

VACC COVID-19 UPDATE

Thursday, 2 April 2020
Issue 9.0

VACC understands that this a difficult and stressful time for members, and as always, VACC is here to help wherever we can.

To make it even easier for members to find out what support is available, we have developed a [summary of government initiatives](#) with a description and link. I encourage you to read through this extensive list and investigate your options carefully. It covers Federal and State (Victoria and Tasmania) initiatives.



Federal and State Government Assistance Available to Business

Assistance	Description	Link
JobKeeper payment package	Under the JobKeeper Payment, businesses impacted by the coronavirus will be able to access a subsidy from the Government to continue paying their employees. 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. Legislation is yet to pass parliament.	
Boosting cash flow for employers	Employers will receive a payment equal to 100 per cent of their salary and wages withheld (up from 50 per cent), with the maximum payment being increased from \$25,000 to \$50,000 and the minimum payment increased from \$2,000 to \$10,000. An additional payment is also being introduced equal to the total of all of the Boosting Cash Flow for Employers payments received. This means that eligible businesses will receive at least \$20,000 up to a total of \$100,000 under both payments. Not-for-profit entities will also be eligible.	
Early access to superannuation	You can access up to \$10,000 of your superannuation in 2019-20 and a further \$10,000 in 2020-21. You will be able to apply for early release of your superannuation from mid-April 2020.	
A hold on evictions for renters	The Prime Minister has announced new measures to help renters. Evictions will be put on hold over the next 6 months for commercial and residential tenancies in financial distress, who are unable to meet their commitments due to the impact of the coronavirus.	

Please note that this document will be updated regularly, as and when, new initiatives are announced and should members be seeking specific advice on applications, VACC can provide recommendations to qualified professional service providers.

We hope you find this of use.

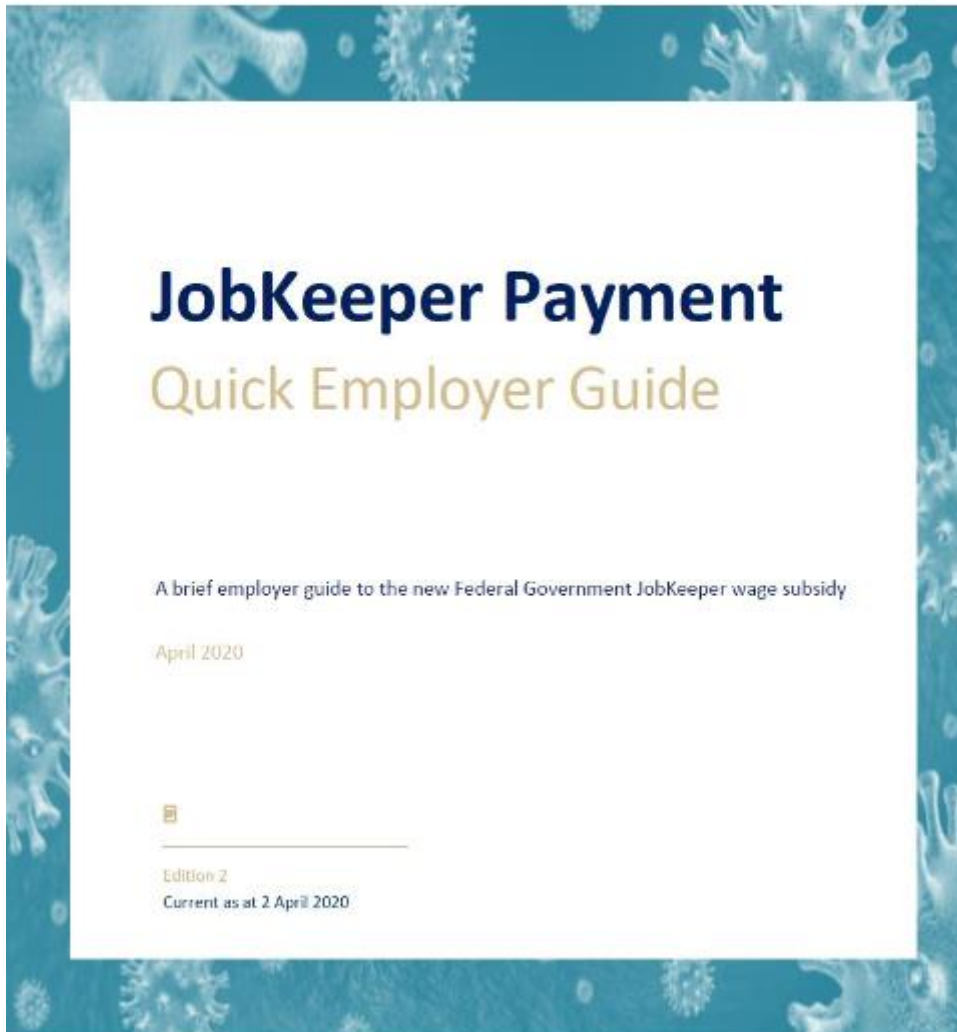
1. INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

JobKeeper Payment Guide – Edition 2

A JobKeeper payment guide was circulated in yesterday's Update to help inform members of what the package entails in light of available information.

Today we have attached an updated version: [Edition 2](#). There is also a marked up copy where members can see the additional changes available [HERE](#).

The second edition includes new information out from Treasury around meeting the eligibility requirements, as well as new issues that have come to light – such as the interaction with the apprenticeship and trainee subsidy and genuine redundancy with rehires.



2. GENERAL

Automotive service and repair sector remains open for essential repairs

In a bulletin issued by Industry Policy Adviser, John Khoury today, member concerns are addressed regarding various government restrictions applying to the gathering of people and the provision of services.

It is important to note, you can continue to remain open for business if that is your choice. People are still permitted to have their vehicle serviced or repaired; however, they should exercise the current social distancing rules. Workshops must also practice the 1.5-meter gap between workers with a 4 square meter average across a workspace.

VACC also encourages you to adopt a contactless service model during these times and promote this to your customers via appropriate channels (e.g. SMS messaging, email, social media).

Members can read the full Bulletin [HERE](#).

A poster has been prepared for members to print. You can download it [HERE](#).

Commercial rent relief on the way: report

The Australian has reported Australia's governments are considering businesses under pressure from the economic impact of the coronavirus to break leases with their commercial landlords. A national cabinet of federal, state and territory governments will meet on Friday to consider how to help commercial tenants struggling with their rent. VACC will put date members accordingly.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison announces free childcare plan

Prime Minister Scott Morrison has announced that parents who need childcare will be able to access this for free as part of the latest coronavirus rescue measures.

The new childcare system, which will begin on Sunday night, will see children still going to their current providers.

The Government will also provide support to 13,000 childcare centres across the country to ensure they are able to remain open.

For further details please read the Prime Minister's media release [HERE](#).

3. EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Second Factsheet: Supporting Apprentices and Trainees Wage Subsidy

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment has just released a second factsheet regarding the Supporting Apprentices and Trainees wage subsidy – including maximum payment amounts and the definition of a small business.

The Factsheet and other information is available [HERE](#).

For further information and advice contact the [Australian Apprenticeship Support Network](#) (the apprenticeship centre who signed up your apprentice).



Supporting Apprentices and Trainees

Questions and Answers

As part of the Government's [Economic Response to the Coronavirus](#), \$1.3 billion will be made available to 70,000 small businesses to help them keep around 117,000 apprentices and trainees across the country in work and training.

1. What is Supporting Apprentices and Trainees?

[Supporting Apprentices and Trainees](#) provides a wage subsidy to small businesses (including those using a Group Training Organisation) to support the retention of their existing apprentices and trainees. This recognises the benefits of training already undertaken by apprentices and trainees and the significant investment made by employers.

The wage subsidy is also available to employers of any size, including a Group Training Organisation, if they re-engage an apprentice or trainee that has been displaced from a small business.

The wage subsidy will support businesses to manage cash-flow challenges and help small businesses retain their apprentices and trainees. This will help to ensure the continued development of the skilled workforce that employers need.

2. How much will be available to employers?

Eligible employers will receive assistance in the form of a wage subsidy reimbursed in arrears at 50 per cent of the apprentice's or trainee's wage.

The wage subsidy will be available for a maximum of nine months, covering wages paid from 1 January 2020 to 30 September 2020, or paid from the date of re-employment for an apprentice or trainee who has been displaced.

Employers will be reimbursed up to a maximum of \$7,000 per quarter, per eligible apprentice or trainee.

3. Who is eligible?

An employer who [retains](#) an apprentice or trainee in their Australian Apprenticeship may be eligible for the subsidy where:

- the employer is a small business (with fewer than 20 employees); or
- a small business (with fewer than 20 employees) using a Group Training Organisation; and

As at 18 March 2020

4. COMMERCIAL VEHICLES

UPDATE: Exemption for Roadhouses and Truckstops

On 30 March 2020, the National Cabinet agreed to exempt roadhouse and rest stop facilities that provide meal and hygiene facilities for the trucking industry from the non-essential services restrictions and allow these facilities to continue supplying their services to heavy vehicle drivers.

Protocols have now been released and can be accessed [HERE](#). This document provides explicit instructions for premises to comply with in order to operate under the exemption.

5. TASMANIA

Tasmanian Support and Stimulus Package

The Tasmanian Government has prepared a \$420 million stimulus package to support Tasmania as they tackle the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Consult the Factsheet [HERE](#) for further details on all initiatives.

Energy cost relief

As of 1 April the Tasmanian Government will provide financial relief from energy costs to small business and individuals. Small business customers and community service organisations will have their next quarterly energy bill waived in recognition of the ongoing impacts of COVID-19.

Energy prices will also be capped for 12 months for all regulated electricity customers. Aurora is implementing other measures such as: payment plans, freezing debt, bill relief, and waiving fees and charges.

Aurora Energy will not disconnect any residential or small business customers, without their agreement during this crisis.

Coronavirus Frequently Asked Questions

The Tasmanian Government has issued a factsheet covering a number of Frequently Asked Questions aimed at providing clarity on the Stages of coronavirus restrictions.

Members should note that “getting your vehicle serviced or repaired” is considered essential.

The Factsheet is available [HERE](#).

Register the impact COVID-19 is having on your business

Tasmanian based members are encouraged to visit the [Business Tasmania website to register the impact of COVID-10 on your business](#). This will enable them to make well-informed decisions on how best to support you. They are providing advice to the Premier and Ministers’ offices based on what the business community and stakeholders are telling them – so your feedback is important.

6. Previous Update Issues

- [Monday, 23 March 2020 - Issue 1](#)
- [Tuesday, 24 March 2020 - Issue 2](#)
- [Wednesday, 25 March 2020 - Issue 3](#)
- [Thursday, 26 March 2020 - Issue 4](#)
- [Friday, 27 March 2020 - Issue 5](#)
- [Monday, 30 March 2020 - Issue 6](#)
- [Tuesday, 31 March 2020 - Issue 7](#)
- [Wednesday, 1 April 2020 - Issue 8](#)

Geoff Gwilym
Chief Executive Officer

Disclaimer: *The information gathered has been drawn from a number of sources and VACC strongly recommends that members revert to the primary source of information for any clarification.*