

Friday, 30 July 2021

COVID-19 – Pandemic Leave and Payments as at 30 July 2021

Introduction

1. Recent COVID-19 outbreaks across Australia have again highlighted the inadequacy of the Morrison Government's responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and its continuing failure to look after Australian workers.
2. This briefing note covers the limited support that is currently available for workers who are affected by recent COVID-19 outbreaks in their state or territory.
3. The Commonwealth Government's JobKeeper program ended on 28 March 2021, removing a vital support for workers.
4. A number of workers are entitled to unpaid pandemic leave through their relevant Modern Award.¹ In March of 2021, the paid pandemic leave provisions operating in a number of health care sector awards (including *the Aged Care Award 2010*) expired.

Payments Currently Available

5. Here's what is currently available for your members in each state and territory, including eligibility and how to apply:²

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¹ See *COVID-19 Award Flexibility Schedules* [2021] FWCFB 1601

² Note: Different arrangements and entitlements may apply at the workplace level, for instance where these have been won through collective bargaining. This does not cover what may or may not be available for self-employed persons, contractors etc.

State	Payment	Eligibility	How to Apply
Commonwealth Provided (all states)	<p>COVID-19 Disaster Payment</p> <p>Payment varies based on location and hours of work lost. For SA and VIC if claiming for the most recent (now ended) lockdowns, you can claim \$375 per week if you lost between 8 and 20 hours of work and \$600 for weeks in which you lost 20 hours or more. In NSW, amounts vary based on location and time period, ranging from \$325 for the lower payment and \$500 for the higher payment for the first weeks of lockdown (8 July to 14 July) through to \$450 and \$750 respectively for future weeks. Exact dates and areas for each payment level are available HERE.</p>	<p>The general eligibility requirements for the payment are: ³</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live, work or have visited a Commonwealth declared COVID-19 hotspot.⁴ • Are in paid employment and cannot attend work and lost income during a recognised COVID-19 'event' • Have no entitlement to relevant paid leave (pandemic leave) or have exhausted their entitlement. • are an Australian resident or hold an eligible working visa; • are aged 17 years or older; and • The liquid assets test does not apply to this payment, but this waiver is applied event by event so it may apply to future version of the payment. <p>You do not need to have lost all your hours to be eligible for this payment, you only need to have met the hours lost requirement for each payment.</p> <p>Workers cannot receive payment if they are receiving any income support payment or the Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment for the same period;</p> <p>Each State affected also has specific rules for eligibility, which outline the specific areas of the state in which you must work, reside or have visited in order to be eligible for payment and the dates for which you are eligible to claim. New sections are added as lockdowns begin in new states. You can still claim for past periods in states where lockdowns have ended. The current rules can be found at: Victoria, NSW, SA.</p>	<p>Via a MyGov Account linked to Centrelink. Visa holders can claim by telephone.⁵</p>

³ For more information on eligibility, visit

<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/covid-19-disaster-payment>

⁴ For a list of declared hotspots, visit <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/listing-areas-of-covid-19-local-transmission-as-hotspots>

⁵ For more information on how to claim, visit

<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/covid-19-disaster-payment/how-claim>

State	Payment	Eligibility	How to Apply
		Claims for each week of lockdown open and close at their own individual times, which are available through the state links above. If you claim for a single week, you will have the option of receiving automatic payments for future weeks. If you do this and you later go back to work or your hours lost in a week changes, you MUST notify Services Australia.	
	<p>Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment.</p> <p>\$1,500 for each 14-day period of self-isolation, quarantine or care.</p>	<p>For workers who:⁶</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannot earn income due to a requirement to self-isolate or quarantine because you have COVID-19 or have been a close contact of someone who does (having been directed by a health official) or are caring for a child who has COVID-19 or is a close contact of someone who does (note: in these circumstances a 14 day quarantine/self-isolation period would be required).⁷ • Are aged above 17 years old; • Live in a state or territory; • Are Australian residents or hold an eligible working visa; • Have no entitlement to relevant paid leave or have exhausted their entitlement. <p>Eligibility periods differ between states and territories (i.e. in Victoria, the period of quarantine must be <i>after</i> July 5 2020, in NSW <i>after</i> 17 September 2020).</p> <p>Workers cannot receive payment if, during the quarantine/self-isolation period, they have received any income, income support, or payments such as the: (no longer available) JobKeeper, the (no longer available) Victorian</p>	<p>Via telephone (by calling 180 22 66). Or by completing a form (which is different in each state):⁸</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victoria; • NSW; • Queensland; • WA; • SA • ACT; • Tasmania

⁶ Eligibility criteria for each state and territory are available here:

<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/pandemic-leave-disaster-payment>

⁷ Note: This payment covers quarantine arising from having COVID-19 or being a close contact of someone with COVID-19, but not, for instance, as a result of being tested. Quarantine arising from visiting a tier-1 exposure site in Victoria is covered, with quarantine arising from visiting a Commonwealth declared COVID-19 hotspot in Sydney to be covered from 1 July 2021.

⁸ For more information on how to claim, visit

<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/pandemic-leave-disaster-payment>.

State	Payment	Eligibility	How to Apply
		Coronavirus (COVID-19) Worker Support Payment or the Queensland Hardship Payment.	
New South Wales	Support for Sole Traders (COVID-19 Micro Business Grants). Co-funded with Commonwealth. \$1500 per fortnight.	To be eligible for this payment, a business or sole trader must have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A turnover between \$30k and \$75k • A revenue decline of 30% or more due to the NSW lockdown • Businesses that provide the primary income source for a person associated with the business. 	Register your interest with Service NSW
	Support for Sole Traders (JobSaver). Co-funded with Commonwealth. Non-employing business: \$1,000 per week (Also available to employing businesses at a higher rate)	Eligible businesses must have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A revenue decline of 30% or more • Turnover between \$75,000 and \$50 million <p>The NSW government has indicated that employing businesses will be required to commit to maintaining their employment levels to receive this payment, but this requirement doesn't apply to sole traders.</p>	Register your interest with Service NSW
Victoria	\$450 Coronavirus (COVID-19) test isolation payment	For workers who: ⁹ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are aged above 17 years old; • have been, or are the carer or guardian of someone who has been, tested for COVID-19. • Were likely to work but not able to due to post-test self-isolation requirement; • Did not receive any income for the period. • Have no entitlement to relevant leave or have exhausted their entitlement. <p>Can be received <i>in addition to</i> \$1,500 Pandemic Leave Disaster payment (if eligible for both).</p>	Via Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions website .

⁹ For more information on eligibility, visit <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/450-coronavirus-covid-19-test-isolation-payment>

State	Payment	Eligibility	How to Apply
South Australia	SA COVID-19 Cluster Isolation Payment. \$300.	For workers who: ¹⁰ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are required to and have undertaken a COVID-19 test because they have visited a declared exposure site; Have been lost work due to the post-test self-isolation requirements; and Do not have access to paid leave or other income support. 	Via online application form . ¹¹
Australian Capital Territory	COVID-19 Test Hardship Isolation Payment \$270 for the first 3 days' isolation and \$90/day thereafter (if test result delayed).	For workers who: ¹² <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reside, or work at least 80% of the time, in ACT; are unable to work, and not receiving income as result of post-test self-isolation requirement. <p>have no entitlement to relevant leave or have exhausted their entitlement. have less than \$5,000 and are not receiving commonwealth income support.</p> <p>Not available to most Commonwealth and territory Government employees.</p>	Via online application form . ¹³ May be claimed once per 30 day period.
Queensland, Western Australia, Northern Territory ¹⁴	No specific state-based payments. Workers may be eligible for the Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment or the COVID-19 Disaster payment.		

¹⁰ For more information on eligibility, visit <https://www.covid-19.sa.gov.au/school-and-community/financial-support-for-individuals>

¹¹ <https://www.covid-19.sa.gov.au/school-and-community/financial-support-for-individuals>

¹² For more information on eligibility, visit https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/1621627/CV_Hardship-Isolation-Payment-Guidelines.pdf

¹³ For more information on claiming, visit <https://form.act.gov.au/smartforms/servlet/SmartForm.html?formCode=1563>

¹⁴ Other non-industrial forms of assistance may apply, for example in WA a \$600 electricity credit was applied to residential accounts.