



**IRRIGATION  
AUSTRALIA**

## **Impacts of COVID-19 on Agricultural Water Management in Australia**

## **General overview of the spread of the COVID-19 (could be collected from international archives)**

COVID-19 has resulted in nearly 2000 deaths in Australia and over 204,000 cases. More than 50% of the deaths have been in Victoria. Regions such as Victoria and NSW have entered long periods of lockdown and other regions such as QLD and WA have only suffered mild disruption. Melbourne has the record of the longest period of lockdown of any city in the world.

The initial impacts of the pandemic in Australia appeared to have increased levels of psychological distress, particularly for adults aged 18–45. By April 2021, the average level of psychological distress had returned to pre-pandemic levels, however continued to be higher for young people

## Impacts on agriculture and lives in rural area

Apart from the loss of life and serious health consequences arising from the impact of COVID-19 the most significant impact on agriculture has been the inability of farmers to access seasonal labour which traditionally comes from international people/students on work visas. This has resulted in many crops, fruit and vegetables not being able to be harvested and product is left to rot on the ground. This creates a negative economic impact on farmers and the Australian economy. Now that vaccination rates are improving and international borders opening it is hoped that this problem will not reoccur.

Australia's agricultural trade has by and large continued unhindered by the COVID-19 pandemic. But for some sectors, such as those closely associated with food service and those reliant on air freight, there were some significant disruptions. The Australian Government and industry continue to work together to ensure that Australia's trade profile remains strong. Main impact areas were exports of meat, seafood & dairy products.

However official trade data indicates that, despite the pandemic, most agricultural exports have continued to leave Australia and reach consumers in international markets. Export levels have been on par with what would have otherwise been expected during early 2020

## **Impacts on water resources management including domestic water supply**

There is no evidence that drinking water is affected by coronavirus and drinking water in Australia is of a high quality and is well treated.

The Australian Drinking Water Guidelines developed by the National Health and Medical Research Council provide rigorous guideline values for water utilities to follow.

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## **Impacts on agricultural water management**

There has not been a significant impact from COVID-19 on agricultural water management.

## **Measures taken for the impacts, including governmental project**

The Australian government have provided significant COVID-19 financial support for businesses and individuals impacted by lockdowns. The Government also recently announced additional funding for water efficient projects.

The Off-farm Efficiency Grants Program provides owners or operators of water delivery infrastructure in the Murray-Darling Basin up to \$150 million in funding to help achieve a sustainable future for the Murray-Darling Basin, its people, industries and the environment. Grants of \$50,000 to \$150 million to cover up to 100% of eligible project costs