

COVID-19 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

- The [Victorian Government Coronavirus Homepage](#) provides information on:
 - [Testing sites](#) and guidelines for what to do if you have COVID-19.
 - The latest [exposure sites](#) across metropolitan Melbourne
 - The [wearing of masks](#) in public, on public transport, and in crowds.
 - Interstate [travel](#), travel within Victoria and [border restrictions](#).
- **COVID-19 vaccinations:** The rollout of Victoria’s vaccine program began 22 February 2021. The vaccine is safe, free and universal. There will be limited doses of COVID-19 vaccines initially, so certain groups at highest risk of infection will get the first doses. More information on Victoria and Australia’s vaccination program, including the rollout plan, can be found at the [Department of Health webpage](#).
- [Emergency relief packages](#) are available from the Victorian Government for vulnerable Victorians needing to self-quarantine due to coronavirus (COVID-19). An emergency relief package contains essential food and personal care items that are available to vulnerable Victorians who need to quarantine or isolation due to coronavirus (COVID-19).
- The Victorian government has put in place a moratorium on evictions, rent relief for eligible tenants, suspension of rental increases, and a continued dispute resolution process. The moratorium is due to end on **28 March 2021**.
 - For more information, visit [Renting laws and support at Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Victoria](#), and for support contact [Tenants Victoria](#).
- The Victorian government’s [International Student Emergency Relief Fund](#) closed on 31 December 2020. International students in Victoria who continue to experience financial hardship are encouraged to apply via Red Cross for the [Extreme Hardship Support Program](#).
- The [Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment](#) is available to people in Victoria on temporary visas who have a visa with work rights, and also meet with other criteria including:
 - You have coronavirus (COVID-19)
 - You have been in close contact with a person who has COVID-19
 - You care for a child, 16 years or under, who has COVID-19 or who has been in close contact with a person who has COVID-19
 - You are caring for someone who has COVID-19
 - You are unable to go to work and earn an income
 - You have no appropriate leave entitlements, including pandemic sick leave, personal leave or leave to care for another person

How to stay COVID safe

- With the relaxing of restrictions, and opening of state and some international borders, Australian governments are encouraging everyone to remain COVID safe.

Physical distancing

- When and where possible, remain 1.5 metres away from other people.
- Avoid physical greetings such as handshaking, hugs and kisses.
- Take extra care if you are using [public transport](#).
- Avoid crowds and large public gatherings.
- Wear a mask when in public.

Workplaces & schools

- Follow the recommended government [health and hygiene advice](#).
- Avoid non-essential face to face meetings.
- Provide alcohol-based hand rub for all staff.
- Eat lunch at your desk or outside rather than in the lunchroom.
- Regularly clean and disinfect surfaces that many people touch.
- Open windows or adjust air conditioning for more ventilation.
- Stay at home if you are feeling unwell.

Employment & Work Rights

- From November 2020, relocation assistance will be available to people who [relocate to harvest and regional areas](#) to take up short-term agricultural work, including those on temporary visas, with the right to work in Australia. For more information about the scheme, and to lodge an application, [visit the website here](#).

- **Temporary relaxation of working hours for student visa holders**

Due to exceptional circumstances during the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to ensure the supply of critical services, the [Department of Home Affairs and Australian Border Force](#) will take a flexible approach to student visa holders working beyond their usual work limitations, but only in specified industries.

You can work more than 40 hours a fortnight if you are:

- employed by an aged care Approved Provider or Commonwealth-funded aged care service provider with a RACS ID or a NAPS ID, before 8 September 2020
- employed by a registered National Disability Insurance Scheme provider
- enrolled in a health care related course and you are supporting the health effort against COVID-19, as directed by health officials.

You **cannot** work more than 40 hours if you are employed in a supermarket. This measure ended on 1 May 2020.

All workers in Australia have the same rights and protections at work, regardless of citizenship or visa status. Your employer must comply with Australian workplace and immigration laws, including their obligation to:

- Pay you the right pay rate for all time worked
- Provide a safe workplace.

- For information on [working](#) in Australia visit the [Home Affairs website](#).

The [Fair Work Ombudsman](#) provides education, assistance, advice and guidance to employers and employees, and can inquire into and investigate breaches of the Fair Work Act.

The [Migrant Workers Centre](#) empowers migrant workers in Victoria to understand rights, enforce them in workplaces, and connect with other migrant workers. The website has information in a [number of languages](#), including Tagalog, Malay, Arabic, Mandarin, Spanish and Tamil.

Food and/or Emergency Relief

- [AskIzzy](#) is a national database with links to supports including housing, food and clothing, health services, financial support, family violence assistance, and much more.
- The National Debt Helpline provides free financial advice, and [the NDH website](#) has information on topics such as rent, utilities and emergency financial assistance. The NDH is open Monday to Friday from 9:30am – 4:30pm, on 1800 007 007.
- The DSS Grants Service Directory is a searchable database of service providers offering emergency relief (including food support). Visit [Victoria section of the directory](#).
- The City of Melbourne [Community Food Guide](#) is a resource for community agencies or anyone in the community who needs affordable, fresh and healthy food.
- Empower Australia have food relief locations in Southbank, Lower Plenty, Ringwood, Pakenham, and Grovedale. [Visit the website](#) for more information or phone (03) 9896 7999.
- 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 or suburb to see what services might be available near you.
- [CISVic local services](#) assist people experiencing personal and financial difficulties by providing information, referral and support services including Emergency Relief.
- NRNA – Non-Resident Nepali Association has a list of resources on their [Facebook page](#).
- The Bangladeshi community of Melbourne has a list of resources on their [Facebook page](#).

Rent and Utilities

- Rental moratorium: For updated information on rental information, factsheets, and where to get help, visit the [Tenants Victoria website](#):
 - If you have lost your job, or had your working hours cut, because of the pandemic, and you have fallen behind in your rent, your landlord [cannot evict you](#). This protection is in place from until **28 March 2021**.

- A landlord is not allowed to increase the rent at any time until **28 March 2021**.
- The Victorian Government's rent relief grant provides up to \$3,000 to eligible tenants who are experiencing rental hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Eligible residential tenants are able to access up to \$3,000. Application forms can be accessed [here](#).
- The [Tenants Victoria website](#) is regularly updated with information for people renting in Victoria, including media releases. **Please note:** The tenants advice line is closed, and all [Email advice](#) will be answered Monday to Friday.
- The [Justice Connect website](#) is updated regularly with housing and rental information, and where to find support.
- [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](#)

Housing / Homelessness

- [Victoria DHHS Crisis Accommodation Line](#): A 24/7 statewide toll free number – 1800 825 955 for housing support. The number will direct your call to a service closest to you, or if the call is outside business hours, it will be redirected to Salvation Army Crisis Services.
- [Launch Housing](#): Bob's Place, 35 Robinson Street, Dandenong, phone: 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. Located at 20 Princess Hwy, Dandenong, phone (03) 9791 6111.
- [Safe places for the homeless to recover and isolate](#)
 - The Victorian Government's COVID-19 Isolation and Recovery Facilities (CIRFs) operate across Melbourne.
 - Brotherhood of St Laurence, Launch Housing, Vincent Care, and St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne manage and operate the CIRF facilities.
 - To make a referral, as an organisation or person in need, contact 1800 365 100

Health and Medical Care

- **Coronavirus Hotline:** 1800 675 398 – if you suspect you may have coronavirus (COVID-19) phone the hotline, which is 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.
- [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 visit the [Royal Children's Hospital](#) (RCH Melbourne) website.
- Neami 'Partners in Wellbeing' – for support or referrals call 1300 375 330 and for more information on the program visit the [Neami website](#).
- 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. Information on referral pathways in Victoria can be found [here](#).
- [Reciprocal Health Care Agreements:](#) Agreements with 11 countries that cover 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 \(eligible for Medicare\)](#)
- To support older people from culturally diverse backgrounds, the Australian Department of Health has funded the Multilingual Older Persons COVID-19 Support Line. The support line will run for six months from 10 February 2021 until 31 July 2021 will be offered in the following six languages – Arabic, Cantonese, Mandarin, Greek, Italian & Vietnamese. For more information visit the [PICAC Alliance website](#).

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](#).
- **Uniting Care** runs the peer support program QRAC. Contact Ian (0400 121 907), Jayke (0448 440 991) or Andi (0409 091 734) for more information.

Information for International Students in VIC

- The Victorian Government's [International Student Emergency Relief Fund](#) closed on 31 December 2020. The [Study Melbourne website](#) provides information on [other supports available](#) to international students living in Victoria.
- International students hotline (1300 981 621) / international.students@dese.gov.au
- **Australian Catholic University** has closed all financial support. Check their [website](#) for updates and other general COVID-19 information.
- **Deakin University** has closed its financial support scheme. General information for students is available on their [website](#).
- **La Trobe University** has information on COVID-19 including [student support](#), and a [COVID Safety Plan PDF](#) available for download.
- **University of Melbourne** has financial aid and food support available to eligible students. More information is available on their [website](#).
- **Monash University** has a number of factsheets available on their [website](#), as well as information on returning to campus, library opening hours, and government updates.
- **Swinburne University of Technology** has created [a page on its website](#) to support students and staff to access official information and updates from the university.
- **Victoria University** has restricted campus access. For the latest updates, and other information for students visit the [Victoria University website](#).

Information for New Zealanders living in Australia

New Zealand citizens in Australia on a Special Category Visa (SCV) may be able to access a range of payments, depending on their circumstances.

- Those who came to Australia prior to 26 February 2001 generally have protected status and have the same access to all Australian payments as permanent residents and Australian citizens, where eligible, including JobSeeker Payment.
- New Zealanders who came to Australia after 26 February 2001 and have non-protected status can access family payments, such as FTB, paid parental leave payments and childcare subsidy, where eligible. If they have been continuously living in Australia for at least 10 years since February 2001, they can also access JobSeeker Payment or Youth Allowance for a one-off period of up to six months.
- New Zealanders on an SCV may be eligible for the JobKeeper Payment if they meet the qualifying criteria, <https://treasury.gov.au/coronavirus/jobkeeper>.
- New Zealand citizens may also be able to claim the Age Pension or, in limited circumstances, Disability Support Pension or Carer Payment, under the Social Security Agreement between Australia and New Zealand.

- For further general information:
<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/subjects/payments-visa-holders>
- Individuals needing specific advice on their circumstances should contact Services Australia:
<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/contact-us>

Additional Information for People Seeking Asylum and Refugees

- CatholicCare have developed an online resource of financial, health, housing and other emergency relief services available for people seeking asylum. You can [access the link here](#).
- 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](#)