

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

Version 4.0 June 10 2021		Federal										State									Locally	
Visa Status	Sub-classes included (but not limited to)	Job Keeper	Job Seeker	COVID-19 Disaster Payment	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	Business Costs Assistance Program	Extreme Hardship Support via Red Cross	Get Active Kids Voucher Program	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	19	20	21
NOTE: There are other eligibility requirements so check the attached notes and follow the links.																						
Permanent Residency	Family-stream Work-stream Business-stream Refugee-stream: 866, 200-204	x	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	✓	x	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Temporary Protection	060 - Bridging visa F 070 - Bridging (Removal Pending) 449 - Humanitarian Stay 785 - Temporary Protection 786 - Temp Humanitarian Concern 790 - Safe Haven Enterprise	x	x	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	✓	✓ *	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bridging Visa	010 - Bridging visa A 020 - Bridging visa B 030 - Bridging visa C 050-051 - Bridging visa E	x	x	✓	x	x	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Expired Visa	Tourist, Student, Business, Asylum	x	x	x	x	x	✓	x	x	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



To get this document (or the latest version) on your phone hold your smartphone camera to this QR Code and click on the link.
OR email rob.koch@monashhealth.org and request the link by typing in subject line: **'PDF please'**

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

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



Federal



State



Local

1. JobKeeper

This Federal Government payment supported businesses impacted by coronavirus (COVID-19) by helping with the costs of their employees' wages. The JobKeeper Payment Scheme finished on March 28 2021.

2. JobSeeker

This fortnightly payment supports Australian residents and citizens aged between 22 and Age Pension age who are looking for work. It's also for people who are sick or injured and cannot do their usual work or study for a short time.

3. COVID-19 Disaster Payment

This new payment is for any worker aged 17+ who is a citizen, permanent resident or visa holder with work rights, who was not able to work due to COVID-19 restrictions in a Commonwealth-declared COVID-19 hotspot. You lost income on or after day 8 of a lockdown and don't have any paid leave entitlements and have less than \$10,000 in assets, and do not receive other income support payments. During June 4-10, people who worked less than 20 hours per week receive \$325; over 20 hours per week receive \$500. Residents apply through myGov account, non-residents apply by phone on 180 2266.

4. Social Security benefits and concessions

Some Australian citizens and residents may be eligible for a range of financial support through Services Australia (Centrelink). Most new permanent residents will need to wait four years to 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](#)

5. 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) and from February 1 2020 and all through 'the COVID-19 concession period' receiving this payment will NOT affect their SHEV Pathway Requirements. [More details here.](#)

6. 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.

7. 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. Just staying home because of Stage 3 or 4 restrictions doesn't mean they will meet the eligibility for this payment.

8. 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).

9. Early Release of Superannuation

The COVID-19 early release of super program closed on 31 December 2020. You can no longer apply for early access to some of your superannuation. You may be able to withdraw some of your super on other compassionate grounds.

10. Status Resolution Support Service (SRSS)

According to the Department of Home Affairs, individuals or families may be eligible to receive financial and case management support through SRSS if they are either:

- 'Unlawful' but engaged with International Organization for 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) OR recently released from immigration detention.
- AND are facing significant barriers that are impacting on their ability to resolve their immigration status or their ability to work.

Contact Life Without Barriers on 8752 8500 or AMES srssapplications@ames.net.au.

11. COVID-19 Rent Relief Grant

This Victorian Government scheme ended on March 28 2021. It was 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.

Facing eviction? Can't pay rent? See #15 and the links on last page.

12. Business Costs Assistance Program

Grants are now available of up to \$5,000 to eligible small and medium businesses who were impacted by COVID-19 restrictions. Your business employs others or can also be a sole trader. Your business needs to meet a number of criteria including; be in an eligible category, be registered for GST, have an ABN, have yearly earnings over \$75,000. Not-for-profit organisations that are not registered for GST and have an annual turnover between \$75,000 and \$150,000 can apply for a grant. Applications close 24/06/2021 in relation to the restrictions recently imposed but may be available in future lockdowns. Click on the link above to see the range of supports and help available for those in business.

13. Extreme Hardship Support Program – extended to October 31 2021

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. It is designed to assist the most vulnerable temporary and provisional visa holders, including international students and undocumented migrants, with little or no income, savings or community support. A single person can receive up to \$800 for their first application and may be able to apply for another payment after two months. Families may receive more, based on the number of people in the family and individual circumstances. A bank account may not be required. *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 the link above or call Red Cross on 1800 855 240.

14. Get Active Kids Voucher Program - extended to 5pm July 9 2021

This State Government initiative helps eligible families engage their children aged 4-18 in organised sport and recreation activities by reimbursing the cost of membership and registration fees, uniforms and equipment. Families can receive up to \$200 for each child. Anyone with a Health Care Card or Pension Card can apply direct to [Get Active Victoria](#). Families on a temporary visa can apply through Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL), if the parent or carer has zero or very limited income, little savings or community support, and is a temporary or provisional visa holder, or undocumented migrant or international student, and is unable to access Commonwealth income support or only receives SRSS payments. Agencies can refer: getactivekids@bsl.org.au

15. 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 wound down now that the pandemic appears to be under control. The Victorian Private Rental Assistance Program (PRAP) and the joint Housing Establishment Fund (HEF), is still operating. 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, like having some income to repay the loan. 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. **Facing eviction? Can't pay rent? See also the links on the last page.**

16. 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 are awaiting COVID-19 testing result or has tested positive and 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.

17. 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 be provided. Pet food can also be requested (even if the website says it cannot – this error has been reported). Not included: medicines, incontinence and personal hygiene products. If you are too sick to cook for yourself meals may be provided. Contact the Hotline on 1800 675 398.

18. 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.

19. 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
- /CONTINUED

- 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.

20. 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 in a two-year period. 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.

21. 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](#)
- [Other](#) (search by postcode)

Coronavirus COVID-19 Victoria website **Hotline 1800 675 398**

[Department of Health](#) – COVID Vaccine questions answered in your language

[South East Public Health Unit \(SEPHU\)](#) – latest vaccination info from Monash Health for all in City of Casey, Shire of Cardinia plus Greater Dandenong & surrounds.

Accommodation

[Crisis Accommodation](#) – Call Opening Doors on 1800 825 955 24/7 if at risk of homelessness or family violence. If in danger call Triple Zero 000.

[Dear Landlord](#) – if you are struggling to pay rent or facing eviction

[Justice Connect](#) – What do the new rental laws mean for Victorian renters?

[Tenants Victoria](#) – expert advice, resources and representation for renters

Employment

[Deakin CREATE](#) – help for refugees and asylum seekers to get their career moving

[Given the Chance \(BSL\)](#) – help in Dandenong for disadvantaged job seekers to get work

[Harvest Trail](#) – vacancies listed about jobs all over Australia working on farms

[Jobs Victoria](#) – find job and training opportunities plus advice and support

[Salvation Army - Employment Plus](#) – help in Dandenong for asylum seekers to get jobs

[SMRC Employment Pathways](#) – help in Dandenong for migrants and refugees to get jobs

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

Finance

[Centrelink Payment and Service Finder](#) – See what else you may be eligible for

[Department of Health - Financial support in Victoria during COVID-19 and beyond](#)

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

[National Debt Helpline](#) – free financial support online or phone 1800 007 007

[No Interest Loan Scheme \(NILS\)](#) – for essential goods and services

[Public Transport Victoria \(PTV\) concessions](#) – travel more for less money

[SECL Financial Counselling](#) – free advice and advocacy in Greater Dandenong

[Small Business Support Line](#) – free help so businesses can survive 1800 413 828

Other

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

[Asylum Seeker Resource Centre \(ASRC\)](#) – a variety of services and supports

[Refugee Council of Australia](#) – find a service in any location in Australia

[Specialized and Intensive Services](#) for Humanitarian Entrants and Refugees

South East Region Refugee and Asylum Seeker Service Directory