



# **FACT SHEET ONE: GENERAL PUBLIC**

If you've lost your job during the COVID-19 pandemic, you're not alone. The Government's social distancing rules have seen a raft of businesses close, with steep downturns for many others.

While this is a worrying time, there are many ways that you can get help. State and Federal governments have both put stimulus packages into place to help individuals. Navigating them can be confusing, so Elders have put together a factsheet to help.

## **INCOME PAYMENTS**

### **JobKeeper payment**

If you have been retrenched from your employer, and your employer agrees to put you back on the books, you may be eligible for the JobKeeper payment.

*What is it?*

Under this scheme, the Australian government will provide your employer with a \$1500 payment per fortnight as reimbursement for each eligible employee that they keep on their books. The employer passes the whole payment on to you as the employee. This is the case even if you earned less than \$1500 per fortnight prior to the crisis. All employees will receive the same payment. If you earned more than \$1500 per fortnight your employee can elect to top up the payment to your current wage.

The goal is to keep employees on the books of employers who intend to reopen or ramp up their business after the crisis has passed.

*Am I eligible?*

You are eligible for JobKeeper payment if:

You were employed by a business, including companies, partnerships, trusts and sole traders, a not-for-profit or a charity:

- With a turnover of less than \$1B that has lost 30% of their revenue compared to a comparable period a year ago
- With a turnover of \$1B or more that has lost 50% of their revenue compared to a comparable period a year ago

Banks subject to the banking levy are not eligible.

You must be (or have been prior to being laid off):

- Full time
- Part time
- Casually employed and working for that employer for at least 12 months

If you are self employed, you are a business even if you don't employ any workers. You must:

- Have an ABN for your business
- Nominate an individual to receive the payments
- Provide that individual's Tax File Number

- Provide a declaration of recent business activities to show a reduction of 30% or more in revenue to a comparable period last year

You must also be one of the following:

- 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 in Australia for over 10 years)
- A Special Category (Subclass 444) Visa Holder

*How do I apply?*

If you're an employer that is eligible to receive JobKeeper payments, then you should [register your interest](#) in the program with the ATO. The Australian government will then pass you the information you need to make an application.

If you are an employee, get in touch with your employer (or former employer) to discuss whether they are willing to take you back on their books and apply for the JobKeeper payment.

## **JobSeeker payment**

If you aren't eligible for the JobKeeper payment, you may want to access JobSeeker instead.

*What is it?*

JobSeeker is the payment formerly known as Newstart. The government has changed the eligibility and amount. Partner income thresholds have also been changed.

The base amount of JobSeeker payment is \$565.70/fortnight. The government has also added a Coronavirus Supplement of an additional \$550 per fortnight from 27 April.

This is payable for anyone in receipt of:

- JobSeeker payment
- Youth Allowance
- Austudy and Abstudy
- Sickness Allowance
- Parenting Payment
- Farm Household Allowance

That means that even if you were unemployed before the COVID-19 crisis hit, your payment could potentially double.

*Am I eligible?*

You are eligible for JobSeeker payment if:

You are unemployed or do not have enough work and you are not in receipt of JobKeeper payment. This includes sole traders and self-employed people who are not eligible for JobKeeper payment, as well as people caring for someone who is infected with coronavirus or are themselves in isolation.

From 25 March 2020, Services Australia has waived asset testing for 6 months (except for those requesting Farm Household Allowance and Special Benefit). It has also waived liquid asset testing, the waiting period for newly arrived residents and the seasonal work preclusion period.

However, income tests still apply. If you are in receipt of any other income, the amount you are entitled to will reduce. If you have a partner, their income is also taken into account. The cut off for partner income has been raised from \$48,000 to \$79,000.

You can check the income cut off limits [here](#).

*How do I apply?*

Go to Services Australia and start your claim [online](#). You will need to set up a MyGov account if you don't already have one. Your claim will be backdated to the date you lodge your intent to claim.

The government has waived the standard one-week waiting period and the sign up process has been streamlined.

## **OTHER HELP**

### **Early release of superannuation**

*What is it?*

If you are financially impacted by COVID-19 and meet eligibility rules, you can access up to \$10,000 of your superannuation per financial year. That means that you could potentially access \$10,000 from now until 1 July 2020, and then another \$10,000 from 1 July to 24 September 2020.

You will not need to pay tax on the amount released, and it will not affect your entitlement to Centrelink payments.

*Am I eligible?*

You are eligible if you are:

- Unemployed, have been made redundant or had your working hours reduced by 20% or more since 1 January 2020
- A sole trader whose business has been suspended or whose turnover was reduced by 20% or more
- Eligible for a JobSeeker payment, Youth Allowance, Parenting Payment, Special Benefit or Farm Household Allowance

*How do I apply?*

Directly to the ATO through the [myGov website](#).

## Taxation relief

The ATO is offering a range of additional relief measures to individuals who may be impacted by COVID-19. These include:

- Giving you more time to lodge and pay tax obligations
- The potential to access tax that you've already paid for 2020 in certain conditions
- Low interest payment plans
- Deferred payments of owed monies
- Relief on interest and penalties

To find out more about what you're eligible for please contact the ATO on 1800 806 218.

## Energy providers

Several energy providers have agreed to suspend any disconnections for non-payment of energy bills. In addition, all energy providers offer general hardship provisions. If you can't pay your electricity bill, the best thing to do is get in touch with your energy provider.

## Mortgage providers

The Big Four banks have all agreed to offer mortgage holidays for anyone holding a home loan and struggling financially. They may also agree to pause repayments on credit cards and loans on an individual basis.

## State government packages

Each State and Territory has also offered assistance. The packages vary between each region, so check the information in your state or territory as follows:

**ACT:** <https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/businesses-and-workplaces/economic-survival-package>

**NSW:** <https://preview.nsw.gov.au/covid-19>

**VIC:** <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>

**QLD:** <https://www.qld.gov.au/about/industry-recovery>

**SA:** <https://www.sa.gov.au/covid-19/home>

**TAS:** [https://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/news/2020/Important information about new COVID-19 response measures](https://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/news/2020/Important%20information%20about%20new%20COVID-19%20response%20measures)

**WA:** <https://www.wa.gov.au/government/covid-19-coronavirus>

**NT:** <https://businessrecovery.nt.gov.au/home>