



Thursday, 16 April 2020
Issue 17.0

Earlier today I issued a bulletin to members regarding the recently announced [commercial tenancy relief scheme](#) designed to alleviate financial hardship faced by tenants and landlords as result of COVID-19.

For commercial tenants and landlords, the scheme will provide the following support:

- a six-month moratorium on commercial tenancy evictions for the non-payment of rent for small to medium enterprises with an annual turnover under \$50 million that have experienced a minimum 30 per cent reduction in turnover due to coronavirus (COVID-19), commencing from 29 March 2020
- a freeze on rent increases during the moratorium for commercial tenants
- a rental payment waiver or deferral proportionate to commercial tenants' income reduction due to coronavirus (COVID-19), to be negotiated between the tenant and landlord
- fast tracked dispute resolution service through the Victorian Small Business Commission (VSBC) and Consumer Affairs (CAV) Victoria.

We encourage tenants and landlords to communicate as early as possible to try to reach an agreement. VACC members who are in dispute with their landlord should contact the [Victorian Small Business Commission](#) (VSBC) and avail yourself to the VSBC low cost dispute resolution service.

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

1. GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENTS

Updated Headline Measures Directive

Following National Cabinet announcements last week, the [Headline Measures Factsheet](#) has been updated as at 15th April. The key update includes information on Higher Education and School announcements by states and territories.

You can read the Factsheet [HERE](#).

Hardship provisions for energy, water and rates

On Thursday 9th April, the National Cabinet agreed to a nationally consistent approach to hardship support across the essential services for households and small businesses.

State and territory governments will work with the organisations supplying essential services within their remit, including water utilities and local governments, to apply principles that will ensure access to hardship support for households and small businesses. Businesses eligible for the JobKeeper payment will automatically be considered to be under 'financial stress' for the purposes of accessing hardship arrangements.

The principles are modelled on the Commonwealth Government's recently released Statement of Expectations for the energy sector:

- Offering flexible payment options to all households and small businesses in financial stress – including small businesses eligible for the JobKeeper Payment;
- Not disconnecting restricting supply/services to those in financial stress;
- Deferring debt recovery proceedings and credit default listing;
- Waiving late fees and interest charges on debt; and Minimising planned outages for critical works, and provide as much notice as possible to assist households and businesses during any outage.

Mental health Support: Centralised portal

The Government is acutely aware of the need to provide support for the mental health and wellbeing of all Australians. In response they are funding and bolstering the capacity of mental health support providers including Lifeline and for Kids Helpline who have experienced an unprecedented surge in call volumes.

The Government's digital mental health portal [Head to Health](#) will be a single source of authoritative information and guidance on how to maintain good mental health and how to access mental health services and care.

You can visit the website [HERE](#).

Beyond Blue also has a dedicated online platform: www.coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au. The Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Service is available 24/7.

Its dedicated phone line, staffed by mental health professionals briefed on the pandemic response, is now open on 1800 512 348.

Australian Government Coronavirus App and Whatsapp channel

The Australian Government has released a Coronavirus App and Whatsapp channel to keep people informed.

To access the Whatsapp channel, you can go to the website here: www.aus.gov.au/whatsapp

2. INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman discusses the JobKeeper Package

SBFEO Kate Carnell explains the JobKeeper legislation via her video below.



COVID-19 - JobKeeper legislation has passed

youtube.com

4th Edition of JobKeeper Payment Guide for employers now available

The fourth edition of this guide was circulated in yesterday's Update. It has been updated in line with the JobKeeper Rules that were tabled late last Thursday, as well as new guidance issued by the ATO on Tuesday afternoon.

This new edition also includes new examples on the application of the Fair Work Act temporary changes covered in the last edition of the guide, as well as a Calendar for the JobKeeper fortnights and deadlines and a checklist for employers wishing to issue a JobKeeper enabling direction.

Members can download the guide [HERE](#).

3. INTERNATIONAL

Financial support to help Australian exporters bounce back

Australian exporters impacted by the COVID-19 crisis will now have access to business-saving loans between \$250,000 and \$50 million under a new \$500 million capital facility to be administered by Export Finance Australia.

The new COVID-19 Export Capital Facility will target loans to established and previously profitable exporters who, due to COVID-19, are unable to gain finance from commercial sources.

In addition to the COVID-19 Export Capital Facility, Export Finance Australia will also provide assistance to its existing customers through access to credit and financial relief.

For more information on Export Finance Australia, including how to apply for finance, visit the website [HERE](#) or read the factsheet [HERE](#).

4. NEWS

New contact tracing app could open borders sooner

A COVID-19 contact tracing app being rolled out in Australia is designed for global use, and could help accelerate international travel if it is adopted broadly. Over 50 countries have expressed interest in the

same app, including New Zealand, which opens the possibility of an early return to trans-Tasman travel. Read the full article [HERE](#).

5. TASMANIA

Coronavirus 'testing blitz' for Tasmania's north-west as cases increase

More cases of coronavirus have been confirmed as being from Tasmania's north-west, on the same day Premier Peter Gutwein has said there will be a "testing blitz" in the region. On Wednesday night, authorities said four new Tasmanian cases had been detected in the 24 hours since 6:00pm Tuesday — all from the disease hotspot of the north-west.

Read the full article [HERE](#).

6. PREVIOUS UPDATE ISSUES

You can read previous Updates of COVID-19 [HERE](#).

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.*