

Regional, rural and remote term contract checklist

Questions to ask before you accept an agency contract

Taking your first nursing agency contract in a regional, rural or remote area can be one of the most incredible opportunities you can take as a nurse. The more knowledgeable you are about the services provided by your agency, the contract on offer, and what is provided your host facility, the better your experience will be. Use this checklist as a guide to make sure you ask your agency, and yourself, all the questions that are important to you.

Agency details: name; consultant name; date contacted; how contacted; when will they get back to you

About your agency

- Has the agency or recruiter been recommended by someone who has worked with them before?
- Does the agency adhere to a code of conduct as a member of a professional body such as the Recruitment, Consulting & Staffing Association (RCSA)?
- What is the background of your recruiter? How long have they been in this role, placing nurses? If it is important to you, are they a nurse?
- Do they understand what it is like to work on an agency contract from first-hand experience? How many nurses is the recruiter managing in contracts?
- Does the agency have a Labour Hire licence (if required) for the State your contract is in?
- If it is important to you, is the agency ISO accredited? (ISO is a quality management system that helps organisations ensure they meet customer and other stakeholder needs within statutory and regulatory requirements related to the product or service they provide).

Regional, rural and remote term contract checklist

Questions to ask about your contract

About your agency

- How often does the agency check in with you while on contract?
- Has the agency placed nurses with this client before?

About the contract

- How long is the contract? What is the start date? what is the finish date?
- Who is your contact person at the agency for all things related to your contract?
- When you get your contract, read it thoroughly. Do the working conditions discussed with the agency align with the contract?

About the recruitment process

- Who makes the decision about whether you are accepted for the role? The agency or the facility?
- How long is the recruitment cycle for this role? How long will it take for you to be notified if you are successful in securing this role?
- How long will it be between when you accept, when you sign the contract and when the contract starts? What are the next steps in the recruitment process?

Regional, rural and remote term contract checklist

Questions to ask about your contract

About the role

- Why is this role vacant?
- What is the Scope of Clinical Practice for the role?
Does it match your experience level?
- Will you be required to work in other parts of the facility in areas outside of your skills and experience? (NB: You can refuse to be redeployed!).

About the facility

- What is the name and address of the facility?
- Has the agency sent nurses there before, and if so, what was the feedback from those nurses?
- How long did the last agency nurse stay in this role?
- Have nurses reported any negative experiences in the past? Why?
- What is the culture like in the facility?
- Are there testimonials or references available from past agency nurses?
- Can you speak to the person who last worked on this contract?
- Can you speak to the NUM or DON before you accept the contract?
- How many beds does the facility have?
- How many staff are currently there?

Regional, rural and remote term contract checklist

Questions to ask about your contract

About the facility

- How many staff are there when the facility is at capacity?
- Are records at the facility computer-based or paper-based?
- Is the on-site parking at the facility? Is it free? If paid, how much does it cost?
- Who will meet you on your first shift? Where will you meet?
- Who is your contact person at the facility?

About rosters, shifts and hours

- Can you see your shift allocation before you arrive? If so, when will you get to see it? How far in advance are rosters created?
- Is there an equitable shift allocation? (Are you OK with getting the shifts no one wants?)
- How long are the shifts? What are the start and finish times?
- What are the minimum hours the facility is required to provide you?
- Does the agency have a minimum hours guarantee?
- Are there any flexible arrangements on offer, such as no nights or alternate weekends? Is on-call expected? If so, how often? What is the on-call rate of pay? Do you work alone on-call?
- Are fatigue provisions in place? Are late/early shifts the norm? If so, what is the minimum time between back-to-back shifts?

Regional, rural and remote term contract checklist

Questions to ask about your contract

About rosters, shifts and hours

- Will the contract end on a night shift or day shift? Can I request that it doesn't end on a night shift?

About pay, bonuses, benefits and incentives

- Are the rates on offer agency rates, or facility rates (sometimes known as Category 1 = Agency Rates, or Category 2 = Facility Rates)?
- What is the hourly rate?
- Is the pay rate a base rate plus Super, loading etc or is it all-inclusive?
- What is the pay rate for on-call, and for after-hours, nights, and weekends?
- What are the pay rates for recall/callbacks and how does it work if you're on leave/fatigue time? Does the rate of pay match your year level, level of experience and post-graduate qualifications you have?
- How frequently will you get paid?
- What is the first pay date in the contract?
- Who is your employer? The facility or the agency?
- Who pays you? The facility or the agency?
- If both, what is the rate you will be paid by the facility, and what is the rate you will be paid by the agency? Is overtime expected? How much overtime is expected?

Regional, rural and remote term contract checklist

Questions to ask about your contract

About pay, bonuses, benefits and incentives

- Is overtime paid or offered as an Additional Day Off (ADO). If ADO, when can the ADO be taken? If paid, when does overtime pay start? (Immediately, after one hour, two hours or more?)
- If, for example, you are contracted to do an 80 hr fortnight, do you need to work 80 hrs before you can claim any overtime? (Not sure if your overtime will be approved by your agency? Check your contract before signing it!)
- Are there any sign-on, relocation, training or completion bonuses or incentives? When are they paid?
- Is professional indemnity insurance covered by the agency or do I need to have my own? Is salary sacrificing available?
- Is there a Living Away From Home Allowance (LAFHA)? What is it? When is it paid?

About safety considerations

- Has there been any local violence, break-ins, assaults, or sexual assaults in the area in the past X# months?
- Is there security staff at the facility? Are they there 24 hours? Are they able to accompany you to your vehicle after shifts if needed?
- What are the security arrangements at your accommodation?
- Are you expected to attend to patients outside of work hours on your own?

Regional, rural and remote term contract checklist

Questions to ask about your contract

About transportation

- Will the agency pay in full for your travel from Point A (eg: Home) to Point B (Your accommodation) as well as your return travel?
- If they will pay in full, will they pay in full before you travel or are you expected to pay upfront and they will reimburse after a specific time?
- When you arrive, how do you get to your accommodation? Who pays for it?
- When you leave, how do you get to your departure point? Who pays for it?
- If transport is provided, what sort of transport is it? Plane, train, bus, car?
- Is it possible to drive-in drive-out (DIDO) and bunch shifts together so you can drive home on days off?
- If you are expected to pay upfront and then get reimbursed, when will you get reimbursed? Do you get reimbursed for the full amount paid or a portion of the cost?
- Is transport provided between your accommodation and the facility? If so, what sort of transport is it? If a car is provided, who pays for the fuel? Is it included?
- Does the vehicle have fully comprehensive insurance including roadside assistance? If a rental car is provided and rates are subsidised, are corporate rates available?
- What is the distance in km between the accommodation and the facility? If transport is required between the facility and accommodation, what transport is provided?
- If you are expected to walk between accommodation and facility to attend shifts, what is the walking distance and estimated time it will take?

Regional, rural and remote term contract checklist

Questions to about your contract

About transportation

- Will you have access to a vehicle to go shopping; to get to and from the facility to use on our days off? If so, is it shared? If a car is provided, who pays for the fuel? Is it included? Does the vehicle have fully comprehensive insurance including roadside assistance? If a rental car is provided and rates are subsidised, are corporate rates available?

About accommodation

- Is accommodation provided? If yes, what is the address of the accommodation?
- What type of accommodation is provided? Nurses quarters, single room, single accommodation, family unit, private rental, motel, hotel, facility-owned accommodation, family house etc?
- Does the accommodation have a shared kitchen, shared bathroom or ensuite, on-site lock-up car parking, shared laundry, private laundry, air-conditioning, heating etc.
- If accommodation is shared, is there a lock on the bedroom? Is there a lock on the bathroom? Are you comfortable sharing accommodation with other women/men or would you prefer single-sex accommodation?
- Is the accommodation clean, safe and private? Has the agency had complaints about the cleanliness, safety and privacy of the accommodation? Will the accommodation be professionally cleaned before arrival, or is it cleaned by the past agency nurse?
- Is the accommodation paid for in full, or is it subsidised? If subsidised, by how much?

Regional, rural and remote term contract checklist

Questions to ask before you accept an agency contract

About accommodation

- If the agency or client pays in full, will they pay in full before you travel or are you expected to pay upfront and they will reimburse after a specific time?
- Will your accommodation and room remain the same for the duration of the contract or will you have to change rooms each week?
- What is the parking like at the accommodation? Are spaces designated? Is parking free or paid? If paid, how much does it cost?
- When and where will you get the keys to access the accommodation? From a real estate agent or from the facility? Who is the contact person for this and what is their phone number, email address and opening hours?

About orientation and your first shift

- Will you get a full orientation to the facility on arrival?
- What does the facility consider a full orientation?
- How long will the orientation take?
- When will orientation take place?
- Who will give you the orientation?
- Who will meet you on your first shift?
- Is orientation paid?

Regional, rural and remote term contract checklist

Questions to ask about your contract

About training and education

- Will you have access to educational opportunities and is there a cost to you for this?
- Will the cost of your mandatory training be covered? If so, exactly what will be covered in full?

About uniform

- Are uniforms supplied? What type? Scrub top and scrub pants or polo shirt and pants? How many uniforms are supplied?
- How are uniforms laundered? By the facility or by you?
- If so, will you have laundry facilities at your accommodation?
- Do you need to use an external laundry and pay for laundry? If so, what is the cost? Where it is located?
- Will you have enough clean uniforms and time to launder between shifts?

Internet & Phone

- Is there mobile phone coverage? Are there any mobile providers that don't work there?
- Is internet included in the accommodation?
- What type of internet connection is it?

Regional, rural and remote term contract checklist

Questions to ask about your contract

About family

- Can you bring your partner / children?
- If so, is family accommodation provided?

About pets

- Can you take pets? What sort of pets can you take?
- If you wish to take your dog, is there a fenced area and can dogs be left there while you work?
- If you cannot take your pets, will costs for their boarding at the venue of your choice while away be covered by the agency and paid for in advance?

About shopping

- Is there a local shop? How close is it to your accommodation?
- What does it sell? What doesn't it sell? Do I need to buy water?
- What are the shop opening hours?
- Is there an option of ordering from and receiving deliveries from the shop before you arrive and during your contract?
- What transport is on offer to go grocery shopping?

