills support.

Case management services will be available to provide the services described above and specialised support, as required, at the discretion of the ESM.

Employees may access job search support services prior to redundancy. Any time off work to access services prior to retrenchment will need to be negotiated with Sibelco.

Job search support is provided up until the affected worker finds employment with ongoing mentoring provided for up to three months post job placement, if required.

How can my partner access job search support?

Where an affected eligible worker has declined to utilise this element or it has not been fully expended, their partner may access the balance of funds up to \$2,000 to receive job search support, for the purpose of contributing to the household income. All applications will be reviewed on a case by case basis by the ESM.

Training and skills support

What training is considered to be approved training?

The purpose of this element of the WAS is to assist affected workers acquire additional skills to support them to find alternative employment.

For the purposes of the NSI WAS, approved training is defined as accredited training that provides links to career options for affected workers. This training needs to align to the eligible worker's individual employment goals, as discussed with and approved by the ESM.

Up to \$2,000 per worker is available for approved training and skills support.

What training programs can affected workers access?

Eligible affected workers may access DESBT subsidised training, which provides a broad range of training and skilling delivered through a network of Skills Assure suppliers.

Programs available include:

- Certificate 3 Guarantee;
- Higher Level Skills which provides access to Certificate 4, diploma or advanced diploma qualifications; and
- User Choice which provides a funding contribution towards the cost of training and assessment for eligible Queensland apprentices and trainees.

The funding may also be used, at the discretion of the ESM, for short courses and tickets that are not subsidised by the DESBT and meet the approved training definition.

Can I access training while still employed at Sibelco?

Yes. Employees whose redundancy is pending may access training and skills support services prior to redundancy. Any time off work to access services prior to the retrenchment will need to be negotiated with Sibelco.

Compensation will be made available under the WAS for affected workers who wish to undertake approved training, prior to retrenchment, on leave without pay that has been approved by Sibelco. A maximum of four weeks ordinary time earnings will be available per worker. The amount will be calculated by the ESM.

How can my partner access training and skills support?

Where an affected eligible worker has declined to utilise this element or it has not been fully expended, their partner may access the balance of funds up to \$2,000 to receive training and skills support, for the purpose of contributing to the household income. All applications will be reviewed on a case by case basis by the ESM.

Where can I find information about training options?

The ESM will provide advice on training options available for workers to facilitate appropriate career changes and/or upskilling. It is recommended that affected workers discuss training options with the ESM as soon as practical. Further information about DESBT subsidised training opportunities is available at desbt.qld.gov.au/training/providers/funded.

Access to financial advice

How does this work?

This element assists affected workers to consult with an appropriately qualified professional such as a financial advisor/financial planner or accountant for the purposes of obtaining independent financial advice. Financial advice may include, but is not limited to, decisions on managing redundancy payments, superannuation or other forms of income.

A maximum of \$1,000 per eligible affected worker will be available to access financial advice, at the discretion of the ESM.

An eligible affected worker who elects to receive funds to obtain independent financial advice will be required to acknowledge the financial advice obtained is independent of the WAS. Workers will need to sign a written waiver agreeing to release the WAS and DESBT from all liability in relation to the financial advice obtained.

Small business mentoring

How does this work?

This element provides affected workers with business mentoring to support them in starting and running their own business.

A maximum of \$1,000 per eligible affected worker will be available to access small business mentoring, at the discretion of the ESM.

Employer wage subsidy

I have hired an affected worker, am I eligible for an employer wage subsidy?

The provision of a wage subsidy will be paid to eligible employers who engage an affected worker in permanent employment on NSI or the mainland. The new position must be based in Queensland and will be eligible for:

- up to \$10,000 per worker if the permanent position is in South East Queensland
- up to \$4,000 per worker if the permanent position is in areas outside South East Queensland.

The subsidy is provided once the affected worker has been employed on a permanent basis (either full time or part time) for six (6) months continuously. The six (6) months of continuous permanent employment must be completed and the application for the subsidy submitted for approval by 30 June 2022. This means that the affected worker must be employed before 1 January 2022.

75 per cent of the subsidy will be provided for affected workers employed permanent part time (minimum 20 hours per week). The subsidy will not be paid for permanent employment of less than 20 hours per week or for casual or contract employment.

Australian and State Government employers are excluded from receiving the subsidy. However, local government employers in South East Queensland only are eligible for the wage subsidy, noting their contribution to the surrounding labour market.

Employers will need to apply and verify the employment of the affected worker.

For further information or to apply, visit desbt.qld.gov.au/employment/transition-programs/north-stradbroke-assistance.

Further information

Web desbt.qld.gov.au/employment/transition-programs/north-stradbroke-assistance

Email nsiwas@desbt.qld.gov.au

Phone 0478 405 423