



COVID-19 Update

Dear Amelia

As the Prime Minister said on Sunday night, it has been a hard week in Australia. Many businesses have closed their doors, none of us know exactly what life will look like in the months ahead.

The good news is that in the past week, we have also seen the vast majority of Australians working together to tackle this challenge by supporting one another, supporting businesses however they can, and following the instructions to isolate where possible, for the safety of everyone. I see this across the electorate where there is less traffic on the road and fewer people in the shops.

Many of the measures the Government has introduced are in response to issues and concerns people in our electorate have raised with me over the last few weeks - issues and concerns which I have been passing on to my Ministerial colleagues.

This update brings you the latest information, and links to direct you to additional information you may need, as you navigate the week ahead.

Please share this email with family and friends who may be interested. Anyone who would like to be added to the distribution list can email julian.leeser.mp@aph.gov.au and ask to be added. You can also follow [JulianLeeserMP](#) on Facebook.

While my office is closed to drop-in visitors as a social distancing measure, we are open for phone calls and emails. **We are experiencing an unprecedented volume of calls and correspondence, so please be patient. I am here to help you in any way I can.**

Take care,

Julian Leeser

Whatsapp channel and Coronavirus app launched

Over the weekend, a new Whatsapp channel and the Coronavirus Australia app were launched. These communication channels have everything you need to know about coronavirus and the actions being taken in Australia.

The Australian Government's Coronavirus app is available from the app store (iOS) or Google Play (Android):

iOS download here: <https://apps.apple.com/.../app/coronavirus-austr.../id1503846231>

Android download here: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details...>

To receive updates via Whatsapp, [click here](#) and follow the steps.

You can also visit [Australia.gov.au](https://www.australia.gov.au) for all the information you need on coronavirus.

These communications channels have all the information you need on health advice, travel advice, the Australian Government's economic response.

JobKeeper Payment

Today the Government announced a \$130 billion investment in keeping Australians in their jobs.

The JobKeeper Payment is designed to help businesses affected by the Coronavirus to cover the costs of their employees' wages, so that more employees can retain their job and continue to earn an income. The payment will also support employers to maintain their connection to their employees which will enable businesses to reactivate their operations quickly when the crisis is over.

The JobKeeper payment will see workers receive a flat payment of \$1,500 per fortnight through their employer for up to 6 months. The payment is equivalent to around 70 per cent of the national median wage.

Employers (including non-for-profits) will be eligible for the subsidy if:

- their business has a turnover of less than \$1 billion and their turnover will be reduced by more than 30 per cent relative to a comparable period a year ago (of at least a month); or
- their business has a turnover of \$1 billion or more and their turnover will be reduced by more than 50 per cent relative to a comparable period a year ago (of at least a month); and
- the business is not subject to the Major Bank Levy.

Businesses can register here

Where employers participate in the scheme, their employees will receive this payment as follows.

- If an employee ordinarily receives \$1,500 or more in income per fortnight before tax, they will continue to receive their regular income according to their prevailing workplace arrangements. The JobKeeper Payment will assist their employer to continue operating by subsidising all or part of the income of their employee(s).
- If an employee ordinarily receives less than \$1,500 in income per fortnight before tax, their employer must pay their employee, at a minimum, \$1,500 per fortnight, before tax.
- If an employee has been stood down, their employer must pay their employee, at a minimum, \$1,500 per fortnight, before tax.
- If an employee was employed on 1 March 2020, subsequently ceased employment with their employer, and then has been re-engaged by the same eligible employer, the employee will receive, at a minimum, \$1,500 per fortnight, before tax. It will be up to the employer if they want to pay superannuation on any additional wage paid because of the JobKeeper Payment. Payments will be made to the employer monthly in arrears by the ATO.

The subsidy will start on 30 March 2020, with the first payments to be received by employers in the first week of May. Businesses will be able to register their interest in participating in the Payment from 30 March 2020 on the ATO website.

The payment also applies to sole traders* and not for profits.

*see the 'sole trader' section below for more information.

More information

Job Seekers

If you have lost your job or are a sole trader* whose income has been impacted, Services Australia has launched an online 'intent to claim' function through myGov, making it easier to register for financial support. This eliminates the need to call or go into a Services Australia service centre to get the claim process underway.

Step 1: ensure your myGov account is linked to Medicare or the ATO.

Step 2: on your myGov welcome page there should then be a prompt to register your 'intent to claim'.

Step 3: Services Australia will contact you to talk through the next steps.

Helpful information:

- Claims will be backdated to when you first tried to contact Centrelink or lodged an intent to claim.
- The eligibility has been expanded to support sole traders* whose income is negatively affected by the economic impact of coronavirus.
- When you apply you will get the JobSeeker Payment and \$550 fortnightly Coronavirus supplement all at once.

You can still call Centrelink to obtain a CRN, but there is no need to go into Services Australia.

There are long wait times on the phone, and I know it is frustrating. However the government is increasing staff numbers and working on reducing waiting times.

If you do not have a myGov account, here is a guide on how to set one up: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/online-help/create-mygov-account>

*see the 'sole trader' section for more information.

Sole Traders

If you are a sole trader whose income has been impacted by coronavirus you can now claim Job Keeper or JobSeeker payments and continue running your business. Sole traders should explore the option they are eligible for, and which best accommodates their individual situation. For more information on the support available to sole traders, visit business.gov.au by clicking on the button below.

JobKeeper payment

Under the JobKeeper Payment, businesses impacted by the coronavirus will be able to access a subsidy from the Government to continue paying their employees. This includes sole traders as they are classified as self-employed. Affected employers will be able to claim a fortnightly payment of \$1,500 per eligible employee from 30 March 2020, for a maximum period of 6 months.

Job Seeker allowance

Income testing will apply consistent with current arrangements which allows individuals to earn more than \$1000 per fortnight before losing access to payment.

Under the temporary arrangements some JobSeeker Payment eligibility criteria has been relaxed including waiving the assets test, liquid assets waiting period, seasonal work preclusion period and newly arrived residents' waiting period.

Sole traders who are eligible for JobSeeker or Youth Allowance will also receive the \$550 fortnightly Coronavirus supplement.

Previously to determine if a self-employed person was unemployed for the purpose of accessing social security payments they had to be genuinely willing to seek and be available to take up alternative work effectively requiring their business to close. However, under this allowance sole traders are being encouraged to keep their businesses running and are not required to look for work elsewhere.

See the instructions above in 'Job Seeker' to apply for payments.

Support available for sole traders

Landlords and Tenants

A six month moratorium on evictions for commercial and residential tenants who can't pay rent, was announced on the weekend.

The Australian Bankers Association has announced that banks will be able to defer loan repayments for business loan facilities up to the value of \$10 million. More decisions are expected about tenancies in coming days. In the meantime, tenants, landlords and banks should try to reach mutually suitable arrangements if a tenant is experiencing significant financial hardship because of COVID-19.

Foreign investment changes

In normal circumstances, when a foreign investor from a country with which Australia has a free trade deal wants to take over an Australian business, security, asset or land, it has to be reviewed by the Foreign Investment Review Board if the value of the takeover is over \$1.2 billion. The Foreign Investment Review Board gives advice to the Government about whether that investment will be in Australia's national interest.

For some sensitive industries such as media, security and transport, that threshold is already lower, at \$275 million.

However in response to the COVID-19 situation, the Australian Government has temporarily reduced the monetary screening threshold for all foreign investments covered in the Foreign Acquisitions and Takeovers Act 1975 to \$0.

[Read more here](#)

Business support links

For more information for business on Coronavirus and the Australian Government's response go to australia.gov.au or call 13 28 46.

[Visit aus.gov.au](http://aus.gov.au)

New social Distancing Instructions

The instructions regarding social distancing have been changed. The instructions are now to:

- Stay in your home wherever possible.
- Work from home if you are able.
- Practice social distancing at your workplace if you are unable to work from home.
- You can still go out to collect groceries, to receive medical care, to exercise or for other necessary reasons but continue to practice social distancing.
- Public gatherings are now limited to two people.
- If you are aged over 70 (or over 60 and have chronic illness, or over 50 and are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander), the recommendation is that you don't leave your home at all.
- It is important to keep in touch regularly with your friends, family and neighbours via phone, email, skype etc. in order to maintain good mental health.

In NSW, the Premier has announced that Police will be given powers to enforce these measures, so that we can keep getting the health situation under control.

As the Premier said in her press conference *“There isn’t any place in the world I would rather be than Australia at the moment. We are doing our best to make sure we keep controlling the spread and we keep people out of hospital.”*

Health Announcements

Self-isolating? If you are in self-isolation because you are confirmed or suspected to have Coronavirus (COVID-19), or have been in close contact with a confirmed case, use this form to help us track the spread of the virus → aus.gov.au/covid-form

Telehealth, domestic violence and emergency food relief: A safety net package of \$1.1 billion has been announced by the Prime Minister to expand mental health and telehealth services, increase domestic violence services and provide more emergency food relief.

Overseas travellers will be quarantined: All travellers returning home from overseas will be quarantined in a hotel or designated facility for 14 days.

Elective surgeries suspended: All non urgent elective surgery will be temporarily suspended to free up hospital beds and resources and to minimise unnecessary risk to patients.

More health information

FAQs

I am over the age of 70 and have been told to stay home so how do I access food?

There are numerous services such as grocery delivery that will enable you to do this. Funding is also being injected into these services to enable the people who need them most to have access.

Groceries

- **Woolworths** - Must apply through Priority online register at <https://www.woolworths.com.au/shop/discover/priorityassistance>
- **Coles** - Priority Assistance available at <https://shop.coles.com.au/a/national/content/coles-online-access-form>
- **Harris Farm** - delivery can be requested at <https://www.harrisfarm.com.au/pages/delivery>

Takeaway

- **Uber eats** – www.ubereats.com/au
- **Menulog** – www.menulog.com.au
- **Deliveroo** - <https://deliveroo.com.au/>

Many local businesses also have their own delivery services operating. You can call local businesses and ask what is available.

Community organisations providing assistance

- Meals on Wheels

Usually this service would only be available to people with a My Aged Care number however they are now extending the service to include anyone over 65 affected by the coronavirus restrictions for a period of up to 6 weeks.

Call the below of the service closest to you and a representative will ask a series of questions to determine specific needs and then proceed to assist.

Hornsby 9482 2088, Hills Shire 9761 7600

- Hornsby Community Transport

Hornsby Community Transport can pick up and deliver goods; food, pharmaceuticals etc., if they are paid for and ready to pick up.

The number to call 9983 1611 (all messages will receive a call back so encourage that they leave a voicemail)

If you are struggling to make ends meet, you may be able receive help from one of the following organisations (however this is not an exhaustive list of organisation assisting in our community):

- Salvation Army

During these difficult and challenging times, where many people are experiencing economic hardship and uncertainty, the Salvation Army remains committed to assist vulnerable people with basic necessities as best we are able.

Through the generosity of Harris Farm, Pennant Hills and Baker's Delight, Berowra, the Salvation Army at Hornsby MAY BE able to assist with fruit, vegetables and bread. Please note that our supplies are limited.

If you require assistance, please contact the Salvation Army at Hornsby on 02 9477 1133 option "2" Monday to Friday between 10am-2pm.

- St Vincent de Paul

Call 9477 5022 to receive food parcels and food vouchers. They will soon have digital vouchers that can be used to order with supermarkets on-line.

- Hornsby Connect do not deliver but are still providing food to those who need it. You must be registered - you can register online and they are providing food from 9am to 2pm on Wednesdays. Visit hornsbyconnect.org.au for more information.

- Other agencies you can call:

- CatholicCare - 9488 2406
- Mission Australia - 9480 2506
- Lifeline - 9489 2757

Can I get tested for coronavirus?

Previously the advice was that you only needed to get tested for COVID-19 if you have developed symptoms and have returned from overseas in the previous 14 days or if you have been in contact with someone with COVID-19 and develop symptoms.

The eligibility criteria for coronavirus testing has been expanded to include the following:

- all health workers
- all aged/residential care workers
- geographically localised areas where there is elevated risk of community transmission as defined by the local public health unit.
- where no community transmission is occurring, high risk settings where there are two or more plausibly-linked cases, for example:
 - aged and residential care
 - rural and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
 - detention centres/correctional facilities
 - boarding schools
 - military bases (including Navy ships) that have live-in accommodation.

I have a pet and am wondering what I do if I get sick – will vets remain open?

Vets have been classified as an essential service and will remain open. Where possible, they will consult online so phone ahead.

I own an investment property – what will happen to me?

For the next six months, tenants cannot be evicted because of being unable to pay rent as a result of coronavirus. The Government is aware that this could put some landlords in a financially untenable situation. More announcements about landlord/tenant matters will be made. However landlords are encouraged to discuss arrangements with to tenants and banks in the first instance.

I am a self-funded retiree. What support is there for me?

The Government has reduced the draw-down rate for account-based pensions so that you can sell fewer assets to top up your income, than you would need to under normal circumstances.

The Government will also cut the deeming rate by 25 points on the first of May. The lower deeming rate will be 0.25% and the upper deeming rate will be 2.25%

If your assets and income drop below the eligibility threshold you may also become eligible for the age pension. You can investigate this at: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/age-pension>

What businesses, premises or places are now restricted?

Some businesses, organisations and places encourage people to congregate and therefore pose a particular risk. The operation and access to these have necessarily been restricted. The table below outlines the restrictions. In all situations, including workplaces, Australians should practice good hygiene and social distancing wherever possible by keeping 1.5 metres apart from others and applying the 4 square metre per person rule.

An updated **schedule on the businesses that are now restricted** and the exceptions is below:

Already Restricted	
Business, premises or place	Exceptions
Pubs, registered and licensed clubs	Bottle shops attached to these venues
Hotels	
Gyms and indoor sporting venues	
Cinemas, entertainment venues, casinos and night clubs	

Restaurants and cafes	Takeaway service and delivery allowed
	Cafés or canteens at hospitals, care homes or schools; prison and military canteens; services providing food or drink to the homeless, workplace canteens can provide takeaway
Religious gatherings, places of worship	
Food courts	Takeaway and delivery only
Auction houses	
Real estate auctions and open house inspections	Private appointments for inspection allowed
Hairdressers and barber shops	Hairdressers that can strictly apply the 1 person per 4 square metre rule within the premises, with personal contact to be minimised wherever possible.
Beauty therapy, tanning, waxing, nail salons, tattoo parlours	
Spas and massage parlours	
Gaming and gambling venues	
Strip clubs, brothels and sex on premises venues	
Concert venues, theatre, arenas, auditoriums, stadiums	Live streaming of a performance by a small group could be permissible with social distancing observed
Amusement parks and arcades	
Community and recreation centres	Facilities may remain open for the purpose of hosting essential voluntary or public services, such as food banks or homeless services.
Health clubs, fitness centres, yoga, barre and spin facilities, saunas, bathhouses and wellness centres	Allied health services
Swimming pools	
Galleries, museums, national institutions and historic sites	
Libraries, community centres, and youth centres	
Local government non-essential facilities and services (such as libraries and pools)	
Community facilities (such as community halls, clubs, RSLs, PCYCs)	
Weddings	Weddings can be conducted with no more than five people, including the couple, the celebrant and the witnesses. The 4 square metre rule and social distancing must be observed.
Funerals	Funerals must be limited to no more than 10 people. The 4 square metre rule and social distancing must be observed. States and territories can provide exemptions in relation to attendance at funerals, but only at the margin.

Restricted from 11:59pm local time 30 March 2020	
Public areas, public playgrounds, outside gyms and skate parks	
Boot camps, personal training operating outside and inside	For outside events, limited to no more than 2 persons and social
Social sporting-based activities	Individual or small group sporting activities can take place if adhering to the 2 persons rule while practising social distancing. Other club activities, such as golf or tennis, can continue if the relevant state or territory government has approved the club to remain open - and as long as the 1 person per 4 square metre rule, appropriate social distancing and enhanced hygiene measures are implemented.
<i>Note: These measures also apply to outdoor spaces associated with the above venues.</i>	
Restrictions on the following items will be a decision for each state and territory:	
Business, premises or place	Exceptions
Outdoor and indoor markets	Food markets will continue to operate in all states and territories
Hotels, hostels, bed and breakfasts, campsites, caravan parks, and boarding houses	Permanent residents and workers
Caravan and camping parks	Where people live permanently in caravan parks or are staying in caravan parks as interim abodes where their primary residence is not available, they may continue to do so.

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"The ultimate reason for setting goals is to entice you to become the person it takes to achieve them." -- Jim Rohn