

Tasmanian Planning Scheme

Amendment 05-2024 of the SPPs – Agricultural Worker Accommodation – Fact sheet

What is agricultural worker accommodation?

Agricultural worker accommodation is for workers employed in agricultural uses, such as fruit picking and packing, dairies or sheep shearing. The accommodation can be for seasonal or permanent workers, and may be in self-contained units or part of a shared facility. It must be on land zoned Rural or Agriculture in the Tasmanian Planning Scheme.

Can accommodation for agricultural workers be located in other zones?

Yes. Workers often stay in villages and towns near the farms where they work. They may also stay in visitor accommodation like motels, backpacker hostels, or caravan parks. The proposed changes do not impact this.

What are the proposed changes?

The proposed changes improve the current planning requirements for agricultural worker accommodation meaning that agricultural businesses will have the flexibility, when needed, to accommodate their labour force on site.

The changes include:

- Adding a definition for ‘agricultural worker accommodation’
- Clarifying how the use is categorised in the planning scheme
- Creating a Permitted approval pathway for modest-scale agricultural worker accommodation
- Simplifying the assessment standards, like setbacks, vehicular access and parking for approval of agricultural worker accommodation
- Consistent requirements in both the Rural Zone and Agriculture Zone.

Why is the reason for the proposed changes?

The agricultural industry is a major employer and amongst the largest contributors to Tasmania’s economy. The Tasmanian Government has a goal of increasing the value of the agricultural sector to \$10 billion by 2050. Current housing shortages are making it difficult to accommodate the agricultural labour force and it is important to improve the options available.

Will the proposed changes make it harder to build agricultural worker accommodation?

No. The proposed changes will make it easier by clarifying the requirements that apply and providing certainty for agricultural businesses seeking planning approval. The proposed Permitted approval pathway guarantees planning approval for agricultural worker

accommodation provided it meets any other relevant code requirements in the planning scheme. This means any requirements on heritage, natural values or natural hazards.

How do the proposed changes differ to the current requirements?

The Agriculture Zone already includes Discretionary¹ approval of residential development required as part of an agricultural use. This could include farmhouses, farm managers residences, or agricultural worker accommodation. The Rural Zone currently limits residential development to a single dwelling per title which limits the approval of agricultural worker accommodation.

The proposed changes introduce specific requirements for the assessment of agricultural worker accommodation in both the Rural Zone and Agriculture Zone, including a Permitted² approval pathway for modest-scale accommodation.

Current requirements for Residential or Visitor Accommodation approvals in other zones are not affected as the proposed changes only apply to the Rural Zone and Agriculture Zone.

What are the proposed Permitted and Discretionary approval pathways?

A Permitted² approval pathway guarantees receiving a planning permit when all relevant Acceptable Solutions are met. Under the proposed changes, a planning application will be approved if:

- it accommodates up to 20 workers;
- the workers are employed on the site or an adjoining site in the same ownership;
- the accommodation is located on the same lot as either an existing dwelling or an existing building or facility where the workers are employed;
- the accommodation shares the vehicular access and electricity connections with the dwelling, or shares the vehicular access with the existing building or facility;
- the accommodation is on a lot, or is part of a farm, that is 40 hectares or larger;
- any other relevant Acceptable Solutions are met in the zone (such as building height and setbacks), and
- any matters in the relevant codes (e.g. heritage, natural values, or natural hazards).

Applications that do not meet the Permitted requirements will be assessed through the Discretionary¹ approval pathway.

The council may ask for a business plan for the agricultural use to show that the accommodation is needed. This is to make sure that our valuable agricultural land is kept

¹ The council can make a decision to approve or refuse to issue a planning permit for a Discretionary use or development based on an assessment against the planning requirements. Discretionary applications are subject to public comment and appeals on the council decision can be lodged by a third-party.

² A planning permit is required for a Permitted use or development. The council must issue a planning permit for a Permitted application which may be subject to conditions.

available for agricultural uses to meet the [State Policy on the Protection of Agricultural Land 2009](#).

What types of agricultural worker accommodation can be built?

The proposed changes do not control the type of accommodation that can be built. The operator can choose the accommodation type that best suits their needs and budget, whether permanent or temporary buildings and modular, or transportable housing options.

Can I build accommodation for more than 20 workers, or on farms smaller than 40 hectares?

Yes. This will be considered by the council through the Discretionary approval pathway. The council may ask for a business plan to show that it is needed as part of an agricultural use.

Can I build accommodation for workers employed on other farms?

Yes. Accommodation can be approved for workers employed on other farms. The Permitted approval pathway provides flexibility so that workers can be employed on other farms provided they are also employed on the farm on which they are accommodated. Accommodation for workers not employed on that site will be considered under the Discretionary approval pathway.

Can agricultural workers be accommodated in towns?

Yes, the proposed changes do not affect this. There are a variety of housing options that can be approved in residential zones or mixed use and business in towns.

Why aren't changes proposed for other workers in remote locations?

Other projects are considering the housing needs of other remote workers, such as those employed in mines and renewable energy projects on the West Coast. These industries have more complex issues to consider.

Can agricultural worker accommodation be used as visitor accommodation?

Yes. An application could be made at any time for approval of the use of agricultural worker accommodation as visitor accommodation (e.g. farm stays) when not being used for workers. Any visitor accommodation would need to be assessed against the relevant requirements in the planning scheme.

Why is the Government seeking to bring SPPs amendment 05-2024 into effect sooner?

The Government wants to implement improvements as a priority through an 'interim' SPPs amendment. An interim SPPs amendment allows changes to be brought into effect earlier. The process for an SPPs amendment to become an interim SPPs amendment is shown in a flowchart below. This process has recently been used to bring the planning requirements for Tasmania's Container Refund Scheme into effect earlier.

Are there other building and plumbing requirements for agricultural worker accommodation?

Building and plumbing requirements are separate, and in addition, to the planning requirements.

You should check with your council whether a building or plumbing permit is needed.

General enquiries about the Government's planning reform agenda and the Tasmanian Planning Scheme should be directed to:

State Planning Office, Department of Premier and Cabinet

GPO Box 123

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Flowchart – Preparation and assessment of draft SPPs amendments process under LUPA Act:

