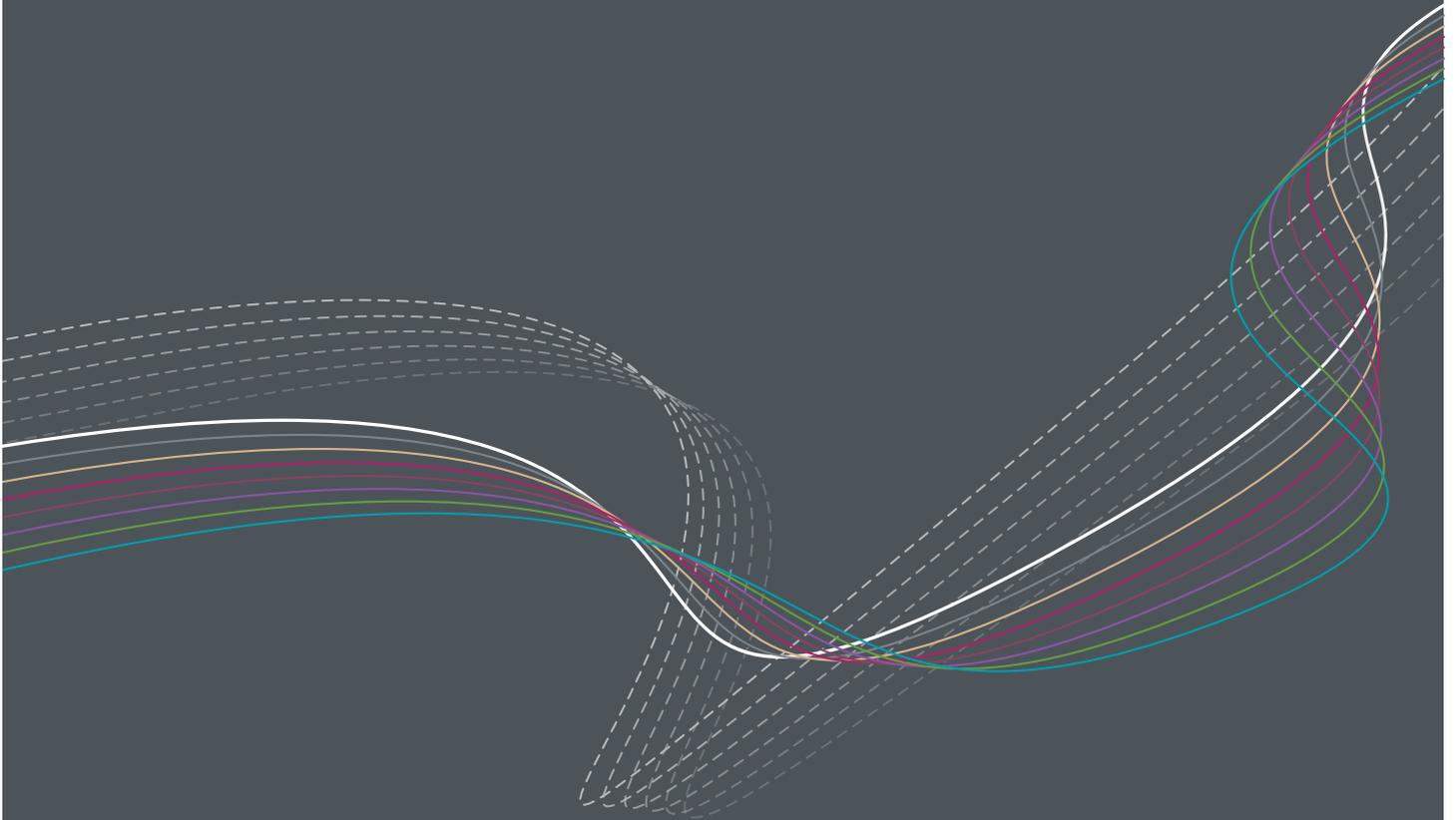


# North Stradbroke Island – Workers Assistance Scheme Guidelines



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

The WAS came into effect when the *North Stradbroke Island Protection and Sustainability and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2015* was passed on 26 May 2016. Assistance under the WAS is available for Sibelco workers employed as at 26 May 2016, and will be available for a five-year period to May 2021.

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

- job search support;
- training and skills support;
- housing assistance;
- commuting subsidy;
- income supplementation; and
- dislocation assistance.

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

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

### Who can apply for assistance

The WAS is available for Sibelco workers employed as at 26 May 2016 at the company's operations on NSI (including the Pinkenba processing plant) made redundant as a result of the cessation of sand mining on NSI.

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

Long term casual and long term contract workers can access all assistance elements under the WAS (eligibility requirements apply), with the exception of income supplementation and dislocation assistance.

Employers who hire an affected worker in a permanent full time or part time position may access the employer wage subsidy (eligibility requirements apply).

### Role of the ESM

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 and dislocation assistance, 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 to the WAS; and
- engage case managers, if required, to work on a one-on-one basis with affected workers.

### Assistance Elements

#### Job search support

The ESM will deliver this element of the WAS and provide immediate, direct and tailored services to support affected workers find alternative employment. Funding has been made available (up to \$2,000 per worker) for individualised job search support. Sibelco permanent full time and part time, long term casual and long term contract workers are eligible for this element of the WAS.

Support includes: career counselling; job referral; resume writing; interview skills; and literacy and numeracy skills support.

Case management services may be engaged to provide 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 three months post job placement, if required.

#### Training and skills support

The purpose of this element of the WAS is to assist affected workers acquire additional skills to support them to find alternative employment. Sibelco permanent full time and part time, long term casual and long term contract workers are eligible for this element of the WAS.

Training must meet the definition of approved training:

Training that provides links to career options for affected workers. This training should align with the eligible workers' individual employment goals, as discussed and approved by the ESM.

The ESM in conjunction, with the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training, will provide advice on training options available for workers to facilitate appropriate career changes and/or upskilling.

Eligible affected workers may access assistance through the Annual VET Investment Plan which provides training and skilling support through a network of approved pre-qualified suppliers.

Programs available include:

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

There will also be funding made available (up to \$2,000 per worker), at the discretion of the ESM, for short courses and tickets that are not subsidised by the Annual VET Investment Plan and meet the approved training definition.

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

Compensation will be made available 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. The compensation amount will be calculated by the ESM and linked to the duration of the approved training.

Training and skills support is provided up until the affected worker finds employment with ongoing mentoring provided for three months post job placement, if required.

### **Housing assistance**

To support affected workers who reside on NSI to continue to live on the island and support the local community, special mortgage/rent assistance will be made available (up to \$5,000 per worker). Sibelco permanent full time and part time, long term casual and long term contract workers are eligible for this element of the WAS.

Eligible affected workers are those whose principal place of residence is on NSI and have ongoing rental or mortgage payments due.

This measure will be available to an eligible worker once only during the operation of the WAS.

Affected workers are not eligible for this assistance measure if, at the time of application, they are receiving WAS income supplementation or where the affected worker is in receipt of earnings greater than their final ordinary time earnings from Sibelco prior to retrenchment.

### **Commuting subsidy**

To support affected workers who reside on NSI to continue to live on the island and support the local community, a commuting subsidy will be made available. Sibelco permanent full time and part time, long term casual and long term contract workers are eligible for this element of the WAS.

Eligible affected workers will be provided with a commuting subsidy where it is required for affected workers who continue to reside on NSI to seek employment, attend approved training or attend employment on the mainland. The subsidy is available for a period of up to two years or until the individual cap is reached.

The commuting subsidy can be used for motor vehicle registration (up to \$1,500) or reimbursement of ferry costs required to travel to the mainland from NSI.

A maximum of \$5,000 per worker will be available for the commuting subsidy. Affected workers must assign what portion of the subsidy will be expensed on motor vehicle registration (up to \$1,500) and ferry costs upon application for this subsidy.

Motor vehicle registration must be due after the date that the applicant is retrenched. Further, the registration must be in the applicant's name (can be in joint names). This payment will be made in arrears and proof of payment will need to be provided to the ESM.

Affected workers are not eligible for this assistance measure if, at the time of application, they are receiving WAS income supplementation or where the affected worker is in receipt of earnings greater than their final ordinary time earnings from Sibelco prior to retrenchment.

### **Income supplementation**

Income supplementation is available to support permanent affected workers who did not receive a redundancy payment from Sibelco who take up employment at a lesser income and continue to reside on NSI.

Eligible affected workers must meet all of the following criteria:

- Sibelco permanent full time or part time employee; and
- did not receive redundancy or other separation payment from Sibelco; and
- take up employment at lesser final ordinary time earnings than at Sibelco prior to retrenchment; and
- continue to reside on NSI.

Workers receiving a Commonwealth Support Payment benefit are ineligible.

Income supplementation will be the difference between the affected worker's current earnings (in their new employment) and their final ordinary time earnings at Sibelco. Payment rates and instalments will be determined by the ESM.

Supplementation will only be provided for either the duration of employment at a lesser level or up to a maximum of 52 weeks, whichever is sooner.

### **Dislocation assistance**

Affected permanent full time and part time workers who did not receive a redundancy or that received a gross redundancy payment below the assistance amount listed in the below table may be able to claim top-up assistance to the value of the dislocation amount (i.e. the difference between the gross redundancy payment and the dislocation assistance amount below).

| Years of Eligible Service       |          |
|---------------------------------|----------|
| Less than 2 years               | \$ 8,600 |
| 2 years but less than 5 years   | \$13,000 |
| 5 years but less than 8 years   | \$17,250 |
| 8 years but less than 11 years  | \$25,800 |
| 11 years but less than 14 years | \$34,500 |
| 14 years but less than 17 years | \$43,100 |
| 17 years but less than 20 years | \$51,600 |
| 20 years and over               | \$60,200 |

Eligible permanent workers will be entitled to dislocation assistance as a once only lump sum payment based on continuous service in the mineral sand mining and processing industry with Sibelco on NSI or at the Pinkenba processing plant.

#### Employment support through employer wage subsidy

The provision of a wage subsidy (up to \$4,000 per worker) 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.

The subsidy is provided once the affected worker has been employed on a permanent basis for 6 months continuously. Sibelco permanent full time and part time, long term casual and long term contract workers are eligible for this element of the WAS.

75 per cent of 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 casual 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.

#### When can assistance be accessed

Affected workers are encouraged to contact the ESM to discuss their career options and assistance available under the WAS. Job search and training and skills support are available to eligible affected workers prior to and following retrenchment.

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

Employers may apply for the wage subsidy, once they have employed an affected worker for a period of six months subject to meeting the eligibility criteria.

#### Workers employed beyond May 2021

Assistance under the WAS is available for a five-year period to May 2021. The WAS and Sibelco's remaining operations (if any) will be evaluated prior to closure of the WAS. The process for

assessing payments to remaining workers will be advised 12 months prior to WAS closure.

#### Immediate services available

A number of assistance measures under the WAS are available to affected workers prior to redundancy with the remaining assistance measures available from when an affected worker is retrenched.

Affected workers can also access the following Australian Government services immediately following retrenchment:

- Sarina Russo Job Access provide jobactive services on North Stradbroke Island. To make an appointment, please call **131 559**.
- To find your local jobactive provider on the mainland visit [jobsearch.gov.au](http://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 [www.employment.gov.au/jobactive](http://www.employment.gov.au/jobactive).
- For advice on services offered by the Department of Human Services call **13 28 50** or visit [www.humanservices.gov.au](http://www.humanservices.gov.au).

#### Submitting an application

Affected workers must submit applications to the ESM in the first instance. The ESM will undertake an initial review of applications to ensure they meet eligibility requirements and all supporting documentation is included.

The ESM will forward completed applications to the WAS for processing of payments, where applicable.

Employers submit applications for the employer wage subsidy directly via the form available at: [www.treasury.qld.gov.au/growing-queensland/nsi-workers-assistance-scheme](http://www.treasury.qld.gov.au/growing-queensland/nsi-workers-assistance-scheme)

Affected workers should note that receipt of financial assistance under the WAS may impact eligibility of Commonwealth Support Payments (either 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. Contact the Department of Human Services for further information.

#### Application assessment

Applications will be assessed to ensure they meet all eligibility requirements under the WAS, have included all necessary information and that relevant supporting documentation is attached and complete.

#### Payment of assistance

Payment of assistance (where applicable) will be made to the bank account nominated on the application form within 14 business 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 training outside the Annual VET Investment Plan will be paid directly to the training provided, on receipt of an invoice to the DESBT.

Payment of the employer wage subsidy will be delivered to the employer's nominated bank account, provided on the application form, within 14 days of the application and supporting documentation being submitted to the DESBT.

Affected workers may request a review of a decision in relation to the provision of financial assistance under the WAS. An Employee Relations Committee, comprised of Queensland Government representatives including the Office of Industrial Relations, Trade Union and community representatives will perform this function.

## Key terms

### Eligible affected workers

The WAS is available for Sibelco workers employed as at 26 May 2016 at the company's operations on NSI (including the Pinkenba processing plant) made redundant as a result of the cessation of sand mining on NSI.

There are three categories of eligible workers:

#### Permanent Workers

Permanent workers, whether full time or part time, whose employment has been terminated as a consequence of the phasing out of mineral sand mining on NSI will be eligible for assistance measures under the WAS.

#### Long Term Casual Workers

Long term casual workers whose employment has been terminated as a consequence of the phasing out of mineral sand mining on NSI will be eligible for assistance measures under the WAS. A long term casual worker is a casual worker engaged by Sibelco, on a regular and systematic basis, for several periods during a period of at least one (1) year immediately before the worker seeks to access an entitlement under the WAS.

#### Long Term Contract Worker

Long term contract workers whose employment has been terminated as a consequence of the phasing out of mineral sand mining on NSI will be eligible for assistance measures under the WAS. A long term contract worker is a contracted worker engaged by Sibelco, on a regular and systematic basis, for several periods during a period of at least one (1) year immediately before the worker seeks to access an entitlement under the WAS.

### Final ordinary time wages

For the purposes of the housing assistance, commuting subsidy and income supplementation measures in the WAS, final ordinary time wages will be calculated on the annual earnings as specified in the workers' group certificate. This ensures that final ordinary time wages includes the average amount of leave loading an employee earns on an annual basis as well as all regular allowances and regular overtime.

The following allowances are included in determining final ordinary wages (as included on the annual earnings specified on the workers' group certificate):

- Shift work loading
- Weekend work loading
- Regular overtime
- NSI site allowance
- First aid allowance
- Team leader allowance
- Trades skill allowance
- Workplace assessor allowance
- NSI resident allowance

### Continuous service in the mineral sand mining and processing industry with Sibelco on NSI (including the Pinkenba processing plant)

The period where a worker has been employed for at least nine of every twelve months in the mineral sand mining and processing industry with Sibelco on NSI (including the Pinkenba processing plant). In cases where workers have left the industry for more than three months in any one-year and returned, the employment period to determine continuous service will be the most recent period of employment.

### Approved training

Training that provides links to career options for affected workers. This training should align to the eligible worker's individual employment goals, as discussed and approved with the ESM.

### South East Queensland Local Government areas eligible for employer wage subsidy

- Brisbane
- Gold Coast
- Ipswich
- Lockyer Valley
- Logan
- Moreton Bay
- Noosa
- Redland
- Scenic Rim
- Somerset
- Sunshine Coast
- Toowoomba

### List of acronyms

DESBT: Department of Employment, Small Business and Training

ESM: Employment Services Manager

NSI: North Stradbroke Island

WAS: Workers Assistance Scheme

VET: Vocational Education and Training

## Further information

**Web** [www.treasury.qld.gov.au/growing-queensland/nsi-workers-assistance-scheme](http://www.treasury.qld.gov.au/growing-queensland/nsi-workers-assistance-scheme)

**Email** [nsiwas@dsd.qld.gov.au](mailto:nsiwas@dsd.qld.gov.au) **Phone** 0478 405 423