

# Overview of financial support for people of refugee backgrounds during COVID-19

Version 2.1 September 1, 2020		Federal									State							Locally	
Visa Status	Sub-classes included (but not limited to)	Job Keeper	Job Seeker	Some Social Security benefits & concessions	Special Benefit	Emergency Relief Payment via Red Cross	Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment	Household Relief Loan	Early Release of Superannuation	Status Resolution Support Service (SRSS)	Rent Relief Grant	Extreme Hardship Support via Red Cross	Homelessness Hotels and other supports	Isolation and Recovery Facilities	COVID-19 Emergency relief package	COVID-19 Test Isolation Payment	Work off Fines (WDP)	Utility bills relief, grants and assistance	Material Aid & Meals
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
<b>Permanent Residency</b>	Family-stream Work-stream Business-stream Refugee-stream: 866, 200-204	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Temporary Protection</b>	060 - Bridging visa F 070 - Bridging (Removal Pending) 449 - Humanitarian Stay 785 - Temporary Protection 786 - Temporary (Humanitarian Concern) 790 - Safe Haven Enterprise	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Bridging Visa</b>	010 – Bridging visa A 020 – Bridging visa B 030 – Bridging visa C 050-051 – Bridging visa E	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Expired Visa</b>	Tourist, Student, Business, Asylum	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

**DISCLAIMER:** This simplified guide for the refugee sector in Melbourne’s Outer South East should not be considered an exhaustive list or a means of determining eligibility. Individual cases may be more complex. While the information has been checked by staff at Services Australia, DHHS and Red Cross, please contact the relevant organisations and services directly for eligibility and the most up to date information.

Compiled by Rob Koch, Community Development Coordinator, Monash Health Refugee Health & Wellbeing, on behalf of the PSAARD Taskforce; a collaboration agencies working together to support People Seeking Asylum At Risk of Destitution in the Outer South East of Melbourne. Email your feedback and suggestions to [rob.koch@monashhealth.org](mailto:rob.koch@monashhealth.org)

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## 1. [JobKeeper](#)

This payment supports businesses impacted by coronavirus (COVID-19) by helping with the costs of their employees' wages, so more Australians can retain their jobs and continue to earn an income. It is paid to the employer who then pays their employees.

## 2. [JobSeeker](#)

This fortnightly payment supports Australian residents and citizens aged between 22 and Age Pension age who are looking for work. It includes the \$550 p/fn Coronavirus Supplement (reduced to \$250 p/fn from Sept 25) . JobSeeker is for people, including:

- permanent employees who have lost their job, or sick or injured or their work situation has changed due to COVID-19.
- sole traders, self-employed, casual or contract workers with reduced income
- people who cannot work because they are caring for someone affected by COVID-19

## 3. [Social Security benefits and concessions](#)

Some Australian citizens and residents may be eligible for a range of financial support through Services Australia (Centrelink), in addition to Coronavirus Supplement (\$550 p/fn, reduced to \$250 p/fn from Sept 25) and/or the Economic Support Payment (\$750). The Government has recently removed the [newly arrived resident's waiting period](#) for some benefits until Dec 31 so people affected by the COVID-19 situation may be eligible for one of these payments:

- [Austudy](#)
- [Farm Household Allowance](#)
- [JobSeeker Payment](#)
- [Special Benefit](#)
- [Parenting Payment](#)
- [Youth Allowance](#)

Pension Card or Health Care Card holders are eligible for a range of [concessions](#)

## 4. [Special Benefit](#)

This fortnightly payment similar to JobSeeker is for people in severe financial hardship through no fault of their own, with savings under \$5000, and can't get other income support from Services Australia (Centrelink), perhaps because they do not meet the

residency requirements. TPV & SHEV holders are eligible (except full-time students) but if they are working or studying in a designated regional area for 42 months they will not be able to count this time towards meeting the pathway requirement. [More details here.](#)

## 5. [Emergency Relief Payment](#)

Australian Red Cross receives Federal Government funding specifically to support people who are on temporary visas with a small one-off emergency relief payment, to help them meet their basic needs, like food, medicine or shelter. Emergency relief payments are not income support. It is for people who are not Australian citizens or permanent residents; and are not eligible for State or Territory funds for temporary visa holders (except those delivered by Red Cross); and have no income or savings and no access to other support.

## 6. [Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment](#)

Support of \$1500 lump sum payment to help Victorians during the 14 days who cannot earn an income because they are required to self-isolate or quarantine at home, as instructed by the Victoria Department of Health and Human Services. Or they are caring for someone with COVID-19.

- They must have no sick leave entitlements or pandemic sick leave.
- The period of quarantine must be between 6:00 pm on 2 August 2020 and 6:00 pm on 2 September 2020.
- Just staying home because of Stage 3 or 4 restrictions doesn't mean they will meet the eligibility for this payment.
- This payment replaces the Victorian Government's \$1500 Coronavirus (COVID-19) Worker Support Payment.

## 7. [Household Relief Loan](#)

The Federal Government with National Australia Bank and Good Shepherd are providing no interest loans up to \$3,000 towards rent and utilities, paid to the agent/landlord or utility company. For those impacted by COVID-19 who are Citizens, Permanent Residents or valid visa holders (provided it does not expire before the 24 month repayment period).

## 8. [Early Release of Superannuation](#)

For people who have been adversely financially affected by COVID-19, they may be able to access some of their superannuation early. Eligible citizens and permanent residents of Australia or New Zealand can apply once in the 2020–21 financial year to access up to \$10,000 of their super. Temporary residents are not eligible to apply at this time.

## 9. [Status Resolution Support Service \(SRSS\)](#)

Individuals or families may be eligible to receive support through SRSS if they are:

- unlawful and living in the Australian community – particularly if they are engaged with International Office of Migration (IOM) with a view to returning to their home country
- an illegal maritime arrival (IMA) and have lodged a TPV or SHEV visa application
- a non-IMA and have lodged a valid protection visa application
- a holder of a Bridging Visa E (BVE)
- facing significant barriers that are impacting on their ability to resolve their immigration status or their ability to work
- recently released from immigration detention.

To enquire contact Life Without Barriers in Dandenong on 8752 8500 or AMES intake worker at Noble Park on 0402 977 140.

## 10. [COVID-19 Rent Relief Grant](#)

This is a one-off payment of up to \$3000 available to Victorian tenants who have lost income as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) health emergency and who are experiencing rental hardship by paying more than 30 per cent of their income in rent. The grant provides direct financial support to renters by contributing towards the cost of their rent directly to their landlord on their behalf. There are no citizenship or permanent residency requirements for applicants, but there needs to be a formal rental agreement.

## 11. [Extreme Hardship Support Program](#)

The Australian Red Cross has been commissioned by the Department of Health and Human Services to provide emergency financial assistance, information and referral to people who are unable to access Commonwealth income support or the International Student Emergency Relief Fund. It is designed to assist the most vulnerable temporary and provisional visa holders, including undocumented migrants, with little or no income,

savings or community support. A single person may receive up to \$400. Families may receive more. An additional payment after two months if possible there is ongoing financial hardship. *\*Some SHEV applicants who have chosen not to accept (or have ceased receiving) a Special Benefits payment may be eligible. Red Cross will treat those applications on a case-by-case basis.* Brotherhood of St Laurence is coordinating agencies registered to verify applications and assist applicants. To apply click on the link above or call Red Cross on 1800 855 240. [More info here](#)

## 12. [Homeless and Housing support initiatives during COVID-19](#)

The State Government's program to shelter [homeless Victorians in hotels](#) during the coronavirus pandemic has been extended until April next year.

Also boosted is the Victorian [Private Rental Assistance Program \(PRAP\)](#) plus a joint initiative of Victorian and Federal governments, the [Housing Establishment Fund \(HEF\)](#). HEF is where designated community organisations provide bond loans to eligible people suffering housing stress. There is nothing in Victorian Government policy that excludes temporary visa holders who meet other criteria. For details and eligibility call the 24-hour statewide toll-free number on **1800 825 955** to speak with a housing and support worker. Or call Launch Housing in Dandenong 8598 1170, or WAYSS Dandenong on 9791 6111.

## 13. [Isolation and Recovery Facilities](#)

The State Government is funding supported accommodation in Melbourne for any Victorian who is homeless to recover and isolate from the COVID-19 pandemic. Eligibility is a person experiencing homelessness who - has undergone testing for coronavirus and are awaiting results - has undergone testing for coronavirus and returned a positive result - is required to self-isolate and does not have suitable housing to do so – or is being discharged from hospital and require accommodation to recover from coronavirus.

## 14. [COVID-19 Emergency relief package](#)

Delivery of a free emergency relief package can be arranged for vulnerable Victorians who are needing to quarantine or isolate due to coronavirus (COVID-19). They are for people who are unable to access food themselves or do not have support available to them. The package contains essential food and personal care items to last a family of four for two weeks. Nappies and baby formula can also be provided if requested. Not included: medicines, incontinence and personal hygiene products, or pet food.

## 15. [COVID-19 Test Isolation Payment](#)

Support of \$450 for Victorian workers while they self-isolate to wait for the results of a COVID-19 test. They must have no sick leave entitlements or pandemic sick leave, or any other income. Only one claim per 30 days, unless test is required by DHHS. People who have to miss work because they are caring for someone isolating may also be eligible.

## 16. [Work off Fines \(WDP\)](#)

The Work and Development Permit (WDP) scheme is an initiative of the Victorian Government to provide vulnerable and disadvantaged people with a non-financial option to address their fine debt by participating in certain activities and treatment, including:

- unpaid work
- treatment given by a doctor, nurse or psychologist
- courses, including educational, vocational or life skills courses
- counselling, including financial or other types of counselling
- drug and alcohol counselling, and
- mentoring (for a person under 25 years of age).

When applying for a WDP, a supervising sponsor will help a person to choose the activities that are best suited to their needs. A sponsor is an organisation or a health practitioner accredited to support the WDP scheme.

To work off their fines a person must be engaged with a sponsor and must:

- have a mental or intellectual disability, disorder or illness, OR
- have an addiction to drugs, alcohol or a volatile substance, OR
- be experiencing homelessness, OR be experiencing acute financial hardship, OR be the victim of family violence.

## 17. [Utility bills relief, grants and assistance](#)

In all regions of Victoria, all energy and water companies must have a hardship program to assist people who are struggling to pay their bills. This help can include:

- An affordable payment plan to help break bills into smaller payments.
- Energy and water efficiency information to help lower usage.
- Assistance with applying for the [Utility Relief Grant Scheme](#), which provides up to \$650 each for overdue electricity, gas and water bills. Both low income households and concession card holders are eligible but must apply through their utility retailer.
- Putting householders on a cheaper energy plan and ensuring concessions are applied.
- Referral to support services including financial counselling.

## 18. [Material Aid & Meals](#)

Each region has a range of agencies, churches and organisations who are providing material aid even during the pandemic. This can include groceries, meals, financial counselling, debt mitigation/negotiation, furniture, vouchers, home goods, medical services, and pharmaceuticals access.

It is best to call ahead to see if you are eligible and to check on availability. For the most up to date information check the resource in the place you live here:

- [City of Casey](#)
- [Shire of Cardinia](#)
- [City of Greater Dandenong](#)
- or search by postcode if in another area [here](#).

### Other links that may be helpful:

[Department of Health and Human Services - Financial support for COVID-19](#)

[Australian Red Cross COVID-19 Information Sheet - Victoria](#)

[Working for Victoria](#) - Find work or employees if you've been impacted by COVID-19

[Tenants Victoria - Guide to Renters During COVID-19](#)

[No Interest Loan Scheme \(NILS\)](#)

[Public Transport Victoria \(PTV\) concessions](#)

[International Student Emergency Relief Fund](#) and other supports for students

[Assistance for people with disabilities during COVID-19](#)

[Specialized and Intensive Services \(SIS\)](#) for Humanitarian Entrants and Refugees, TPV/SHEV

[Refugee Council of Australia](#) – advocacy campaign for temporary visa holders

[Translated COVID-19 resources](#) - available in more than 55 languages

[Victorian Government - Coronavirus homepage](#)  
**Coronavirus Hotline 1800 675 398**