

INFORMATION ABOUT ELIGIBILITY FOR SOCIAL SECURITY DURING COVID-19

8 April 2020

The Federal Government has announced a number of changes to social security to support people who have lost their job or face other difficulties during the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis. While these measures are very welcome, they have not been extended to all people in Australia, leaving many people on temporary visas and bridging visas in very vulnerable situations. Further, many refugees and people seeking asylum, as well as the organisations and people supporting them, are confused about the various eligibility criteria for these packages.

The following answers a number of frequently asked questions about eligibility for these new measures during the COVID-19 crisis.

Please note that these policies are rapidly changing due to the current crisis. We will endeavor to keep this page as up-to-date as possible. For further information please refer to the relevant websites provided below.

Services Australia also has translated factsheets available [online here](#).

Short summary for refugees and people seeking asylum

- Refugees on a permanent visa (e.g. subclasses 200, 201, 202, 203, 204 and 866) are eligible for JobSeeker, the Coronavirus Supplement, Economic Support Payments and JobKeeper Subsidy.
- Refugees on a Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) or a Safe Haven Enterprise Visa (SHEV) are eligible for Special Benefit (same rate as JobSeeker), the Coronavirus Supplement and the Economic Support Payments. They are not eligible for the JobKeeper Subsidy. However, if a person on a SHEV receives Special Benefit for more than 30 months, this may affect their eligibility for another visa via the SHEV Pathway. Students over 18 on a SHEV or TPV studying full time are not eligible for these supports.
- People seeking asylum, including those on a Bridging Visa, are not eligible for any of these payments. However, RCOA is continuously advocating to change this policy and will update this information should this change. You may be eligible for support through the Status Resolution Support Service.

JobSeeker

JobSeeker is the new name for a number of Centrelink payments that have been combined into a single new payment. It provides financial help for people over 22

who are unemployed, underemployed or who are sick or injured and cannot work. Those previously on Newstart and other payments have now been moved to the new JobSeeker payment.

People aged 21 and younger are able to access Youth Allowance for job seekers.

Who is eligible for JobSeeker?

Australian citizens and permanent residence are eligible for JobSeeker. The usual two-year waiting period for permanent residents has been waived during the COVID-19 crisis.

This means that refugees on a permanent visa (subclasses 200, 201, 202, 203, 204 and 866), as well as those who have Australian citizenship are eligible for JobSeeker.

How much can I get on JobSeeker?

Your JobSeeker Payment amount depends on your situation, including if you have children and how much you earn per fortnight. If you are single without children you can receive up to \$565.70 per fortnight.

You can continue to work while you receive JobSeeker. The more you earn, the less income support you receive.

For more information on JobSeeker payment and eligibility see [here](#).

The Coronavirus Supplement

The Coronavirus Supplement is temporary fortnightly payment of \$550 per fortnight, to assist people who have lost their job or have reduced wages during this period.

Who is eligible for the Coronavirus Supplement?

You'll automatically get the supplement if you're getting one of these payments:

- JobSeeker Payment, Partner Allowance, Widow Allowance, Sickness Allowance and Wife Pension
- Youth Allowance for job seekers
- Youth Allowance for students and apprentices
- Austudy for students and apprentices
- ABSTUDY for students getting Living Allowance
- Parenting Payment partnered and single
- Farm Household Allowance

- Special Benefit.

This means that refugees on TPVs or SHEVs who are receiving Special Benefit, as well as refugees on permanent visas who are receiving other Centrelink payments (such as JobSeeker) are eligible for the full Coronavirus Supplement.

Can I still receive the Coronavirus Supplement if I work?

You will still be eligible for the full \$550 Coronavirus Supplement if you work, provided you have not earned more than the limit for your other Centrelink payment.

For example, if you are single and on JobSeeker, you can earn up to \$1,086 per fortnight before your JobSeeker payment is reduced to \$0. As long as you receive a payment (no matter how small) through JobSeeker, you will be eligible for the full \$550 Coronavirus Supplement per fortnight.

For more information on the Coronavirus Supplement see [here](#).

\$750 Economic Support Payment

The Economic Support Payment is a one-off payment of \$750 for people who are receiving certain Government benefits. The first payment was announced for people who were receiving Government benefits between 12 March 2020 and 13 April 2020. A second Economic Support Payment will be provided from 13 July 2020 to those receiving certain Government benefits on 10 July 2020.

Who is eligible for the Economic Support Payment?

Most people receiving income support from Centrelink are eligible for the Economic Support Payment. This includes refugees on TPVs or SHEVs who are receiving Special Benefit, as well as refugees on permanent visas.

For a full list of eligibility and more information see [here](#).

JobKeeper Subsidy

The JobKeeper Subsidy is a payment of \$1500 per employee to eligible businesses and non-profit organisations.

What businesses and non-profit organisations are eligible for the JobKeeper Subsidy?

Employers will be eligible for the subsidy if:

- their business has a turnover of less than \$1 billion and their turnover has

- fallen by more than 30 per cent (of at least a month); or
- their business has a turnover of \$1 billion or more and their turnover has fallen by more than 50 per cent (of at least a month); or
- they are a not-for-profit enterprise and have their turnover has fallen by more than 15 per cent.

Self-employed businesses (e.g. sole-traders) are also eligible if they meet the above tests.

What employees are eligible?

Eligible employees are employees who:

- are currently employed by the eligible employer (including those stood down or re-hired)
- were employed by the employer at 1 March 2020
- are full-time, part-time, or long-term casuals (a casual employed on a regular basis for longer than 12 months as at 1 March 2020)
- are at least 16 years of age
- are an Australian citizen, the holder of a permanent visa, a Protected Special Category Visa Holder, a non-protected Special Category Visa Holder who has been residing continually in Australia for 10 years or more, or a Special Category (Subclass 444) Visa Holder
- are not in receipt of a JobKeeper Payment from another employer

This means that people on temporary visas, including refugees on Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs) and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas (SHEVs), as well as people seeking asylum on Bridging Visas are not eligible for the JobKeeper Subsidy.

Refugees on permanent visas and those who are Australian Citizens are eligible for the JobKeeper Subsidy.

RCOA has advocated to amend this criteria to allow all temporary visa holders access to the JobKeeper Subsidy, but as of yet these recommendations have not been accepted. We will continue to advocate for people on temporary visas and will update this information should the eligibility change.

For more information on the JobKeeper Subsidy see [here](#).

Refugees on TPVs and SHEVs

Refugees on Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs) and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas (SHEVs) are not eligible for JobSeeker or JobKeeper. However, they are eligible for Special Benefit, which is the same rate as JobSeeker, as well as the Coronavirus

Supplement and the Economic Support Payments (outlined above).

What is Special Benefit?

Special Benefit is a Centrelink payment for people who are not eligible for any other Centrelink payment (for example, because of their visa). Currently, refugees on TPVs and SHEVs are eligible for Special Benefit.

Special Benefit is paid at the same rate as JobSeeker (above) and has similar criteria about working. However, people who are studying full time are not eligible for Special Benefit.

What if I am studying?

Refugees on TPVs or SHEVs who are over 18 years old and studying full time are not eligible for Special Benefit. However, they can study part time provided they meet other obligations (such as looking for work).

For more information about studying on a TPV or SHEV and receiving Special Benefit see [RCOA's webpage here](#).

We have advocated to change this policy to allow students on a TPV and SHEV to continue receiving Special Benefit and will update this page if this changes.

What about the SHEV pathway?

Currently, people on a SHEV are encouraged to work or study in a designated regional area for 42 months, without receiving Special Benefit. If they do so, they are able to apply for other skilled, student or partner visas, but must also meet the criteria for those visa.

This means that if someone receives Special Benefit, they will not be able to count this time towards meeting the pathway requirement.

RCOA is advocating to change this policy so that refugees on a SHEV are not penalised for accessing Special Benefit during the COVID-19 crisis.

People seeking asylum

Currently, people seeking asylum, such as those on a bridging visa, are not eligible for JobSeeker, the Coronavirus Supplement, Economic Support Payments or the JobKeeper Subsidy. You may be able to receive support through the Status Resolution Support Service (SRSS) and should contact your caseworker about this.

RCOA is continuously advocating to ensure that all residents, including people seeking asylum, have access to a safety net during the COVID-19 crisis.

For more information on our advocacy, see [here](#).

Students

Full time refugee students on permanent visas are able to access Youth Allowance and AusStudy, as previously. In addition, if they are receiving these payments, they should also be eligible for the Coronavirus Supplement and the Economic Support Payments.

However, refugees on TPVs or SHEVs who are over 18 years old and studying full time are not eligible for income support through Special Benefit or other Centrelink payments.

Free child care

New policies announced on 2 April 2020 mean that the Federal Government will provide free child care to all families. Child care providers will receive an ongoing payment equivalent to 50% of their fees, and must waive all fees for families.

This free child care arrangement is not based on visa status and is available for all families.

For more information on free child care see [here](#).

Appendix: Key Social Services related to COVID-19: Amendments & Eligibility Related to Migrants with Temporary Visas

Support Type	Key Details	Temporary Visa Holder (In)Eligibility	More Info & COVID Updates
CORONAVIRUS SUPPLEMENT for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>JobSeeker Payment</u> - <u>Youth Allowance JobSeeker</u> - <u>Youth Allowance for Students and Apprentices</u> - <u>Austudy for Students and Apprentices</u> - <u>ABSTUDY for students getting Living Allowance</u> - <u>Farm Household Allowance</u> - <u>Parenting Allowance</u> - <u>Special Benefit</u> 	<p><u>Coronavirus supplement</u> is an additional \$550 per fortnight.</p> <p>Those who are an existing or new recipient of any of the listed payments will receive the supplement automatically.</p> <p>The Coronavirus Supplement and expanded access for payments will commence from 27 April 2020.</p>	<p>Eligible: The following temporary visa holders may be eligible for the Coronavirus Supplement via JobSeeker Payment, Youth Allowance, Austudy, Parenting Allowance & Special Benefit, if they meet the additional criteria for the specific category of payment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protected Special Category Visa (SCV) (mainly New Zealand citizens arriving prior to Feb 2001) - <u>Non-protected SCV</u> holders may be eligible if they have lived in Australia without a break for at least 10 years. Non-protected SCV holders may only get JobSeeker Payment for one single period up to 6 months - Temporary Protection Visa - Safe Haven Enterprise Visa (with conditions in terms of how many months they can access Centrelink payments and remain on SHEV pathway) - Subject to passing of legislation: Skilled Work Regional Provisional visa (subclass 491) / Skilled Employer Sponsored Regional Provisional visa (subclass 494) <p>Not normally eligible due to not meeting Australian residence rules:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Most Bridging Visa -Visitor / Tourist Visa -Student Visa -Working Holiday Maker Visa -Pacific and Seasonal Workers -Temporary graduate Visa -Temporary Resident (Skilled Employment) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newly Arrived Residents Waiting Period & Seasonal Work Preclusion Periods have been waived for these payments as of 25 March 2020 • Partner income test for JobSeeker payment has been raised to almost 80K (previous cap was 48K) • Expanded JobSeeker and Youth Allowance JobSeeker criteria applies to sole traders, self-employed, casual workers, contract workers who meet the income tests as a result of the economic downturn due to the Coronavirus • Mutual obligations requirements suspended for JobSeeker, Youth Allowance and Parenting Payment until 27 April 2020. • Asset testing waived for 6 months from 25 March 2020, except for Farm Household Allowance and Special Benefit. • <u>Coronavirus Updates on Services Australia website</u>

<p>Coronavirus Economic Support & Crisis Payments</p>	<p><i>1st \$750 Economic Support Payment</i></p> <p><i>One-off Crisis Payment</i></p> <p><i>2nd \$750 Economic Support Payment</i></p>	<p><i>Same Eligibility (or Lack thereof) for Temporary Visa Holders as Above.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>1st Economic Support Payment issued if person is getting an eligible payment on any day from 12 March to 13 April 2020.</i> - <i>Crisis Payment ((one week of base income support rate) available if in severe financial hardship and either: need to self-isolate or are caring for someone self-isolating.</i> - <i>2nd Available from 13 July 2020 getting an eligible payment or have an eligible concession card on 10 July 2020. You will not receive if you are getting the Coronavirus supplement</i> 	<p><i>More financial support for people affected by Coronavirus</i></p>
<p>JobKeeper Payment</p>	<p><i>Flat \$1500/ fortnightly payment to employers to keep employees on as staff. Employees then receive this amount at minimum</i></p>	<p><i>Eligible:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Holder of a permanent visa</i> - <i>Protected Special Category Visa Holder (mainly NZ citizens arriving prior to Feb 2001)</i> - <i>Non-protected Special Category Visa Holder who has been residing continually in Australia for 10 years or more</i> - <i>Special Category (Subclass 444) Visa Holder</i> <p><i>Not Eligible</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>All other temporary visa holders at this time</i> 	<p><i>JobKeeper Payment Factsheet</i></p> <p><i>Note: People will not receive money until first week of May (back paid to 20 Mar), meaning many may have no access to income for the next month</i></p>

<p>Medicare</p>	<p><i>What's Covered by Medicare</i></p> <p><i>Medicare Eligibility and Enrollment Process</i></p>	<p><i>Eligible:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NZ citizens (SCV holders – protected and non-protected) - A temporary resident with a visa covered by a Ministerial Order: Fulbright scholars / Witness Protection (Trafficking) Temporary visa (subclass 787)/ De facto partners of Australian citizens or permanent residents /Support for Victims of People Trafficking Program / Temporary Humanitarian Concern visa (subclass 786) / Contributory Parent visas (subclasses 173, 143, 884, 864) /Temporary Protection visa (subclass 785) /Removal Pending Bridging visa (subclass 070) /Illegal maritime arrivals holding a Bridging E (Class WE) visa / Illegal maritime arrivals holding a Humanitarian Stay visa (subclass 449) /Secondary Movement Offshore Entry visa XB (subclass 447) /Safe Haven Enterprise visa (subclass 790 / Skilled Work Regional Provisional visa (subclass 491) / Skilled Employer Sponsored Regional Provisional visa (subclass 494) <p><i>Not Eligible:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students, Working Holiday Maker, Visitors / Tourists, Pacific and seasonal workers / Temporary Graduate - Bridging Visa holders (with the exception of BVE), unless their initial substantive visa upon arrival in Australia had Medicare entitlements, which is unlikely 	<p><i>Residents of some countries may qualify for access to Medicare via Reciprocal Health Care Agreements (RHCA). (Belgium, Finland, Italy, Malta or the Maltese Islands, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Republic of Ireland, Slovenia, Sweden, United Kingdom) Country specific information.</i></p> <p><i>No substantive changes to Medicare eligibility have been announced as a result of COVID-19</i></p>
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Temporary Early Release of Superannuation	From 25 March 2020, changes will allow employees to submit two applications for up to \$10,000 each from their Superannuation fund (1/FY)	UNCLEAR. ATO website has conflicting information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - States <u>here</u> and <u>here</u> that only Australian citizens, permanent residents, and NZ citizens with Australian held super are eligible. Temporary residents are not eligible. - Also states <u>here</u> that you are eligible if you are (1) unemployed or (2) you qualify for receive a job seeker payment, youth allowance for JobSeekers, parenting payment, special benefit or farm household allowance. Visa or residency requirements are not noted. This was also queried by a visa holder online and <u>response from ATO</u> was visa and residency are not mentioned in eligibility 	Early Access to Superannuation Factsheet
ER/Community Support Package	\$200 mil to support charities / community organisations which provide emergency and food relief	Not yet clear who will be eligible. Press release notes “Services for vulnerable Australians”	\$200 million Community Support Package