

COVID19 Information Sheet – Victoria (VIC)

Disclaimer: The information below should not be considered an exhaustive list and service delivery may change. Please contact organisations and services directly for the most up to date information and to enquire further about eligibility. Red Cross does not determine eligibility for the third-party services listed.

Victorian Government Updates

- [Victorian Government Coronavirus Homepage](#)
- [Emergency relief packages](#) are available from the Victorian Government for vulnerable Victorians needing to self-quarantine due to coronavirus (COVID-19). Emergency food relief care packages are a box of essential food and personal care items which can be provided to vulnerable Victorians who are self-quarantining due to coronavirus (COVID-19).
- The Victorian Government is providing Emergency Support For Victoria's International Students by establishing a \$45 million [International Student Emergency Relief Fund](#). Applications are now open via the Study Melbourne [website](#).

Food and/or Emergency Relief

- The DSS Grants Service Directory is a searchable database of service providers offering emergency relief (including food support). Go to the [Victoria section of the directory](#) to find services near you.
- The City of Melbourne [Community Food Guide](#) is a resource for community agencies or anyone in the community who needs information about how to access affordable, fresh and healthy food.
- Moreland City Council includes a list of emergency relief, foodbanks, food pantries and services offering food parcels in the Council area [here](#).
- [Health Direct](#) also maintains a database where you can search for food relief. Select food relief as the service you are looking for and enter in your location/suburb to see what services might be available near you.

Housing / Homelessness

- [Victoria Department of Health and Human Services Crisis Accommodation Line](#):
 - Call the 24-hour statewide toll free number on 1800 825 955 to speak with a housing and support worker. The 1800 number will direct your call to a service closest to you, or if the call is outside business hours, it will be directed to Salvation Army Crisis Services.
- [Launch Housing](#)
Bob's Place, 35 Robinson Street, Dandenong VIC 3175
P: 03 9792 0750

- [WAYSS](#)
WAYSS Women's Integrated Services assists women and women with children, who are homeless or at risk of homelessness due to family violence, with information, advocacy, referral and support.
20 Princess Hwy, Dandenong, VIC 3175
P: 9791 6111
- [Safe places for the homeless to recover and isolate](#)
 - The State Government announced \$8.8 million for the establishment of **four COVID-19 Isolation and Recovery Facilities (CIRFs)** across inner Melbourne
 - Operational from 27 April 2020, will provide healthcare and supported accommodation
 - Operated by Anglicare Victoria, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Launch Housing, Sacred Heart Mission and VincentCare Victoria.
 - Those eligible for the service are people experiencing homelessness who:
 - have undergone testing for coronavirus and are awaiting results
 - have undergone testing for coronavirus and returned a positive result
 - are required to self-isolate and do not have suitable housing to do so
 - are being discharged from hospital and require accommodation to recover from coronavirus

Rent and Utilities

- [Tenants Victoria](#)
 - Coronavirus Updates
23/4/2020: [Victorian Government passes new laws](#)
15/4/2020: [Premier announces support for Victorian renters](#)
31/3/2020: [Residential tenancies update](#)
 - Tenants advice line is closed.
[Email advice](#) will be answered Monday to Friday
 - [COVID-19 Impacts on Renters](#)
 - Read: [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) guide for renters](#)
- [Eviction Moratorium](#)

The Victorian Government will bring legislation to the Parliament in line with decisions of the National Cabinet to support tenants and landlords through the coronavirus pandemic by reforming residential and commercial tenancy laws. These include introducing a temporary ban on evictions, pausing rental increases for six months, and providing land tax relief for landlords and rent relief for tenants experiencing financial hardship as part of a plan to help Victorian families and businesses get to the other side of this unprecedented crisis.
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) rent relief grant](#)
 - The Victorian Government has established an \$80 million rental assistance fund to provide rent relief payments of up to \$2000 to Victorians experiencing rental hardship due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.
 - The one off grant is specifically for tenants to help them maintain safe, secure and stable accommodation. It is paid directly to the tenant's agent, lessor or landlord.
 - The grant will be administered by the DHHS Victoria to eligible tenants who:

- have negotiated a rental reduction with their landlord or real estate agent – and lodged that agreement with Consumer Affairs Victoria; or
 - have undertaken a dispute resolution or mediation process with Consumer Affairs Victoria; or
 - are subject to a VCAT decision which directs a grant be made.
- Eligibility:
 - The grant will assist renters in Victoria experiencing financial hardship due to coronavirus (COVID-19), who have, or will shortly have, a bond registered with the Victorian Residential Tenancies Bond Authority.
 - Need to have registered revised rental agreement with Consumer Affairs Victoria or gone through mediation, have less than \$5,000 in savings and still be paying at least 30 per cent of your income in rent. Your household income must be less than \$1,903 per week.
 - There are **no citizenship or permanent residency requirements for applicants**. Applicants that may be eligible include casual workers on holiday and working visas, skilled visas, seasonal workers, New Zealand citizens and all refugee and temporary protection visa holders.
- [Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria](#)
 - In Victoria, all energy and water companies must have a hardship program to assist people who are struggling to pay their bills. There are various areas that energy and water companies can help with, including:
 - 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 Victorian Government's [Utility Relief Grant Scheme \(URGS\)](#) which provides up to \$500 each for electricity, gas and water (subject to eligibility criteria). *If you are not a concession card holder, you need to contact your retailer to find out if you are eligible.*
 - Putting you on a cheaper energy plan.
 - Ensuring concessions are applied to your account.
 - Referral to support services including financial counselling.
 - [General Information Fact Sheets in Language](#)

Health and Medical Care

- **Coronavirus Hotline** 1800 675 398 - If you suspect you may have the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) call the dedicated hotline – open 24 hours, 7 days.
- COVID19- [What if I am from overseas and not eligible for Medicare?](#)
 - Overseas travellers who fall ill in Australia (and are not eligible for Medicare) often have health or travel insurance. For those who do not have adequate insurance coverage, **Victorian hospitals will waive the costs of treatment**. This includes waiving payment and debt recovery procedures for ambulance transfers of people suspected to have coronavirus (COVID-19), who are taken to Victorian hospitals for assessment. These arrangements have been put in place to ensure payment issues are not a barrier for people from overseas with symptoms seeking early medical advice

- [Monash Health Refugee Health and Wellbeing](#)
See website for specific locations and contacts
Main line 03 9594 6666
- All people seeking asylum are entitled to free medical care in Victorian hospitals. For more information see:
 - https://www.rch.org.au/immigranthealth/clinical/Asylum_seekers/
 - <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/hospitals-and-health-services/patient-care/ambulance-and-nept/ambulance-payment/payment-responsibilities/https://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/dental-services>
- The [Refugee Health Guide](#) includes Refugee Health Programs staffed by refugee nurses, doctors and other specialists that operate nationally - providing specialised mental and primary health care and service coordination to refugees and people seeking asylum. These services are familiar with working with people on uncertain immigration pathways and fluctuating Medicare status. Information on referral pathways in Victoria can be found [here](#). Services are defined differently in each state and territory, so look for headings such as 'Refugee Health Program/ Service', 'Immigrant Health Clinic' or 'Community Health Service'.
- [Reciprocal Health Care Agreements](#): Agreements with 11 countries that covers the cost of medically necessary care when Australians visit certain countries and visitors from these countries visit Australia. Those visiting Australia from the following countries may be eligible for medical care under Medicare while in Australia, information for each country is available [here](#).
- [Temporary Visa Categories Covered by Ministerial Orders \(eligible for Medicare\)](#)

Information for the LGBTQI+ community

- Information on health and counselling services, social groups, legal support, multicultural specific services, and other services can be found on this [national LGBTQI+ directory](#).

Information for International Students in VIC

- The Victorian Government is providing Emergency Support For Victoria's International Students by establishing a \$45 million [International Student Emergency Relief Fund](#).
 - The fund will provide one-off payments of up to \$1100 to students in need while expanding emergency provisions for those experiencing exceptional circumstances.
 - Up to 40,000 international students enrolled at Victorian universities, TAFEs, private vocational education and training providers and English language colleges who have lost wages and work due to the COVID19 could benefit from the relief payment.
 - The payments will require co-contributions from university hardship funds and build on existing Victorian Government support provided to international students through the Study Melbourne Student Centre.
 - More information: Visit the specific Study Melbourne homepage [here](#).
- [Study Australia website - COVID-19 International Student Information](#) (*website includes a drop down box (top right) to translate pages into a range of languages*) and [the Department of Education, Skills and Employment \(DESE\)](#)

- Advice only (no financial assistance) - International students hotline (1300 981 621) / international.students@dese.gov.au
- Working: (Info from [Home Affairs](#)):
 - Certain student visa holders can work for more than 40 hours per fortnight to support the supply of essential goods and services for Australians if they are:
 - Employed in the nursing sector
 - Employed by registered supermarkets
 - Employed in the aged care sector
 - See [Employers with access to these essential service arrangements](#).
- Accessing Superannuation
 - Temporary residents may be able to access up to \$10,000 of their superannuation in this financial year (until 30 June 2020) to assist in supporting themselves through the coronavirus crisis. More information is available on the [ATO website here](#).
 - Students will need to use [MyGov](#) for this process.
- [Consumer Affairs Victoria](#) includes information for students affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) travel ban and are unable to travel to Victoria and need to cancel their rental accommodation before moving in, or change the date of moving in. includes [renting information - Simplified Chinese](#), [renting information - Traditional Chinese](#).
- [Study Melbourne](#) has created a series of information, links and resources aimed at supporting international students during COVID-19. They also have social work services who may be able to assist with material aid, food vouchers and rent.
- **RMIT University** has announced a \$10 million support package for students. Students can apply for emergency financial grants and technology grants. While the former is for students who are affected by job loss, housing insecurity or other financial matters associated with COVID-19, the latter is to help students with their IT equipment and internet needs to continue studying remotely.
- **La Trobe University** launched the [COVID-19 Financial Assistance Program](#) and is offering two grants:
 - Technology Bursary– Provision of a laptop and/or \$150 to support students who do not **have** access to computers or the internet at home
 - Crisis Support Bursary – One-off, \$3000 payment for individual students experiencing a significant financial crisis and housing insecurity.
- **Swinburne University of Technology** has established the [Swinburne Student Emergency Fund](#) for eligible, current local and international students. The Student Emergency Fund enables students that have been impacted by disasters such as bushfires, floods, droughts or a health pandemic to access financial support through a one-off grant of up to \$1,000. Students who are not eligible for Centrelink are prioritized.
- **Monash University** has launched a \$15 million [Student Compassionate and Hardship](#) package to support vulnerable students during the COVID-19 crisis. The support is in two phases. In the first phase, emergency payment up to \$500 were given from April 7 to cover

essential living expenses. The second phase started April 14 Monday, in which eligible students can get:

- A payment of up to \$7000, or
 - A payment of up to \$5000 available to students who have incurred reasonable costs in China, Iran or Australia associated with the original inbound bans on travel from these countries.
 - The total amount a student can get is \$7,500 dollars.
- **Deakin University** has set up a [COVID-19 Financial Assistance Scheme](#) and announced additional funding of up to \$25 million to support international students for the next six months, case-managed, individual approach to assist.
 - **Victoria University** has established different kinds of grants and financial [support package](#) to assist students in distress due to COVID-19.
 - **Emergency financial grant** for students impacted by self-isolation/quarantine requirements or job losses. This grant is for essential living or study expenses related to food, healthcare, textbooks and materials (non-tech) for study up to the value of \$100.
 - **Technology grant** to support students in pursuing studies that have transitioned to digital platforms (e.g. voucher to support the purchase of a wifi dongle up to the value of \$100).
 - **Crisis housing support** for students who have encountered hardship as a result of the loss of paid employment. Rental assistance grants up to the value of \$500.
 - It offers support even if the sponsor of an international student is facing hardship due to the **situation**.
 - **University of Melbourne** has two grants to support students affected by COVID Support and funding for students: the [COVID Emergency Support Fund](#) and [COVID-19 Student Support Grants](#)
 - **Australian Catholic University** - ACU offers short-term student loans to students who are in urgent need of financial assistance, through the [Student Loan Scheme](#)

Additional Information for People Seeking Asylum and Refugees

- If you have a Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) or Safe Haven Enterprise Visa (SHEV), you are eligible to apply for the [Special Benefit payment through Centrelink](#). You will need to meet the other criteria for the payment. Click the link for more information.
- [Status Resolution Support Services](#) (SRSS)
 - The SRSS program supports vulnerable migrants who are waiting for the government's decision on a visa application, including people seeking asylum. It provides temporary needs-based support for people facing significant barriers and unable to support themselves while resolving their immigration status.
 - In Victoria, the SRSS Program is delivered by:
 - [Life Without Barriers](#). Contact: info@lwb.org.au Dandenong (03 8752 8500) / Epping (03 8405 4400) / Sunshine (03 9313 2400)

- [Adult Multicultural Education Services \(AMES\)](#) - If you or someone you know would like to apply for SRSS with AMES Australia, [contact online](#) or call 13 AMES (13 2637) for more information.
- [Humanitarian Settlement Program \(HSP\)](#)
 - The HSP is a national program funded by the Australian Government to help refugees to establish themselves when they first arrive in Australia.
 - People granted the following visas are eligible to access the HSP on arrival:
 - Refugee (subclass 200, 201, 203 and 204) visa
 - Global Special Humanitarian (subclass 202) visa
 - Other visa holders are also eligible to access the HSP, but only to receive [Specialised and Intensive Services \(SIS\)](#). These include:
 - Refugee (subclass 200, 201, 203 and 204)
 - Global Special Humanitarian (subclass 202)
 - Protection (subclass 866)
 - Temporary Protection (subclass 785), Temporary Humanitarian Stay (subclass 449), Temporary Humanitarian Concern (subclass 786) and Safe Haven Enterprise (subclass 790).
 - SIS is a component of the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) available to humanitarian entrants and other eligible visa holders who have complex needs:
 - [HSP Service Provider Locations](#)