

North Stradbroke Island – Workers Assistance Scheme

Guidelines

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 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
- access to financial advice
- housing assistance
- commuting subsidy
- small business mentoring
- income supplementation
- dislocation assistance
- employer wage subsidy.

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

The NSI WAS is managed by the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (DESBT).

Who can apply for assistance?

In February 2020 eligibility to access the WAS was expanded to include workers employed after the WAS came into effect. The WAS is available for Sibelco workers:

- employed at the company's operations on NSI (including the Pinkenba processing plant) and made redundant 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.

From 1 October 2019, partners of eligible Sibelco workers are also eligible for the assistance elements of job search support and training and skills support (conditions apply).

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 access to financial advice, housing assistance, commuting subsidy, small business mentoring, 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 for processing
- engage case managers, if required, to work on an individual basis with affected workers.



Assistance elements

All assistance elements will cease on 31 May 2021 or when timeframes or caps are reached, whichever comes first.

Job search support

The ESM will deliver this element and provide immediate, direct and tailored services to support affected workers to find alternative employment.

Funding of up to \$2,000 per worker is available for individualised job search support.

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

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

This element assists affected workers acquire additional skills to support them to find alternative employment.

Training must meet the definition of approved training (see Key Terms).

The ESM will provide advice on available training options, including government subsidised training, to facilitate appropriate career changes and/or upskilling.

A maximum of \$2,000 per eligible affected worker will be available for training and skills support, at the discretion of the ESM.

Employees may access training and skills support 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 until the affected worker finds employment with ongoing mentoring provided for up to three months post job placement, if required.

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.

Access to financial advice

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 is independent of the WAS. Workers will need to sign a written waiver agreeing to release the WAS and DESBT from any and all liability in relation to the financial advice obtained.

Housing assistance

This element provides special mortgage/rent assistance to support affected workers who reside on NSI to continue to live on the island and support the local community.

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

This element is available to an eligible worker as a one off payment up to a maximum of \$5,000 per worker.

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

This element provides a commuting subsidy to support affected workers who reside on NSI to continue to live on the island and support the local community.

The commuting subsidy is available for eligible affected workers who continue to reside on NSI to seek employment, attend approved training or attend employment on the mainland. It can be used for motor vehicle registration (up to \$1,500) and/or reimbursement of ferry costs required to travel between the mainland and NSI for employment or training purposes.

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 expended on motor vehicle registration (up to \$1,500) and ferry costs upon application for the 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.

The subsidy is available for a period of up to two years, or until the individual cap is reached, or until the WAS ceases (whichever comes first).

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.

Small business mentoring

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

Sibelco permanent, casual and contract workers are eligible for this element of the WAS.

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

Income supplementation

This element is designed to temporarily assist when there is a reduction in income.

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; and
- are not receiving a Commonwealth Support Payment benefit.

Casual and contract workers are not eligible for this assistance element.

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, or until the WAS ceases (whichever comes first).

Dislocation assistance

This element is designed to assist 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. Eligible affected workers 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.

Casual and contract workers are not eligible for this assistance element.

Employer wage subsidy

The provision of a wage subsidy will be paid to eligible employers who engage an affected worker in permanent employment as follows:

- 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 new position must be based in Queensland.

The subsidy is provided once the affected worker has been employed on a permanent basis for six (6) months continuously.

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 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.

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 support, training and skills support, access to financial advice and small business mentoring 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 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.

How long is assistance available?

All support under the WAS ceases on 31 May 2021 regardless of whether or not a cap or maximum timeframe has been reached.

Workers who continue to be employed with Sibelco after 31 May 2021 may be eligible for job search, training and skills, financial advice and

small business mentoring only. Formal notification of pending redundancy from Sibelco will be required and eligible workers will need to conclude access to these supports prior to closure of the WAS.

Other services available

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. Retrenched workers can register directly with a jobactive provider to receive employment assistance.
- For advice on jobactive call **136 268** or visit www.employment.gov.au/jobactive.
- For advice on services offered by the Australian Department of Human Services call **132 850** or visit 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 complete applications to the WAS for processing of payments, where applicable.

Employers submit applications for the employer wage subsidy directly via the form available at: <https://desbt.qld.gov.au/employment/transition-programs/north-stradbroke-assistance>.

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, include 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 days of the application and supporting documentation being submitted by the ESM.

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 will be paid directly to the training provider, on receipt of a valid 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 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 at the company's operations on NSI (including the Pinkenba processing plant) and made redundant as a result of the cessation of sand mining on NSI, and;
- who work to the end of their employment contract.

This includes permanent, contract and casual workers.

Partner of a worker

A partner of an affected worker is a person they are legally married to, or in a civil union or de facto relationship with, and who they live with on a genuine domestic basis. The gender of the affected worker's partner is not relevant.

Final ordinary time wages

For the purposes of the housing assistance, commuting subsidy and income supplementation elements of the WAS, final ordinary time wages will be calculated on the annual earnings as

specified in the workers' income summary. 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' income summary):

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

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 LGAs eligible for employer wage subsidy

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

More information

For more information on the WAS:

Phone: 0478 405 423

Email: nsiwas@desbt.qld.gov.au

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