

Ex-cyclone Alfred - frequently asked questions

12 March 2025

Ex-cyclone Alfred has caused severe flooding and power outages across southeast Queensland and northern New South Wales in March 2025.

What do I need to know?

If your life or someone else's life is in danger, please call triple zero (000) immediately.

For flood and storm emergency help, call the state emergency service (SES) on 132 500.

Stay informed about storm, flood, and cyclone warnings by visiting the [Queensland Government's Disaster Management website](#).

Being prepared also means having an emergency supplies kit. Please review the [list of suggested items](#) to include in your kit.

ABC Emergency is broadcasting regular warnings on ABC Radio.

- Brisbane: 612AM
- Gold Coast: 91.7FM
- Sunshine Coast: 90.3FM, 95.3FM, or 1566AM
- Wide Bay: 855AM, 100.1FM, 88.3FM
- NSW North Coast Richmond and Tweed: 94.5FM
- Murwillumbah: 720AM
- Grafton: 738AM.

For the latest updates, including a [map](#) of all warnings, please visit [ABC Emergency](#).

Anyone in Australia who has been impacted by the cyclone and needs further support can contact the organisations below.

- Australian Red Cross - phone (1800 733 276) or visit the [Red Cross website](#)
- Lifeline Australia - phone (13 11 14) or visit the [Lifeline website](#)
- 1800 RESPECT - phone (1800 737 732) or visit the [1800 RESPECT website](#).

What is happening with flights? Is travel still occurring?

While some major and regional airports are still open, careful consideration of safety issues and potential travel disruption should be made prior to departure. PALM scheme employers with workers arriving or departing should consider rescheduling flights and delaying departure until it is safe to do so.

If workers do become stranded in transit, employers should make arrangements to ensure their safety and accommodation and notify the department via the PALM scheme support service line on (1800 515 131).

Anyone seeking flight status updates should contact the relevant [airline](#) directly as the travel time approaches or check the [Brisbane Airport website](#) or other airports as relevant for updates.

Passengers can also obtain information directly from the following airlines:

- [Qantas](#)
- [Virgin Australia](#)
- [Jetstar](#).

Employers are required to continue to support the ongoing safety, welfare and wellbeing of workers until such time as they can return to work or home. This includes providing appropriate accommodation if required.

How do employers and workers report if they have been impacted by this event?

For critical and urgent issues, please call the PALM scheme support service line on (1800 51 51 31). For non-critical matters, you should lodge an enquiry through PALMIS.

How should employers support workers in Australia who have been impacted by this event?

PALM scheme employers must continue to support the ongoing safety, welfare and wellbeing of impacted PALM scheme workers.

- Employers must assist workers to engage with the relevant airline about changes to their travel arrangements. Workers should not depart their placements until their return flight details are confirmed.
- Employers must ensure arrangements are in place for suitable accommodation and food for any impacted workers. If possible, work placement arrangements should be extended until return flight arrangements are finalised.
- Employers must familiarise themselves with their workers' visa status and support workers to apply for new visas if required and if possible.
- The department will support the extension of placements if required and where work is available.
- Employers who have PALM scheme workers due to arrive soon are also encouraged to start to think about contingency planning in case of disruptions to mobilisations.

What financial assistance is available?

- Financial assistance is available for people who have been affected by ex-tropical cyclone Alfred.
 - **New South Wales:** The NSW Government has activated financial assistance for residents affected by ex-cyclone Alfred. To determine eligibility, please visit (nsw.gov.au/emergency/recovery/natural-disaster-declarations/fy-2024-25/tropical-cyclone-alfred-severe-weather-6-march-2025#toc-assistance-available).

- **Queensland:** The Queensland Government has activated financial assistance for residents affected by ex- cyclone Alfred. To determine eligibility please visit (qld.gov.au/community/disasters-emergencies/disasters/money-finance/eligibility-apply/tc-alfred-march-2025).
- **National:** The Australian Government has activated financial assistance in response to ex-cyclone Alfred from 2.00pm on 11 March 2025. Please note, PALM scheme workers may not be eligible due to visa conditions. To determine eligibility, please visit (servicessaustralia.gov.au/natural-disaster-support?context=60042).

If a worker needs to be relocated, do I need written approval from the department to change the approved recruitment?

No. Under normal circumstances, changes to approved recruitments or offer of employments must not be made unless the department has given written approval. However, where the circumstances that require the relocation of workers is urgent and unforeseen, only verbal approval is required.

If workers need to move to access ongoing work because they cannot get home, who is responsible for the cost?

The PALM scheme employer is responsible for the cost of relocating the impacted worker.

Will employers be required to submit a new recruitment plan in the event they have ongoing work available for workers while they are awaiting repatriation?

The department's priority is the welfare and wellbeing of PALM scheme workers and employers. We will assess and approve contingencies on a case-by-case basis. Employers are asked to engage closely with their relationship managers and remain flexible as the situation evolves.

Do workers need a new offer of employment if they continue to work for a short period of time after expiry of their recruitment plan?

The department does not need to pre-approve a new offer of employment. PALM scheme employers are asked to communicate clearly and transparently in writing to impacted workers if extending their offer of employment. Generally, employment should be on the same terms as under the worker's previous placement (if this is possible). If you need help with a variation letter, please contact your relationship manager.

What should an employer do if a worker's placement has ended and they have work available for them - but it will not meet the minimum hours requirement?

The department acknowledges the current situation is exceptional and encourages employers to keep workers engaged and employed wherever possible, even if this is for reduced hours until they can depart Australia. The department will take a flexible approach to managing minimum hours given these exceptional circumstances.

Do employers have to provide the \$200 net pay each week while workers cannot return to work or home?

If a PALM scheme worker remains employed, the employer needs to continue to ensure the worker receives a minimum of \$200 each week. This is to ensure the worker has enough money to meet their basic needs until they can return to work or home. Note that debt cannot be carried over to a new placement if workers subsequently return to Australia.

The department acknowledges feedback from employers that workers may have sufficient means to meet their needs and not wish to take on further debts. Employers must retain written evidence (e.g. an email from a worker or a file note of a conversation with a worker) where workers elect not to accept a cash advance for a top-up of wages.

What are an employer's obligation for long-term workers?

PALM scheme employers are reminded to continue their PALM scheme obligations by providing full-time hours to all long-term workers.

If your business operations are affected by the impact of ex-cyclone Alfred and you cannot usefully employ your workers, you may be able to enact standdown provisions in accordance with the PALM scheme guidelines, *Fair Work Act*, or relevant Fair Work instrument as applicable.

If standdowns reduce long-term worker hours to less than 20 hours per week, employers must:

- ensure workers receive the minimum net pay guarantee of \$200 after tax and deductions
- cover the cost of worker accommodation and transport.

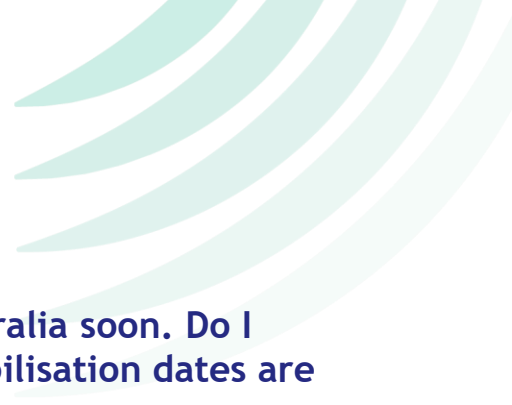
In these circumstances PALM scheme employers must also notify the department. Further information on standdowns is available on the Fair Work Ombudsman website: (fairwork.gov.au/pay-and-wages/stand-downs) and standdowns in the PALM scheme on the PALM scheme page (palmscheme.gov.au/resources/standdowns-palm-scheme).

Do employers have to cover the cost of workers' accommodation and transport if they offer fewer than 20 hours of work in a week?

The department acknowledges the current situation is exceptional and encourages employers to keep workers engaged and employed wherever possible, even if this is for reduced hours until they can depart Australia. The department will take a flexible approach to managing deductions safeguards given these exceptional circumstances. Employers are encouraged to engage with their relationship manager.

If the employer needs to move workers to new accommodation, does the accommodation move require prior approval by the department?

The department's priority is the welfare and wellbeing of PALM scheme workers and employers. We will assess and provide conditional approval that allows workers to move accommodation on a case-by-case basis. Employers are asked to engage closely with their relationship managers and remain flexible as the situation evolves.



I am an employer with workers due to arrive in Australia soon. Do I need to seek reapproval from the department if mobilisation dates are forced to change?

The PALM scheme employer guidelines provide that you must notify us and seek our approval if the variation to the arrival or departure date has changed or is likely to change by more than 2 weeks of the dates specified. The department acknowledges the current situation is exceptional and requests that you advise us by creating an enquiry case in PALMIS of any changes to mobilisation dates, but it will not require our pre-approval.

Can workers continue to work after the expiry of their recruitment plan until they can return home?

PALM scheme employers must support impacted workers to return home as soon as reasonably possible.

If workers need to remain in Australia for a short time after their placement has ended the department will support the extension of placements if required and where work is available.

Please note the implications for visas outlined below.

What if a worker still has time before their 403 visa expires?

PALM scheme employers are encouraged to continue employing and supporting PALM scheme workers whose visa duration has not yet expired. The 403 visa remains valid in this circumstance.

Question: ‘My visa is still valid for more than 7 days?’

If you hold a valid visa you will remain lawful.

Question: ‘My visa is about to expire in the next 7 days?’

If you hold a valid visa you will remain lawful. If your visa is due to expire in the next 7 days, please see the Department of Home Affairs website: (immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/what-we-do/status-resolution-service/overview).

Question: ‘My visa has expired?’

If you are unable to depart and your visa has expired, please see the Department of Home Affairs website: (immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/visa-about-to-expire). PALM scheme employers are encouraged to contact the Department of Home Affairs via the online Status Resolution Service to discuss support options available for PALM scheme workers whose repatriation plans have been impacted by the Tropical Cyclone Alfred.

Employers are required to continue to support the ongoing safety, welfare and wellbeing of workers until such time as they can return home.