

# COVID-19 IMPACTS US ALL

Ensuring the safety and well-being of people on temporary visas during COVID-19.



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power of  
humanity



## Australian Red Cross

Australian Red Cross is part of the world's largest humanitarian network, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, which operates in over 192 countries across the world. The Movement works with people impacted by migration all over the world – in countries of origin, transit, destination and on return, irrespective of their legal status.

Red Cross aims to change lives by meeting critical humanitarian needs and supporting social and economic participation; change minds by increasing social and economic inclusion and a sense of belonging; and change the rules through advocacy on issues of systemic and individual concern.

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This report was written in July and August 2020. All efforts have been made to ensure accurate and up-to-date information as at the time of writing. Please note that information may have since changed.

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# USING THIS REPORT

In response to the COVID-19 crisis in Australia, Australian Red Cross (Red Cross) has significantly expanded its provision of emergency relief to people who are in Australia on a temporary visa, or who are without a visa. Based on our experiences providing emergency relief to over 29,000 people between 1 April and 31 July 2020 and for a small number of people, a broader safety net including casework support, this report shares what we have learnt about the impact of COVID-19 on people on temporary visas and people without visas in Australia. Using de-identified client data, case studies, and Red Cross insights, the report:

- describes the characteristics of migrants accessing emergency relief payments, food relief, complex casework and other supports;
- describes the most significant concerns and the most urgent issues;
- identifies gaps in meeting humanitarian and protection needs; and
- recommends actions by government, business and civil society.

## **This report can be used to:**

- understand the demographic profiles of those most vulnerable to extreme hardship;
- understand the current emergency humanitarian needs of migrants on temporary or without visas in Australia;
- consider the mechanisms needed to ensure basic humanitarian needs are met, including building on current COVID-19 pandemic-related support schemes; and
- plan interventions for individuals and communities experiencing severe hardship during a time of crisis.

## **Federal and State/Territory governments and relevant departments in particular can use this report to:**

- understand how existing measures in place to support people on temporary visas are making a difference;
- review policy options available to protect the health of all people currently in Australia;
- assist with planning emergency relief, broader income support, and other supports over the coming months;
- consider additional funding and policy options that will improve outcomes, especially for the most vulnerable;
- protect public health by continuing to ensure accessible COVID-19 testing and treatment for everyone in Australia; and
- consider the contribution of people on temporary visas to Australia's economic and social recovery and plan an effective recovery that leaves no-one behind.

## **Civil society groups in particular can use this report to:**

- anticipate the emergency relief and support needs of people on temporary visas in the coming months;
- identify people and communities who are most at risk;
- consider outreach to people who do not traditionally access their services;
- review program eligibility criteria to ensure people on temporary visas and people without a visa can access humanitarian assistance; and
- support sector and service collaboration by ensuring access to de-identified data and information.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The success of Australia's COVID-19 response relies on everyone, including people on temporary visas and people without visas, being able to access health care and meet their basic needs. Recovery efforts need to include everyone in Australia, and should not exacerbate existing or create new vulnerabilities, barriers and inequalities.

At the beginning of the pandemic, there were almost 2.2 million people on temporary visas in Australia. While some have been able to depart, by the end of June just over 2 million people on temporary visas remained, most of whom did not have access to a sustainable safety net.

People on temporary visas represent a complex group including people who cannot return home because it is unsafe to do so, people who have made their lives here, studying and working, and who are on a pathway to citizenship, people previously filling skills and labour shortages who are now unemployed, and others who are stranded because of border closures, unavailability and unaffordability of flights.

Red Cross experience indicates that some people without access to a sustainable safety net, such as people seeking asylum, have seen their already challenging situations made more difficult and their vulnerabilities exacerbated. Others have never experienced financial challenges in Australia and have had to ask for help for the first time.

Some government supports to people on temporary visas during COVID-19 have had positive short term impacts, including emergency relief, access to testing and treatment for COVID-19 regardless Medicare status and pandemic leave disaster payments. However, more sustainable assistance is needed.

It is worth highlighting that there is little consolidated government data available to ascertain the needs and humanitarian and health impacts on people on temporary visas during COVID-19. This is in contrast for government data sets such as growth in JobSeeker numbers or Medicare information for Australian citizens and permanent residents.

This report may fill this gap to some extent by providing insights from our support to 29,000 people on temporary visas between 1 April and 31 July 2020 nationwide, through emergency relief payments, food assistance as well as casework support for those in highly vulnerable situations.

Of the people we supported across Australia during this time:

- Over 43% were single adults and 33% were couples or single adults with children;
- Around 60% were students and 15% were people seeking asylum; and
- Half were in their 20s, half were women and over 17% were children.



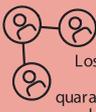
Our experience shows that the situations of people on temporary visas have deteriorated significantly since April, especially those posing a serious risk to people's safety and wellbeing. Our report highlights that the most significant issues for people accessing emergency relief have been:

- **Financial insecurity:** 80% of people receiving emergency relief payments have indicated that they will use it to meet their food needs, with people struggling to cover daily expenses such as bills, groceries, and medications. One off emergency relief has not been sufficient to meet ongoing and growing needs as people are exhausting their savings.
- **Housing insecurity:** Over 50% of people accessing emergency relief have reported housing as their key issue of concern. Rent relief schemes are not consistently available to people on temporary visas and some current measures are approaching their expiry date. Overcrowding and homelessness are an increasingly serious risk, including to families with children.
- **Gaps in health care:** People are increasingly struggling to afford the necessary health care, including premiums, the gap between upfront fees and rebates, or medication costs. For others, their health insurance does not provide sufficient coverage, including for pregnant women.

- **Access to health care:** Some people are worried that if they present for COVID-19 testing or treatment they will be referred to immigration authorities because they do not have a valid visa or can no longer afford health insurance which may put them in breach of their visa condition.
- **Deterioration of mental health:** As with the wider Australian population, COVID-19 is causing great distress, which can be exacerbated for people on temporary visas who face uncertainty and don't have access to a sustainable safety net. For many, their insurance does not cover counselling and they are unable to afford paying for support or medication.

Additional impacts we have observed include pressure on community and health agencies who normally support a smaller group of people, experiences of discrimination and stigma, and barriers to departure and being stranded in Australia.

We are also particularly concerned about the situation of families and children and people seeking asylum and note that people on temporary visas are at increasing risk of labour exploitation.

COMPOUNDING RISKS FOR MIGRANTS in the context of COVID-19		
 <p><b>UNDOCUMENTED OR IRREGULAR STATUS</b></p> <p>Lack of legal status may create formal barriers or lead to a reluctance to access assistance due to fear of arrest, detention or deportation.</p>	<p><b>EXCLUSION</b></p> <p>Migrants may be de-prioritised or excluded in healthcare and prevention and response efforts.</p> 	<p><b>LIMITED OR NO ACCESS TO ESSENTIAL SERVICES</b></p> <p>Informal and formal barriers to accessing essential services like food, shelter, healthcare, psychosocial support, legal assistance and water, sanitation and hygiene services</p> 
<p><b>COMMUNICATION BARRIERS</b></p>  <p>Barriers in understanding or accessing key information on healthcare and challenges in reporting on health conditions.</p>	 <p><b>STIGMA &amp; DISCRIMINATION</b></p> <p>Increasing discrimination and stigma as well as blame for spreading the virus which can prevent people from seeking assistance and support</p>	 <p><b>LOSS OF SOCIAL SUPPORTS</b></p> <p>Loss of contact with family and community networks due to quarantine and/or border closures which prevent return home and lead to anxiety due to isolation.</p>
 <p><b>GENDER DIMENSIONS</b></p> <p>Female domestic workers are often employed in isolated workplaces and increased risk of gender-based violence due to lock-down and movement restrictions.</p>	<p><b>FINANCIAL BARRIERS</b></p> <p>Financial barriers to accessing health systems and support, including lack of insurance and high costs of care or cost of transport to healthcare centres.</p> 	 <p><b>POOR LIVING / WORKING CONDITIONS</b></p> <p>Overcrowding, such as in camp or detention settings, inadequate sanitation and hygiene and inability to isolate or physically distance.</p>
<p><b>LABOUR EXPLOITATION &amp; HUMAN TRAFFICKING</b></p>  <p>Epidemics and pandemics can exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and put people at a greater risk of exploitation and trafficking.</p>	 <p><b>SOCIAL, RELIGIOUS &amp; CULTURAL OBSTACLES</b></p> <p>Lack of familiarity and awareness of health procedures and available support and a lack of culturally appropriate services may prevent healthcare access.</p>	<p><b>PROTECTION &amp; SAFETY</b></p> <p>Migrants, including people seeking asylum and refugees, may be unable to seek safety due to border closures and travel or movement restrictions.</p> 

Source: IFRC (2020). *Least protected, most affected: Migrants and refugees facing extraordinary risks during the COVID-19 pandemic*

To avoid a humanitarian crisis during the COVID-19 pandemic, an improved response to meet the humanitarian and health needs of people on temporary visas or without visas in Australia needs to:

- 1. Provide financial and other support to meet the essential humanitarian needs of people on temporary visas**, including by establishing new or use existing provisions (e.g. Special Benefit) for income support; continuing to provide and expand Emergency Relief, including repeat payments; extending access to the full range of concessions available to people on low incomes.
- 2. Support people on temporary visas to return to work or secure employment**, including by giving people on temporary visas access to existing or designing tailored employment pathways programs and facilitating temporary visa extensions and ensure people have work rights.
- 3. Ensure people on temporary visas have access to safe housing and are not living in overcrowded housing**, including by expanding financial support for housing, expanded access to homelessness services and support for people seeking protection from family violence.
- 4. Support ongoing healthcare coverage, and medical care including for COVID-19 testing and treatment, for people on temporary visas**, including through support to cover the gap in health costs and medication, data firewalls between health care providers and immigration officials and access to a free vaccine for everyone in Australia regardless of visa status.
- 5. Ensure mental health support can be accessed by people on temporary visas most affected**, including tackling barriers that prevent access to mental health services and supporting community groups who are providing social and emotional support, as well as casework support.
- 6. Promote and strengthen social cohesion**, including by increasing public messaging about positive contributions of migrants, countering misinformation that vilifies migrant communities and ensuring migrants who experience physical or verbal assault receive support.
- 7. Limit loss of temporary visa status and regularise status for people without visas**, including waiving visa conditions or compliance requirements that are untenable at this time and considering a COVID-19 amnesty for those whose visa has expired.
- 8. Assist people on temporary visas who are stranded**, including ensuring access to a basic safety net while awaiting departure, and abandoning re-entry bans.

# CONTEXT

In early 2020, Australia started to experience not only the health, but the social and economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic.<sup>1</sup> As the risks of the illness became clearer, governments introduced unprecedented measures to limit the spread and impact of the disease. These measures included: limiting the movement of and contact between people; closing schools; closing non-essential businesses; and restricting international travel.<sup>2</sup> These conditions, alongside the illness itself, have had substantial impacts on the health, wellbeing and livelihoods of all people in Australia.

The federal government has worked to mitigate the impact with a range of interventions including a temporary subsidy of \$1,500 per employee for businesses significantly affected by COVID-19 (JobKeeper), fast-tracked access to unemployment benefits and an additional coronavirus supplement for the unemployed (JobSeeker), as well as mental health supports for Australian citizens and Permanent Residents.<sup>3</sup> These interventions stabilised the situation of many in Australia.

## COVID-19 and people on temporary visas or without visas in Australia

However, for people on temporary visas, access to the ongoing safety nets of Medicare, income support or JobKeeper are largely out of reach. Many also cannot access mainstream mechanisms or rental supports in States and Territories. Some do not have work rights, and others are only permitted to work with a specified employer or in specific locations.

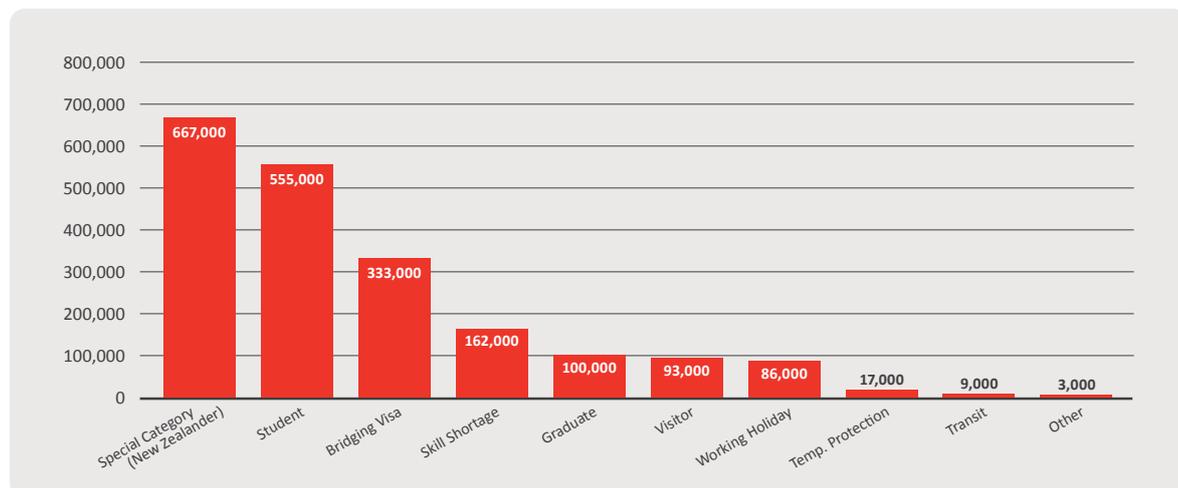
The vast majority of temporary visas holders, who have lost their jobs or have had to reduce their hours rely on friends, communities, local organisations (in many cases those established to support refugees and people seeking asylum) universities, and emergency relief providers.

As seen in Table 1, as of 30 June 2020 there were just over 2 million people in Australia on a temporary visa, the majority of whom cannot access a sustainable safety net.<sup>4</sup> There are also an estimated 62,000 people in Australia who do not currently hold a valid visa because they overstayed, have had their visa cancelled or awaiting the grant of a further visa.<sup>5</sup> A more detailed analysis of the changes in this group is provided in *Appendix II: Further information on temporary visa numbers*.

Red Cross acknowledges and welcomes announcements by Federal, State and Territory Governments on additional supports for people on temporary visas in Australia, which are outlined in full in *Appendix IV - Info sheet COVID-19 & Social Services for People on Temporary Visas*.<sup>6</sup> Some of these government provisions include:

- Emergency relief funds by the Department of Social Services and some State and Territory governments for people on temporary visas and/or international students;
- Extending total permitted work hours for students in key industries including health care;
- Changing visa conditions to ensure people can remain working in key industries such as agriculture and food processing;
- Early access to superannuation for students in Australia more than 12 months;
- Flexibility in determining compliance when coronavirus has prevented students from meeting their visa conditions;<sup>7</sup>
- Free testing and treatment for COVID-19 regardless of Medicare by all State and Territory governments;
- Including migrants on temporary visas in the Pandemic Leave Disaster Payments in Victoria and Tasmania.

Table 1: Temporary migrants in Australia by visa category, 30 June 2020



It is important to consider that emergency relief is usually for people that have an income safety net, access to Medicare, and have short-term needs in accessing food, transport, clothes or paying bills.

As the second wave and protracted recovery from COVID-19 extends into months (and perhaps years) people on temporary visas have exhausted or will be exhausting their savings and supports and will require more sustainable assistance. The current packages of government supports, while effective in making a difference for thousands of people in the short-term, are not enough to sustain the increasing needs of people on temporary or without visas.

One solution offered by some in government and other commentators has been to encourage migrants who cannot support themselves at this time to return home.<sup>8</sup> For some people, in particular people seeking asylum, return to their country of origin may not be an option for safety reasons. For others, and as Australian citizens overseas during COVID-19 have been finding, there may be barriers to immediate return home.<sup>9</sup> These barriers include border closures or caps on arrival numbers, few flights and high ticket prices, and the costs of quarantine on-arrival (described further in “Barriers to departure” below).<sup>10</sup> Students may be committed to completing their course or degree and many other people have lived in Australia for years, built businesses, or started a family. They may be awaiting the outcome of a permanent visa application, which cannot be awarded if they are not in the country. In these situations, it is not simply a case of ‘going home’.

**In mid-July, 161 countries did not allow passengers from, or who had been in, Australia to enter their country.**

*IOM COVID-19 Global Mobility Database, 13 July 2020.*

### **Red Cross Emergency Relief for people on temporary or without visas**

It is very difficult to determine the impact of COVID-19 on the situation of people on temporary or without visas, as there is no single data set available that captures this information. For instance, the broad shift in needs amongst citizens and permanent residents can be assessed through data sets such as Centrelink application numbers. A comparative set of figures does not currently exist for this group of people.

For many years, Red Cross has been supporting people who are vulnerable as a result of their migration situation – with a particular focus on people we refer to as ‘migrants in transition’.<sup>11</sup> In our core “Safety Net” programming, Red Cross provides support to people who have exhausted all other assistance, are often facing protection risks, and do not have access to Australia’s welfare system. Many are unable to access

mainstream healthcare.

Prior to COVID-19, Red Cross was already collaborating with a range of sector partners across the country to provide access to basic assistance for those ineligible for most mainstream supports. This included internal, donor-supported programming of our Safety Net (casework, payments, referrals, employment support) as well as State-government-funded programs in Victoria (Stepping in to Support Asylum Seekers) and in Queensland (Asylum Seeker and Refugee Assistance Program)<sup>12</sup> that provide emergency relief payments, casework and employment support mainly to people seeking asylum. This work continues, but the vulnerabilities of people in this group have been compounded by the financial, health and wellbeing impacts of COVID-19.

Not surprisingly, the group of people in need has expanded rapidly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many thousands of additional people on temporary visas have suddenly found themselves without work or other income, relying on their savings, and the support of family and friends, with some not having savings or family supports, and having to seek assistance from humanitarian organisations like Red Cross.

In response to COVID-19, and in partnership with a range of agencies and community organisations, Red Cross scaled up existing programs through additional funding, including from the Department of Social Services, as well as the NT, ACT, NSW and VIC governments, philanthropic support and regular donors. (See *Appendix I: State and Territory Snapshots*)

The support Red Cross currently provides to people living in Australia on temporary visas and, in some cases, without a visa includes:

- **Emergency relief payments:** Emergency relief is typically useful to bridge short-term gaps in household finances, by providing funds towards food, rent, utilities, transport, medication, and education. Assistance differs according to the relevant funding stream and the vast majority of payments are one-off; however, some funding streams (including our internal program) provide repeat payments, which are provided directly into people’s bank accounts. This has the additional benefit of avoiding unnecessary health risks associated with travel and the expense of needing to attend a Red Cross office; it also means we can provide support regardless of where someone lives. As a result of COVID-19 people can now submit applications from anywhere in Australia through an online portal or through partner agencies. People must provide evidence (e.g. bank statements) of financial distress, such as having used savings.
- **Casework support:** provided to people who are assessed as having significant vulnerabilities (for example, around safety, children at risk).

Red Cross undertakes a more detailed strengths and needs assessment to determine additional support necessary and works with the person to understand their most significant issues, and to identify options to improve their situation.

- **Food parcels** are also available to those struggling to meet their daily food needs, and are provided in partnership with food charities and local community organisations around Australia.
- **Referral** information is available at scale, via our website,<sup>13</sup> and direct referrals to assist people to access additional services based on their need.

### Other Red Cross support to migrants during COVID-19

During COVID-19 Red Cross also developed, and continues to update, posters and audio recordings in 18 community languages explaining COVID-19 public health messages, including on managing wellbeing during this difficult time.<sup>14</sup>

In addition, we continue to reach out to existing clients to understand the impact of COVID-19 on them and their families including by:

- engaging with people in immigration detention remotely;
- settling newly arrived refugees through the Humanitarian Settlement Program;
- supporting people subjected to- or at risk of - human trafficking and Modern Slavery;
- assisting people who have been separated from family members due to conflict, migration and disaster, including COVID-19;
- delivering our In Search of Safety activities, virtually as required, to support Australian's to welcome newly arrived migrants; and
- helping people back into work through employment programs.

### Report data and methods

This report provides an analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data held by Red Cross about the people accessing emergency relief nationwide, from both new and existing emergency relief funding between 1<sup>st</sup> April – 31<sup>th</sup> July 2020.

We have indicated where the report draws on data from specific funding sources, in particular Department of Social Services (DSS)-funded emergency relief, which is the most consistent data set nationwide.<sup>15</sup>

The report also draws on de-identified case data, weekly insights from Red Cross teams in all States and Territories, and selected case studies. We have collected demographic data for people who have received emergency relief funding, and more detailed data for those accessing casework support.

Other sources, including government data and reports, have been used when possible to add value and validate Red Cross findings against external sources. This data is as recent as possible.

### Short case study insights

- One man was very sick when he contacted us for an emergency relief payment because he couldn't afford his heart medication. He feels much better – for now.
- A New Zealand woman who has been here for 10 years lost her job in health care. She is not eligible for ongoing JobSeeker payments, because she arrived from New Zealand after 2001. She has exhausted her savings, and is struggling to meet her family's needs. They are now two weeks behind on rent. Our emergency relief support has provided some short term relief.
- One person with symptoms was scared to get a COVID-19 test. We helped reassure the person and organised a test, transport to the testing facility and a face mask.
- One child is struggling to attend the online classes for school because they're sleeping in a car. We are prioritising this case with emergency relief and casework support but sustainable longer term options and supports are limited.

# PEOPLE REQUIRING EMERGENCY RELIEF

As described above, in response to COVID-19, Red Cross is offering four forms of support for people on temporary visas or without a visa in Australia.

From 1 April to 31 July 2020, this has included supporting approximately 29,000 people through:

- Over 17,000 emergency relief payments;
- 3,705 food pantry and parcel deliveries impacting over 8,600 people;
- Complex casework support to over 850 people; and
- Over 160,000 people provided with referrals and information about other resources.

## Demographic characteristics of people receiving Emergency Relief

Our emergency relief payments impacted over 20,400 people (18,000 through DSS funding and over 2,400 through other funding sources). In the overall population:

- Over 43% are single adults;
- 33% are couples and single adults with children, including 70% for people seeking asylum;
- Around 60% are students & 15% are people seeking asylum;
- Around 50% are in their 20s, 49% are women & over 17% are children;
- 75% live in Victoria, New South Wales, or Queensland.

## Age, gender and family composition

The majority of primary applicants who accessed emergency relief are adults in their 20s and 30s. Over 3,400 people benefitting from the support (17%) are children and a small number of people are over the age of 65. In terms of gender, there are slightly more men (51%) than women (49%) accessing support.

Single adults make up over 43% of people benefiting from support and 33% are couples or single adults with children accessing support, as seen in Figure 1. This is different for some groups, including people who are a Bridging Visa Es or who indicated they are seeking asylum where 70% of are couples or single adults with children.

## Country of birth

Figure 2 shows the top ten countries of birth for primary applicants who are accessing emergency relief. It is notable that the International Monetary Fund considers all of these countries to be emerging markets and developing economies.<sup>16</sup> It is reasonable to anticipate that, on average, people on temporary visas from less wealthy countries will have fewer resources available to sustain them in times of crisis, or have family who are also impacted heavily by COVID-19.

Additional information on demographics for people seeking asylum who received non-DSS funded support from 1 April to 30 June 2020 can be found in *Appendix I: State and Territory Snapshots*. The below snapshot highlights demographics for families receiving DSS funded support.

Figure 1: Family composition

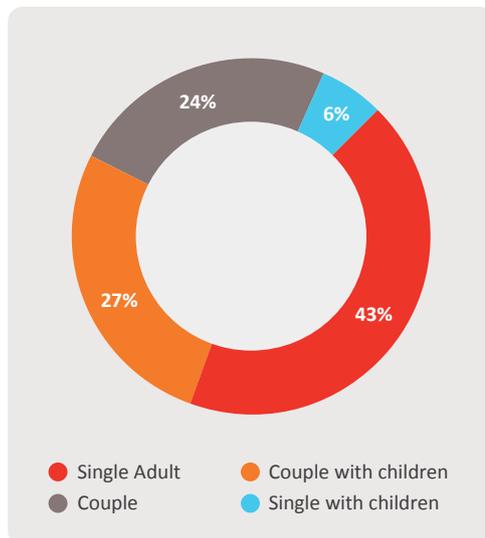
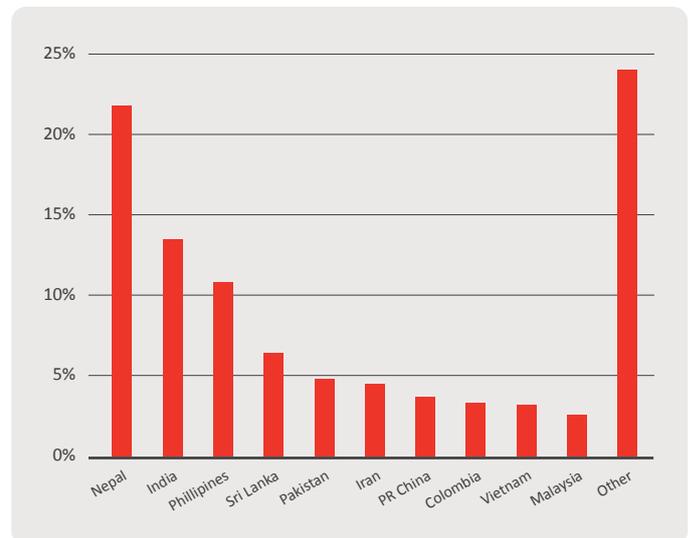


Figure 2: Top 10 Nationalities



**The demographic for families with children differed from the overall group as follows:**

- **Couples with children:**
  - Applicants in this category were less likely to be student visa holders and more likely to be Bridging Visa E or skilled visa holders than the overall group.
  - 52% of people on Bridging Visa E or who indicated they are seeking asylum are couples with children.
  - Top nationalities were: India, Pakistan, Nepal and Iran.
- **Single adult with children:**
  - 91% of applicants were women and applicants were less likely to be student visa holders and more likely to be 444 (Special Category Visa for people from New Zealand) and Bridging Visa E holders than the overall group.
  - 18% of people on Bridging Visa E or who indicated they are seeking asylum are single adults with children.

Queensland. This broadly reflects particular patterns of people on temporary visas, including the concentration of education providers in the eastern states for students.

**Visa category**

Of the households for which we have detailed visa data between 1 April and 31 July 2020, over 60% of recipients were on a student visa as outlined in Table 2. Together, students and bridging visa holders make up 76% of the households accessing support.

People seeking asylum who are either on a Bridging Visa E or are on another temporary visa and have indicated to Red Cross that they are seeking asylum made up 10% of households accessing support. Given that people seeking asylum have been much more likely to be couples or single adults with children as outlined above, this group made up 15% of people impacted by Emergency Relief support in this period. It is important to note that people may apply and receive emergency relief without disclosing that they are seeking asylum, so this number may be higher in real terms.

When compared with the size of each visa category, people with certain types of visas appear to be experiencing greater vulnerability than others. As indicated in Table 3, international students, bridging visa holders and recent graduates are accessing DSS emergency relief support proportionally higher than New Zealand citizens on special category visas, visitors, those filling skills shortages, and working holiday makers as compared to the overall temporary migrant population.

There are several factors likely to be affecting the trend of who is accessing emergency relief, including access to government financial support. Importantly,

**Location in Australia**

Figure 3 shows the distribution of people on temporary visas across Australia who received Emergency Relief in the period 1 April –31 July 2020. During this time we have provided payments to people across 90% of Australia (in 81 of the 88 national statistical areas), indicating widespread need.

As can be seen, Victoria is experiencing the highest numbers, followed by New South Wales and

Figure 3: Location in Australia

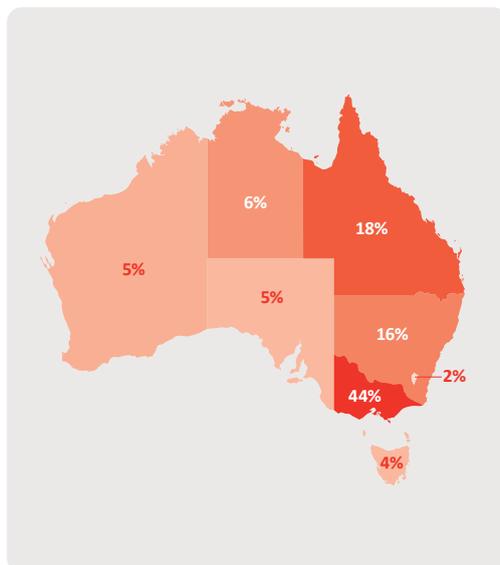
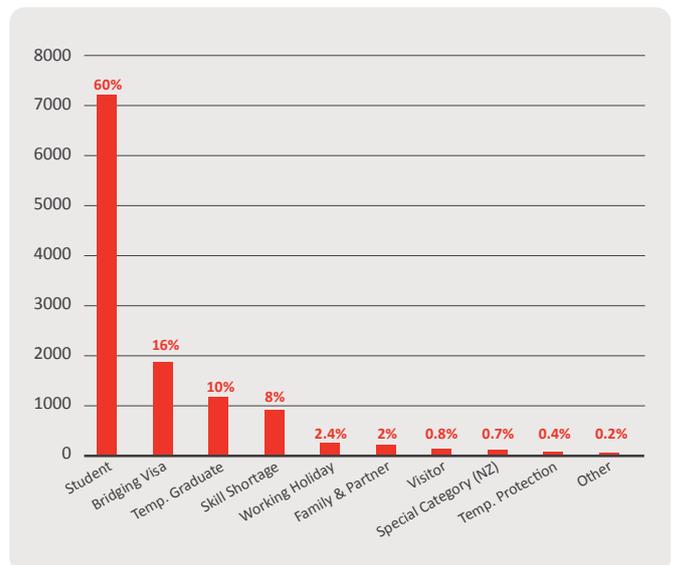


Table 2: Emergency relief by visa type



many New Zealanders on Special Category visas are eligible for JobKeeper and, depending on date of arrival and length of time in Australia, some are eligible for JobSeeker.<sup>17</sup> People from New Zealand can also access Medicare.

This is demonstrated in the difference between Table 3 and Table 4. When excluding Special Category visa holders, it appears that the percentage of international students receiving emergency relief is commensurate with their prevalence in the temporary visa holder population.

Having the right to work and the industry of occupation prior to COVID-19, are also likely contributors. For instance, it is possible a larger proportion of those who arrived to fill skill shortages are still working or have larger savings, as compared to international student or temporary graduate visa holders who may have been working in casual jobs and occupations particularly impacted by COVID-19.

There will be broad correlations between visa category and level of personal savings, with students, temporary protection visa holders, and those on Bridging Visa E all likely to have limited savings available to draw from during times of crisis.

Awareness of Red Cross assistance may also be a factor at this early stage. While Red Cross is a known and trusted humanitarian organisation, due to the limited availability of emergency relief support and the unknown extent of potential need, the support was not advertised widely in the first instance and Red Cross undertook targeted awareness-raising amongst the most vulnerable groups to support those in most need. As we have become aware of barriers to access emergency relief, Red Cross has been working to remove barriers and have expanded awareness-raising of the support available to those who need it.

Other people, in particularly people seeking asylum, have received support prior to COVID -19 and know and trust Red Cross to support them again.

Table 3: Temporary visa holder population vs people on temporary visas receiving DSS funded Emergency Relief by visa type

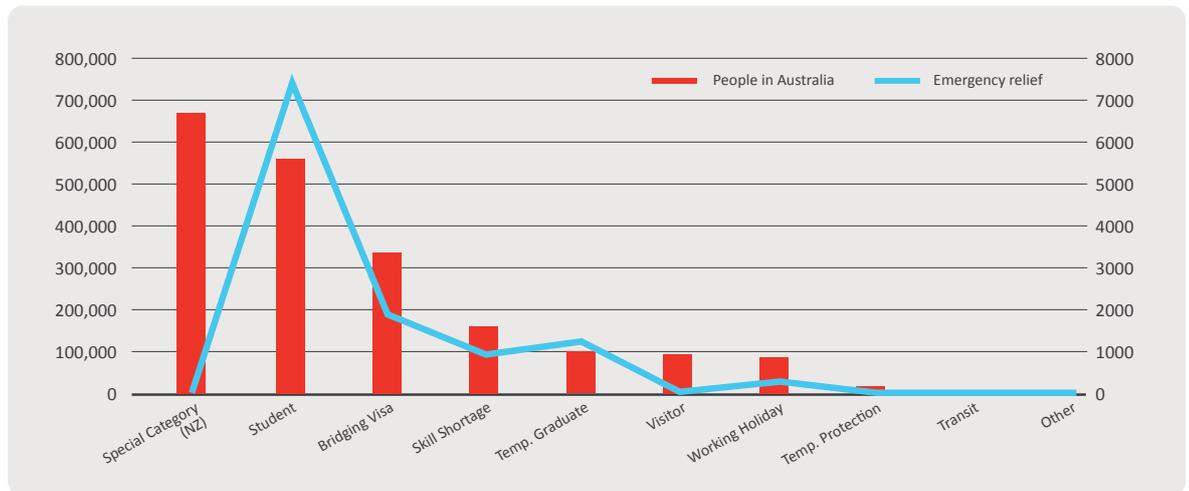
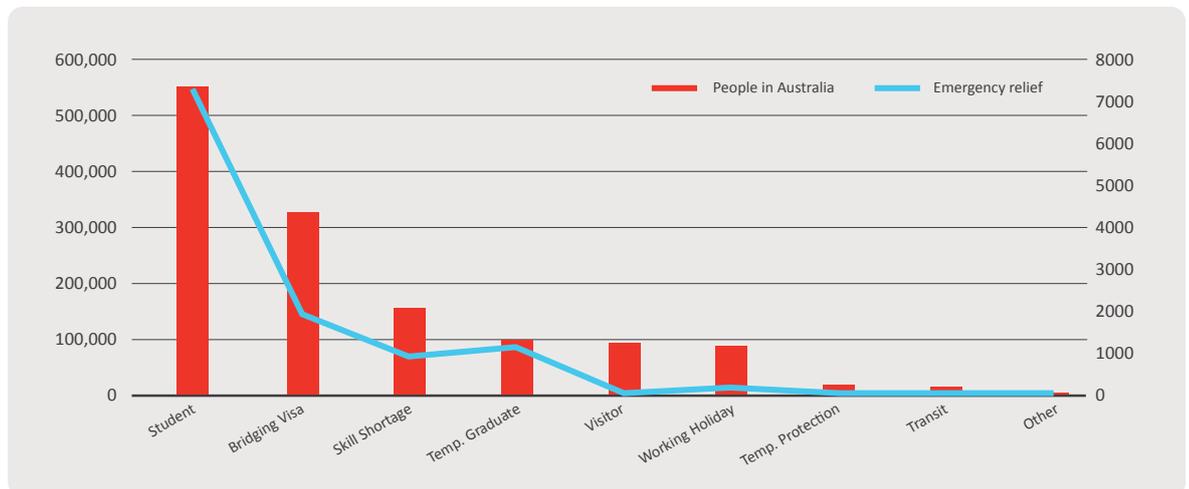


Table 4: Temporary visa holder population (excl. Spec Cat) vs people on temporary visas receiving DSS funded Emergency Relief by visa type



As noted above (“Visa Category”, it is important to note that people seeking asylum may be on their substantive visa and not a Bridging Visa E.

Finally, we have heard that some people may be concerned about negative impacts on future visa pathways if they receive assistance.

As Table 3 and 4 indicate, bridging visa holders are one significant group requiring a sustainable safety net, and this visa category is expanding rapidly. More people on temporary visas are being moved on to bridging visas as their more substantive visa expires to ensure they are not left without visa; there was a 30% increase over the first quarter ending 31 March 2020.<sup>18</sup> Some bridging visas are issued without work rights, Medicare, or social welfare support, which can lead to significant exacerbation of vulnerabilities.

One group of bridging visa holders – those with a Bridging Visa E – are people seeking asylum, many of whom have lived in Australia with no access to welfare, and no right to work for extended periods.

Many people seeking asylum that we had supported through the Red Cross Safety Net before COVID-19, and who had obtained the right to work and become self-sufficient, have now lost their job and are needing support once more.

### Case study 1: Working in hospitality – until COVID-19



A couple on temporary visas had been working in the hospitality industry. Both lost their jobs due to COVID-19, and neither is eligible for JobSeeker. When they contacted Red Cross, they were living in a car in a regional area. They had run out of savings in April and told Red Cross that they had to eat food out of bins. The man was unwell because of inadequate access to food. They also reported concerns about the safety of their car but were unable to afford repairs and, as they were living in the car, had to keep relocating. Red Cross provided food relief and an emergency relief payment to help repair the brakes on their car to ensure safety and assisted them to access other services for more support.

### Case study 2: Studying and working part time – until COVID-19



A young woman from the Philippines came to Australia to study. She has made some good friends here, and is in regular contact with her family back home. She was working part-time alongside her studies, but lost her work when COVID hit. She shares an apartment with two other students. The landlord has recently agreed to reduce rent, but she is not sure how long that will last. She has \$50 left in her bank account, and is buying groceries with emergency relief vouchers. She is trying to borrow some money to pay her tuition fees. She is worried what will happen if she cannot pay her rent.

We were able to support this young woman with an emergency relief payment and referrals for additional assistance.

# TRENDS FROM THE FIRST FOUR MONTHS

Since 1 April 2020, we have seen a significant increase in applications for emergency relief through our online portal with 37,283 applications received as at 31 July. In the two weeks prior to 31 July, Red Cross received over 11,000 new applications for emergency relief. This is in addition to direct referrals and new applications received through emergency relief programs for people seeking asylum in Victoria and Queensland. As seen in Figure 4, we have been experiencing significant and rapid increases in applications through our online portal, which opened on 1 May 2020.

## Most significant humanitarian needs

The most significant issues for people accessing emergency relief are: financial vulnerability; housing insecurity; gaps in health care; and deteriorating mental health. Figure 5 highlights the main needs people receiving DSS funded Emergency Relief support told us the payment will help them with.

We have also seen an increase in the number of people experiencing complex needs requiring casework support. These changes highlight the level of need for people on temporary visas who have no access to other mainstream supports, including income support. Given these people who accessed the Red Cross Safety Net for emergency relief payments and caseworker support in March were already highly vulnerable, we are concerned that we have seen an increase in the amount of unmet need (Figure 6), as well as an increase serious risks to safety and wellbeing (Figure 7).

## Financial vulnerability

People accessing Red Cross Emergency Relief are experiencing a high degree of financial distress, as indicated by 80% of people receiving emergency relief sharing they will use it to meet food needs.<sup>19</sup>

Many people are on the cusp of destitution, with rental arrears, large utility bills, 'maxed out' credit cards, new personal loans, and debts to family or friends. People

Figure 4: Portal applications per week nationwide

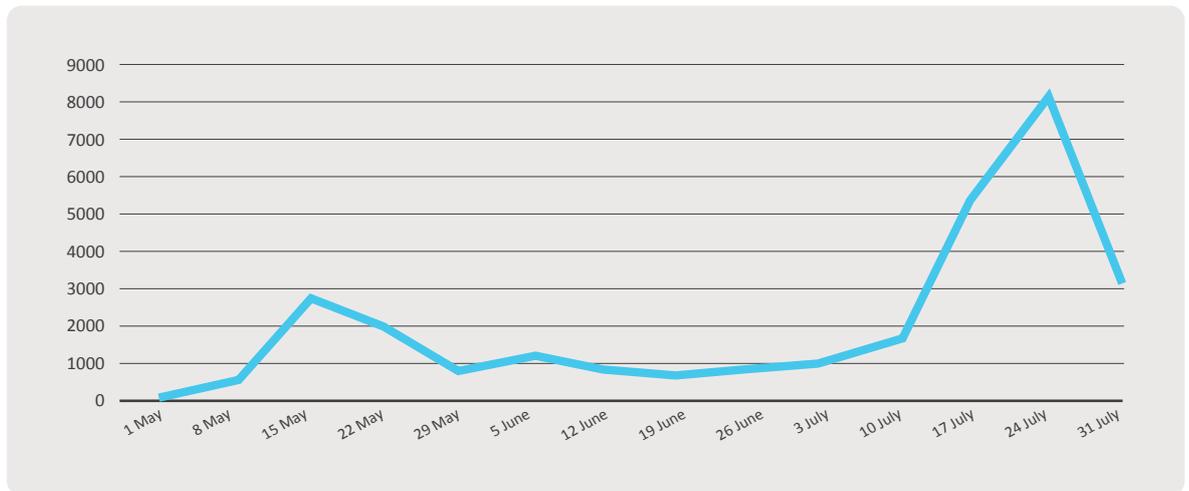


Figure 5: Needs addressed with DSS Emergency Relief payment

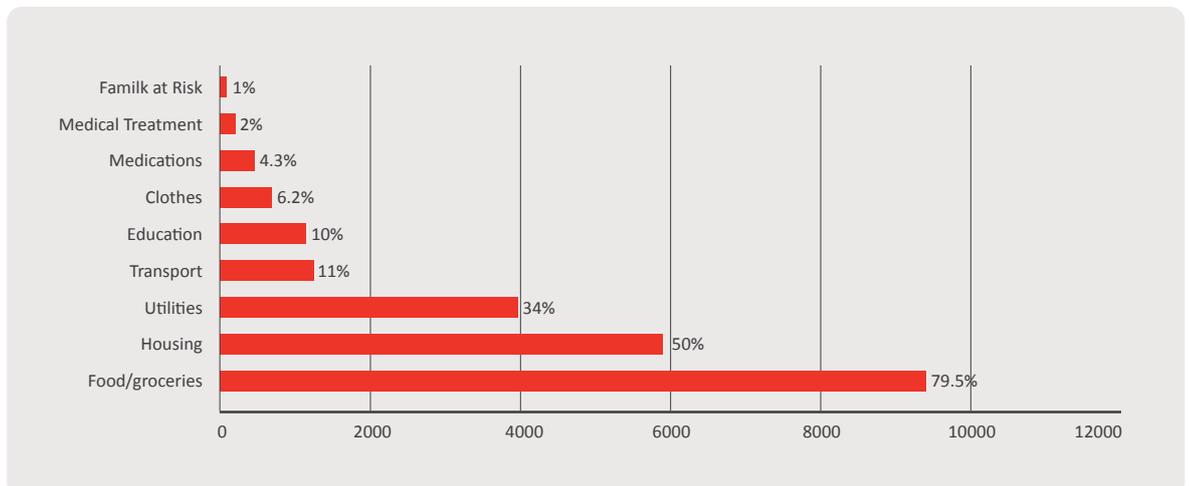


Figure 6: Increase in unmet needs

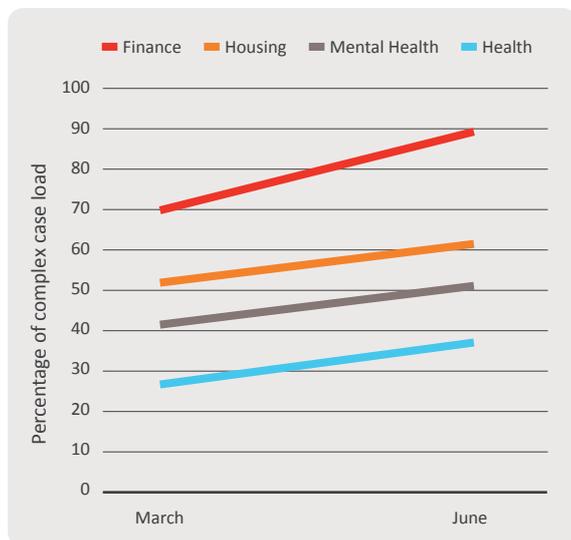
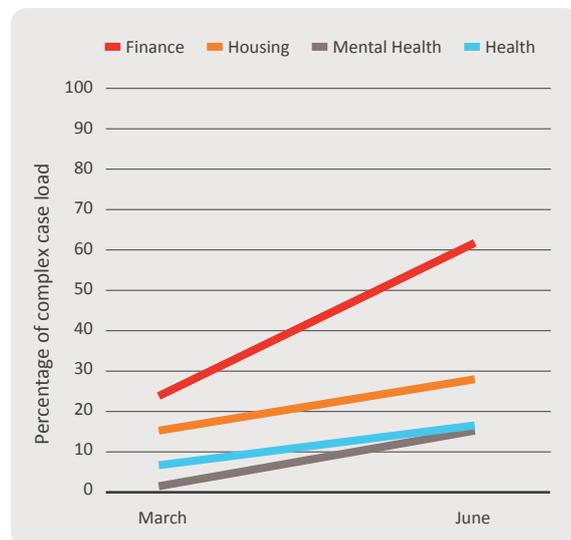


Figure 7: Needs posing serious risk to safety and wellbeing



are struggling to cover daily expenses such as bills, groceries, and medications. While one-off emergency relief payments are an important piece of assistance, for many households it will not go far. Without a job or other sustainable income source, eviction and hunger are real and imminent threats.

Some people are hopeful that their job will recommence soon, and they will be able to recover quickly. This will happen for some, with effective unemployment rebounding slightly from 15% in April to 11.3% in June.<sup>20</sup> Our teams might hear from one or two people a week who are getting back on their feet. However, the shock to Australia's economy has been sharp and severe, and the depth and length of our nascent recession remains unclear. Those who cannot access JobKeeper may find it more difficult to engage in employment. We have heard from people on temporary visas that potential employers have told them they prefer recruiting people who are eligible for JobKeeper. People on temporary visas have also told us that they lost their jobs because they were not eligible for JobKeeper.

Analysis from our Strengths and Needs Assessment<sup>21</sup>, which is conducted with people referred into our casework support, indicates that between March and June, unmet financial needs at first assessment increased from 70% to 89% (Figure 6), and the instances of clients' financial situations posing a serious risk to their safety & wellbeing increased from 24% to 61% (Figure 7). In light of this, we expect:

- Substantial increases in new applications for financial support;
- Substantial increases in repeat applications (and repeat eligibility);
- Increased numbers of people experiencing severe risks to safety and wellbeing, such as not being able to feed themselves or their family.

### Housing insecurity

The majority of households accessing emergency relief are experiencing housing insecurity, with over 50% of people having noted housing as their key issue of concern, specifically the challenge of rental arrears.<sup>22</sup>

There is evidence that many households successfully negotiated a temporary drop in rent, or a delay in payments, which has provided some relief. However, these measures, including formal rental relief schemes (where people on temporary visas are eligible), are approaching their expiry date, and households are accruing increasing debts due to rent deferrals and have started receiving warnings that they are at risk of eviction. Local freezes on evictions have provided significant - but time-limited - protection.

In addition, many people have not been able to stay in stable housing and informal tenancy arrangements are at risk. Some people have had to move out of their usual place of residence, and are now staying in temporary accommodation, such as a shelter or with friends. Others, including families with children, have hit the hardest form of homelessness, sleeping in their cars, in tents, or other makeshift shelters. This poses significant protection and health risks, now and into the future.

Overcrowded housing is a form of homelessness that poses particular risks: it can cause household conflict, undermine child development, risk the safety, health and wellbeing of tenants, and increase exposure to infectious disease.<sup>23</sup> We believe overcrowding will become more acute amongst people on temporary visas as more people under financial stress have to seek cheaper housing options. Migrants and students are both groups who are more likely to experience overcrowded housing.<sup>24</sup>

Our Strengths and Needs Assessment data indicates that between March and June, unmet housing needs

at first assessment increased from 52% to 61% of the people with casework support (Figure 6), and the instances of clients' housing situations posing a serious risk to their safety and wellbeing increased from 16% to 28% (Figure 7). In light of this, we expect:

- more people will return to Red Cross seeking support to pay for housing;
- an increase in the number of people experiencing severe homelessness;
- an increase in personal debts to cover rental payments; and
- an increase in risks associated with housing insecurity, including overcrowding or sexual exploitation.

### Gaps in health care

We welcome the announcements early in the response to COVID-19 that all State and Territory governments will provide free testing and treatment for COVID-19 regardless of Medicare status. However, more and more people are reporting issues with their health as a result of gaps in their access to health care. Cost is the most common presenting issue. Many people have stopped taking medication because they cannot pay for it. People without insurance or Medicare access cannot manage the expense of privately-funded healthcare, and there are very few health care providers offering pro bono services. For those with private health insurance, it is the cost of the insurance premiums, and the gap between upfront fees and rebates they are no longer able to afford. This issue is particularly severe for those facing a serious and life-threatening illnesses, such as cancer. We have also had presentations from pregnant women struggling to pay for – or to access free – support, as their insurance does not cover their pregnancy.

There are further reports that some people are not getting tested for COVID-19 because they do not know that testing and treatment is free regardless of visa status or access to Medicare, or they are afraid of being referred to immigration authorities, with the risk of visa cancellation, deportation or detention.<sup>25</sup> For example, there are over 2,000 people seeking asylum who are undocumented while awaiting the grant of a subsequent Bridging Visa E.<sup>26</sup> Finally, many people on temporary visas are worried they may lose their visa if they cannot pay their health insurance premiums.

Our data shows that for people receiving casework, unmet health needs at first assessment increased from 27% to 37% between March and June (Figure 6). Further, health situations posing a serious risk to their safety and wellbeing increased from 7% to 17% (Figure 7). In light of this, we expect:

- an increase in applications for funds to cover medication or health care costs;
- growing personal debts relating to health care costs; and
- an increase in un- or under-treated health issues.

### Case study 3: Stable mental health – until COVID-19



A young man from India was working part-time while studying to become a nurse. He lost his job in March, and has now spent his limited savings on living expenses. His parents in India cannot help him, as they also had to stop work due to the pandemic. He has moved in with a relative who is lending him money to get by. He is due to start a nursing placement in a few weeks, but needs to pay for the necessary certificates. He has found himself feeling depressed since losing his job and feeling isolated from friends and colleagues. He would like to get counselling, but is waiting until he is earning money again to be able to pay for it.

An emergency relief payment has provided some short term relief and we are working to find free mental health support for this young man.

### Deteriorating mental health

The challenges presented by COVID-19 have been testing for everyone. Lifeline, for example has reported a surge in calls relating to the fear of disease and the disruptions to daily life.<sup>27</sup> Conversely, there is evidence mental health improves with the easing of COVID-19 related restrictions.<sup>28</sup> People on temporary or without visas are more vulnerable to these impacts, as uncertain visa status is a risk factor for poorer mental health outcomes.<sup>29</sup>

COVID-19 is causing great distress amongst the people we have been supporting, with many worried they might catch the disease. People are worried about money, about getting another job, about where they will live if they cannot pay the rent, and about how this situation will affect their children. People are also worried about separated family members overseas. People with mental health issues are finding symptoms are exacerbated. Some are finding it hard to stay on medication because they cannot afford it.

In June, 16% of people receiving casework support indicated concerns that may present serious risk to themselves or others. Presenting concerns include

threatened or actual self-harm including suicidal ideation, threats to harm others, and disengagement from a mental health treatment plan (such as choosing to stop taking medication). Our caseworkers are assisting people in this situation to remain safe through direct support and referrals to other agencies -many of which are stretched.

We are particularly concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of people seeking asylum and recognised refugees with temporary or insecure visas (i.e. Bridging Visa E, Temporary Protection and Safe Haven Enterprise Visa). Research shows insecure visa status is associated with significantly higher post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms, depression symptoms, and suicidal ideation compared with those with a secure visa status.<sup>30</sup> Such studies also highlights that community and social engagements are key protective factors for people in this group, but access to these is limited during COVID-19.<sup>31</sup>

Our data indicates that between March and June, unmet mental health needs at first assessment increased from 42% to 51% (Figure 6) amongst people accessing casework support, and the instances of clients' mental health situation posing a serious risk to their safety and wellbeing increased from 2% to 16% (Figure 7). In light of this, we expect:

- an increase in clients reporting a deterioration in their mental health;
- an increase in clients with severe mental health concerns including risk of suicidality and self-harm.

## Spotlight on families and children

Families make up around one third of people accessing Red Cross support, with higher percentages of families in some groups, such as people seeking asylum - where 70% are families with children. Overall, families have reported increasingly concerning issues.

### Educational disadvantage due to online schooling

Children of families experiencing hardship are struggling to participate fully in online schooling. This is sometimes due to a limited number of devices (such as laptops) within the household, internet affordability and competing demands amongst multiple family members. Some parents have expressed concerns about their children's screen time, and felt ill-prepared to supervise their children during home schooling due to cultural and linguistic barriers, and limited digital literacy. Some schools that had previously provided laptops were asking for their return, or for payment for ongoing use at home.



### Family and domestic violence

We know that family and domestic violence is an underreported issue, and that it increases during emergencies. While this was not a dominant issue reported in the period 1 April – 30 June, there are indications that cases were starting to increase. Caseworkers have reported some women on temporary visas feeling tied to abusive partners due to the risks associated with leaving and the lack of a sustainable safety net, such as homelessness and poverty. We also received a further increase in reports in Victoria following the second wave restrictions. There is likely further underreporting for all families in Australia experiencing violence due to the reduction in safe reporting options including through first line responders such as schools and GPs.

## OTHER SIGNIFICANT RISKS AND IMPACTS

A number of additional concerns are relevant to consider in anticipating and responding to the needs of people on temporary visas in the context of COVID-19. Some of these concerns have only recently been reported to and raised by Red Cross teams, are based on anecdotal evidence or a small number of cases, or are issues reported in the public domain that align with Red Cross experience.

### Reduced support available from other sources

Red Cross refers people to a wide range of partner organisations for additional supports or specialised services. The community sector, including agencies that previously mainly supported people seeking asylum, have been working and trying to meet the increasing need. Without additional support these organisations are increasingly becoming overloaded, and no longer able to meet the needs of all people on temporary visas seeking assistance.

For many people, their family members overseas are no longer able to support them. In July, 55% of people applying for emergency relief through our online portal indicated that one of the key reasons why they are applying for support is because their family overseas cannot support them anymore.

### Being subjected to labour exploitation or modern slavery

We know that the risk of labour exploitation and modern slavery increases during and after emergencies, especially for migrants without a sustainable safety net. We have received information about increased instances of labour exploitation; for example, where migrants are offered jobs at unfairly reduced rates of pay or accepting long hours and other unsafe working conditions. We suspect significant under-reporting as people on temporary visas may feel they have to choose between destitution or accepting unsafe work to meet their and their families basic needs. Recent reports on wage theft from international students, and on undocumented migrants, appear to validate these concerns.<sup>32</sup>

### Going to work despite COVID-19 symptoms due to lack of paid leave

Many people on temporary visas are employed on casual contracts without paid leave entitlements (such as sick leave). Many are also in sectors or roles with low incomes, such as aged and disability care. Without the ability to accrue savings, and without access to the security of an income safety net, people are at risk of feeling like they have to work while sick because they have no other option to provide for themselves and their families.<sup>33</sup> Recent announcements by Federal, Victoria and Tasmania governments to include migrants on temporary visas in the Pandemic Leave Disaster Payments are a positive step in the right direction.<sup>34</sup>

### Increase in people without a visa

Pre COVID-19 there were estimates of around 62,000 people without a visa in Australia<sup>35</sup> including over 2,000 people seeking asylum with an expired Bridging Visa E in the community waiting for the grant of a further visa.<sup>36</sup> Despite some extension provisions being put in place, people with no fixed address or mobile phone are likely to find it harder to remain engaged with authorities. Those required to regularly renew short-term bridging visas may miss deadlines, while immigration officials may struggle to meet the renewal timeframes.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, people without visa do not have access to Medicare, including people seeking asylum with an expired Bridging Visa E who are awaiting the grant of a further visa as noted above.

### Discrimination and stigma

We know there is a risk of increasing social stigma and discrimination in situations during and post emergencies and in situations of increasing financial distress across the Australian population. We have and continue to hear reports of discrimination and stigma towards migrant communities, including blaming migrant communities for spreading the virus. We remain concerned this will be heightened for those on temporary visas or with no visa.

#### Case study 4: Just getting by – until COVID



A man from Fiji arrived in Australia several years ago on a work sponsor visa. Last year, he was injured at work and incapacitated. He is pursuing a workers compensation claim, but it is being contested. Workplace compensation programs are hard to access if you are injured while working on a temporary visa. When his previous visa expired, he was moved onto a bridging visa with no work rights or Medicare access. His family in Fiji can't provide support because of the recent hurricane. The man has run out of money, and is relying on food parcels, and emergency relief payments for his medication. He was staying in emergency accommodation, but expects he will have to sleep in his car soon.

### Stuck overseas, separated from family in Australia

Some people on temporary visas had gone overseas, and are now unable to return to their partners and children in Australia. They are worried about their families, but also about losing their work, housing and visa eligibility.<sup>38</sup>

### Unable to claim lost wages when employer collapses

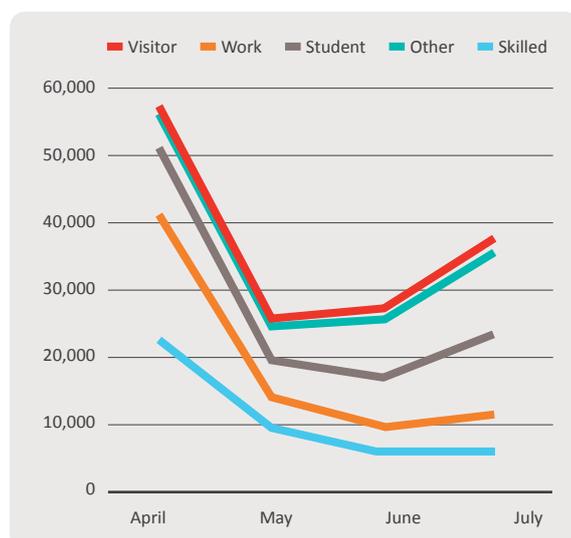
People on temporary visas who are owed wages or other entitlements when their employer declares bankruptcy are excluded from reimbursement under Australia's Fair Entitlements Guarantee scheme. This government compensation scheme reimburses workers' lost wages and entitlements to annual leave, superannuation, and so forth. As more businesses are expected to go bankrupt during the recession, this issue will become more significant.<sup>39</sup>

### Barriers to departure

Some people accessing emergency relief who do want to leave Australia are reporting challenges in departing the country. This is consistent with other data sources. As shown in Table 5, departures slowed between April and July 2020.<sup>40</sup> This is particularly significant when considering that 834,000 people on temporary visas departed Australia in March 2020.<sup>41</sup>

As of 10 August, 130 countries continued to ban arrival of passengers from Australia.<sup>42</sup> Combined with the cost and scarcity of flights, some people who want to return home are struggling to leave the country. For example, one woman who was unable to get home in time for the birth of her baby, gave birth in Australia without her family, and with unexpected additional costs.

Table 5: Departures by visa type, April to July 2020



### Spotlight on people in immigration detention



While this report focuses on people on temporary visas who are in the community, Red Cross notes we have continued our monitoring work with people in detention (given it is a high risk setting for COVID-19) remotely via phone calls during COVID-19. We hold significant concerns for people in immigration detention, especially for the most vulnerable, including those at Alternative Places of Detention, where some have been for over 12 months. We are further concerned about the transfer of people to immigration detention facilities on Christmas Island Immigration Detention Centre, in particular during the COVID-19 crisis.

There are well-known mental health impacts of prolonged detention, and across the immigration detention network, people have been detained on average over 1.5 years as at 31 July 2020.

Mitigating risks to people in immigration detention from COVID-19, including by releasing the most vulnerable people from immigration detention with appropriate supports, is a consideration proposed by Australian Red Cross and also globally by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

#### See also:

[https://www.icrc.org/en/download/file/117261/public\\_note\\_on\\_the\\_protection\\_of\\_migrants\\_in\\_the\\_face\\_of\\_the\\_covid-19\\_pandemic\\_08.04.2020.pdf](https://www.icrc.org/en/download/file/117261/public_note_on_the_protection_of_migrants_in_the_face_of_the_covid-19_pandemic_08.04.2020.pdf)

<https://www.redcross.org.au/getmedia/54642b95-4841-4e17-9902-358a8b816481/Guiding-principles.pdf.aspx>

# ANTICIPATING FUTURE NEEDS

The current needs amongst people on temporary visas, and the early trends in our emergency relief program during COVID-19, give some indications of the likely needs in the future. Without additional interventions, we are concerned these trends could amplify quickly.

## Who will need emergency relief?

In terms of the cohort of people requiring support, we are expecting:

- a large and rapid increase in the number of people on temporary visas needing emergency relief;
- a large growth in the number of people on bridging visas, including due to expiry of their substantive visa needing support;
- a strong upsurge in people re-applying for emergency relief with ongoing eligibility;
- an increase in the number of vulnerable groups, including people seeking asylum, experiencing significant needs across multiple domains, and compounded vulnerabilities;
- more families with children experiencing unmet needs or serious risks to their safety and wellbeing;
- a higher number of applications from people in Victoria due to the Stage Four lockdown; and
- that in some States and Territories, with support, many people on temporary visas will get back into work, albeit with reduced hours or changes conditions.

## What will this look like?

As the strain on personal financial resources extends over longer periods of time and based on current and past indicators during times of crises, we expect to see:

- an increase in the number of people without safe and adequate housing or living in overcrowded conditions;
- more people experiencing compounding vulnerabilities presenting with complex needs;
- an increase in households with multiple or compounding vulnerabilities around risks to safety and wellbeing (for example, destitution, housing, child protection concerns);
- an increase in incidences of family violence;
- evidence of other impacts of sustained stress on households, including family breakdown;
- an increased number of people being unable to maintain their lawful migration status due to COVID-19 related issues;
- increase of concerns regarding safety, including engaging in risky behaviours; and
- increase in people at risk or experiencing labour exploitation and modern slavery.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

Red Cross aims to support and protect vulnerable people by meeting critical humanitarian needs. These recommendations aim to address the most serious humanitarian needs and to avoid further escalation of the humanitarian situation faced by people on temporary visas or without visas in Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 1. Provide financial and other support to meet the essential humanitarian needs of people on temporary visas

**Outcome sought:** People on temporary visas, in financial distress due to the COVID-19 pandemic are able to meet their essential needs and are protected from harm during COVID-19.

**Specific options include:**

- Establishing new or use existing provisions (e.g. access to Special Benefit) to provide income support for people on temporary visas with protracted needs during the COVID -19 pandemic.
- Continuing to provide and expand Emergency Relief to people on temporary visas through a range of responses (repeat payments, cash assistance, food, rental assistance) with funding from a number of sources (state, federal governments, philanthropic funds) and delivered through networks of agencies Australia-wide.
- Extending access to the full range of concessions available to those on low incomes (e.g. health care card holders) to people on temporary visas in financial distress.

## 2. Support people on temporary visas to return to work or secure employment

**Outcome sought:** People on temporary visas can earn an income that meets their essential needs, recognising that many people have been in Australia long term and there is no tailored assistance available to help get them back to supporting the economy, filling skills and labour shortages, being able to support themselves while studying and becoming self-reliant again.

**Specific options include:**

- Developing a nationwide coordination mechanism / database that can be used by all support agencies that links people on temporary visas to work.
- Including people on temporary visas in existing employment pathways programs.
- Facilitating temporary visa extensions and regularisation for those without visa and ensure people have work rights, including people seeking asylum.

## 3. Ensure people on temporary visas have access to safe housing and are not living in overcrowded housing

**Outcome sought:** People on temporary visas avoid homelessness by remaining in housing, or securing safe and adequate shelter, and are not living in overcrowded housing.

**Specific options include:**

- Expanding financial support for housing, including access to rent relief programs.
- Developing rental relief options for people living under informal tenancy arrangements.
- Expanding funding to homelessness services and ensure eligibility for non-citizens.
- Ensuring housing support for people seeking protection from family violence.

## 4. Support ongoing healthcare coverage, and medical care including for COVID-19 testing and treatment, for people on temporary visas

**Outcome sought:** People on temporary visas are able to access healthcare to meet their needs, including by being able to afford health insurance and medication, and access Medicare where possible. There are no barriers for people to access COVID-19 testing and treatment.

**Specific options include:**

- Ensuring emergency relief or income support can help cover the gap in health costs and cover medication.
- Collaborating with health service providers and health insurance companies to expand financial hardship programs.
- Ensuring people on Bridging Visa E have access to Medicare.
- Increasing communication about free COVID-19 testing and treatment and committing to data firewalls between health care providers and immigration officials.
- Ensuring free access to a COVID-19 vaccine for everyone in Australia including temporary visa holders and people without a visa
- Expanding reciprocal Health Care Agreements countries.



## 5. Ensure mental health support can be accessed by people on temporary visas most affected

**Outcome sought:** People on temporary visas have access to a full range of mental health supports and mental health impacts are limited.

**Specific options include:**

- Working with communities to tackling barriers that prevent access to mental health services.
- Ensuring Psychological First Aid is provided to those in isolation and lockdown suburbs.
- Resourcing community groups who are providing social and emotional support, as well as casework support programs.

## 6. Promote and strengthen social cohesion

**Outcome sought:** Social cohesion is strengthened and communities are brought together to support a successful recovery from COVID-19.

**Specific options include:**

- Demonstrating leadership by increasing public messaging about positive contributions of migrants to Australian society.
- Countering misinformation that vilifies migrant communities.
- Ensuring migrants who experience physical or verbal assault receive support.

## 7. Limit loss of temporary visa status and regularise status for people without visa

**Outcome sought:** All people without visa status are supported to regularise their status.

**Specific options include:**

- Waiving visa conditions or compliance requirements that are untenable due to COVID.<sup>43</sup>
- Ensuring temporary visas can be renewed, or alternatives offered, without gaps in coverage.
- Expanding the COVID-19 event and temporary activity visa access to a wider range of industries.
- Considering a COVID-19 amnesty for those whose visa has expired.

## 8. Assist people on temporary visas who are stranded

**Outcome sought:** People on temporary visas who want to can return to their home country.

**Specific options include:**

- Ensuring people have access to a basic safety net to meet their essential needs while awaiting departure.
- Ensuring people are aware of return supports<sup>44</sup> and consular assistance as relevant.
- Abandoning re-entry bans and debts for flights for those departing during the pandemic.<sup>45</sup>

# CONCLUSION

Social inequalities are amplified during humanitarian crises and disasters, as those who have been marginalised and excluded from key mainstream resources and supports are particularly impacted.

This report shows Australia has taken some important steps to support people on temporary visas and people without visas during the COVID-19 pandemic, both through significant government initiatives and the work of civil society. However, these measures need to be continued and deepened – and made more sustainable - to avert more significant humanitarian consequences for those most vulnerable.

There are over 2 million people in Australia on temporary visas who do not have access to JobSeeker or public health care. Those who want to return home have very little chance of leaving any time soon. Many have lost their jobs. For some people who were already vulnerable, such as people seeking asylum who had previously accessed the Red Cross Safety Net program, the situation is compounding existing vulnerabilities. Without adequate alternative options, the structural barriers that exclude people on temporary visas from Australia's national support systems are pushing them to the edge. The consequences could be devastating for people and their communities.

Over coming months, unless significant further action is taken, Red Cross expects to see a continued increase in people on temporary visas and people without visas who are destitute and homeless in Australia and a further increase in people not being able to meet their physical and mental health needs. People are hitting their credit card limits; they are behind on their rent; they have exhausted options to borrow off family and friends; they cannot immediately go home. The next stage is homelessness, hunger, and ill-health.

An improved response that supports the safety and wellbeing of everyone in Australia will take clear and deliberate policy initiatives, appropriate funding and coordination across governments, business and civil society. If we continue to work together in the spirit of cooperation through our response and recovery, we will emerge stronger and we will support those most vulnerable in our community through this crisis.

## Case study 5: Finding her feet again



A young woman who had received Red Cross emergency relief support for her and her son wrote to tell us that she had found a job. She wrote:

*“Good afternoon, thank you very much for your help and support, you’ve saved me and my son at the hardest time. I just found a job that I’m very excited about and starting tomorrow.”*



## APPENDICES

- I. State and Territory snapshots
- II. Further information on temporary visa numbers
- III. Individual and structural risk factors
- IV. Info sheet COVID-19 & Social Services for People on Temporary Visas

# APPENDIX I: STATE AND TERRITORY SNAPSHOTS

Australia's eight States and Territories have an important role to play in supporting their residents during the COVID-19 crisis. These layers of government have responsibility for key areas, including the provision of health care, education and emergency response. As their approach to people on temporary visas varies, eligibility for these social benefits also varies for temporary migrants depending on where they are living in Australia.

Red Cross has also been providing Emergency Relief mainly to people seeking asylum across all States and Territories through generous donor funds, partnerships and additional federal as well as State and Territory funding in some instances. This support has continued and in some cases has expanded during COVID-19 and is outlined below.

## Free access to COVID testing and treatment

Notably, **all** State and Territory health departments have announced that everyone in Australia, regardless of their immigration situation or Medicare status, will have access to free COVID-19 testing and treatment. This is an important decision that will provide greater public health protection and recognizes that COVID-19 doesn't discriminate between citizens and temporary or without visa.

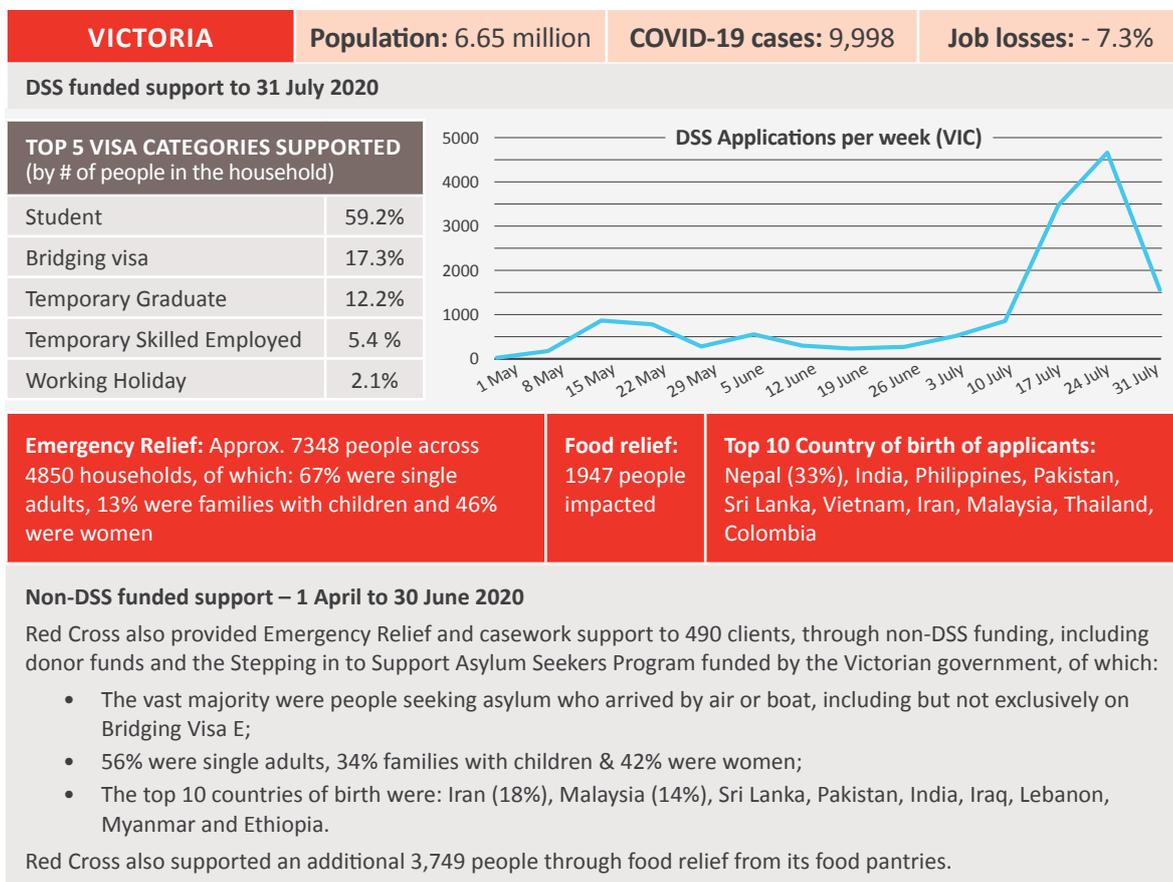
Some States and Territories have created financial assistance programs for certain groups of people on temporary visas, such as international students.<sup>46</sup> In some cases, their hardship programs – such as rent relief or emergency utility bill funds – are open to all residents, without regard for migration status.

A table outlining these programs is in *Appendix IV: Info sheet COVID-19 & Social Services for People on Temporary Visas*.

COVID-19 will impact each of our States and Territories in different ways. This will depend on factors such as the rate of infection, the scale and duration of lockdowns, the foundations of the local economy, and the rates of unemployment.<sup>47</sup> For example, at the time of writing, Victoria is experiencing a second wave of COVID-19 infections requiring further lockdown of metropolitan Melbourne. It is expected this will impact the level of need amongst people on temporary or without visas who live in that state, due to the impact on the state's health and economy.

Recommendations for States and Territories include:

- Providing financial support to people on temporary visas who are isolating due to COVID-19.
- Enabling people on temporary visas to access to state concession programs.
- Enabling people on temporary visas to access rental relief programs.
- Creating avenues for renters with informal tenancies to access rental relief.
- Tackling barriers to education for children on temporary visas.

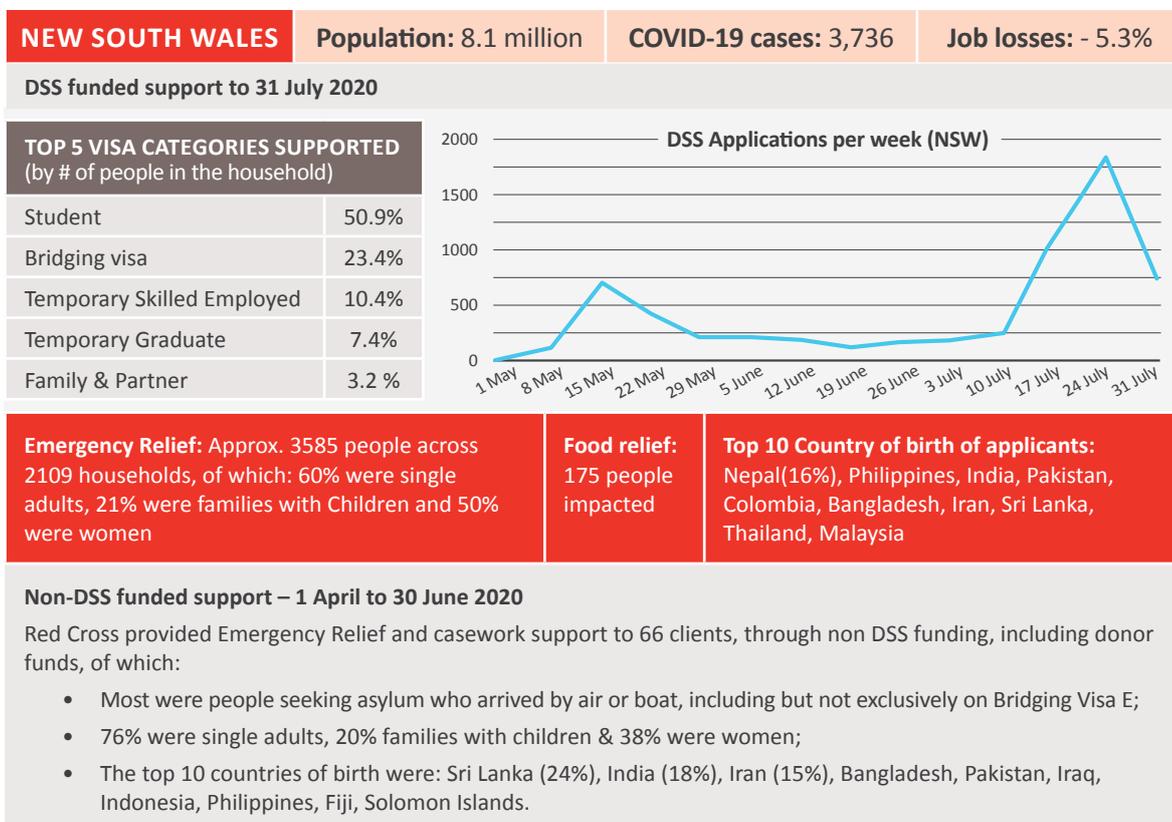


At the time of writing, Victoria is experiencing a higher social and economic impact from COVID-19 than other states. It is undergoing a second wave of COVID-19 infections, with six-weeks of Stage 3 restrictions (up to end July). Interstate borders have been closed to people from Victoria. The state has significant job losses due to the concentration of arts, accommodation, hospitality, and international education providers.<sup>48</sup> Housing affordability, particularly in Melbourne, is a pre-existing issue that continues to affect housing accessibility.<sup>49</sup> Meanwhile, many communities in regional Victoria are only starting to recover from the devastating bush fires earlier in the year, and are now facing the additional burden of limited international, national and local tourism.

Supports offered by Victoria that extend to people on temporary visas include:

- **Waiver of hospital treatment costs** and ambulance fees for all suspected COVID cases.
- **Coronavirus (COVID-19) Rent Relief Grant:** provides a one-off grant of up to \$2000 to Victorians experiencing rental hardship. Conditions include a bond lodged with the RTBA.<sup>50</sup>
- **International Student Emergency Relief Fund:** provides a one-off payment of up to \$1100 to students experiencing financial hardship due to lost wages or work as a result of COVID-19.<sup>51</sup>

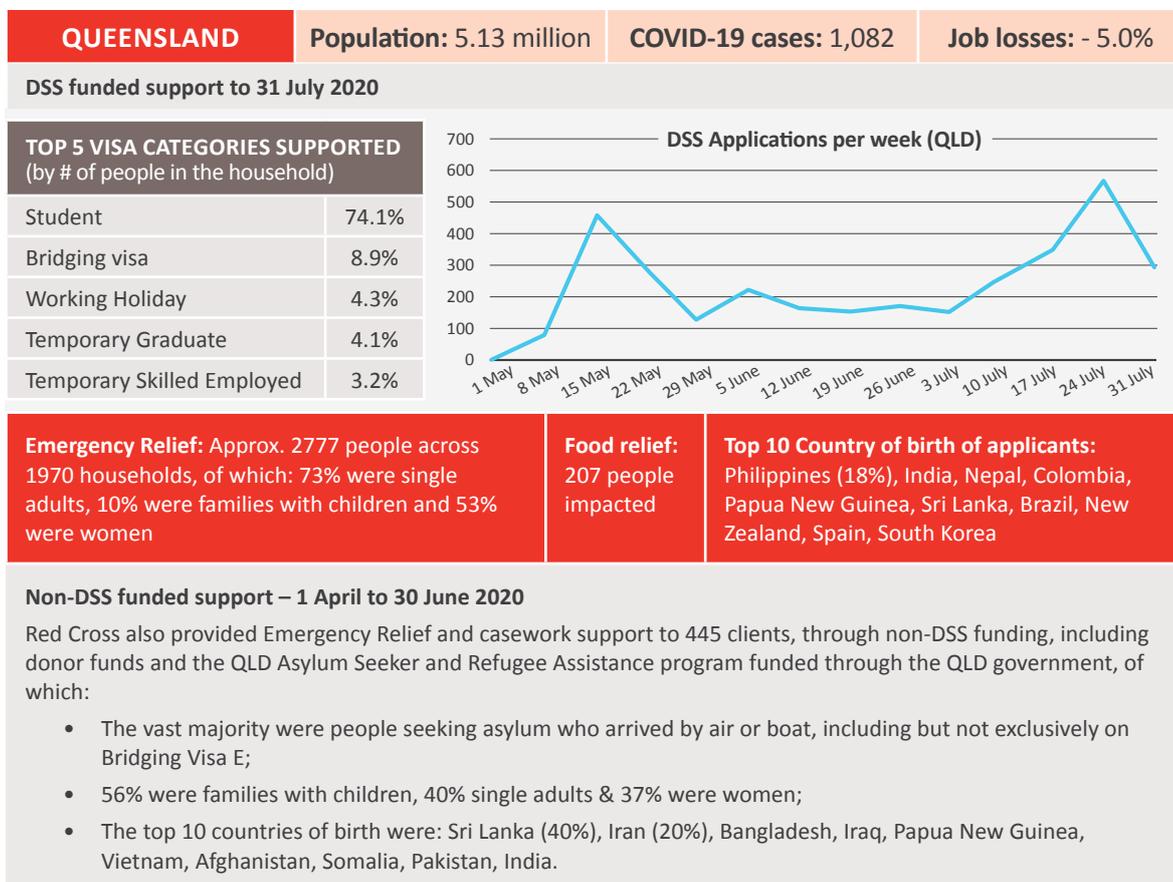
- **Coronavirus (COVID-19) Worker Support Payment:** A \$1500 hardship payment to people who miss work because they are required to self-isolate due to testing positive to COVID-19. This includes workers on 457 and 482 visas, and temporary protection visa holders.<sup>52</sup>
- **Coronavirus (COVID-19) Test Isolation Payment:** A \$300 payment to people who are self-isolating while awaiting the results of a COVID-19 test.
- **Extreme Hardship Support Program:** commissioned Red Cross to provide financial assistance, information and referrals people in Victoria who are unable to access other forms of Victorian or Commonwealth Government income support.<sup>53</sup>
- **COVID-19 Mental Health Package:** including support to Red Cross to provide financial assistance, information and referrals, casework support and housing assistance to temporary migrants in Victoria who are unable to access other forms of Victorian or Commonwealth Government income support.
- **DPC COVID-19 Multicultural Communities Package:** including support to Red Cross to provide financial assistance, information and referrals and casework support to temporary migrants in Victoria who are unable to access other forms of Victorian or Commonwealth Government income support.



At the time of writing, New South Wales is experiencing new cases of COVID-19, and has responded with additional restrictions. Queensland has closed its border to people from Sydney. The high cost of housing is an ongoing barrier to affordable, adequate and secure housing for many temporary migrants. Six NSW Local Government Areas are some of the most concentrated sites for overcrowding in Australia,<sup>54</sup> and the increased pressure on accommodation may exacerbate this further. Regional areas are also still recovering from the devastating bush fires earlier in the year.

Supports offered by New South Wales that extend to people on temporary visas include:

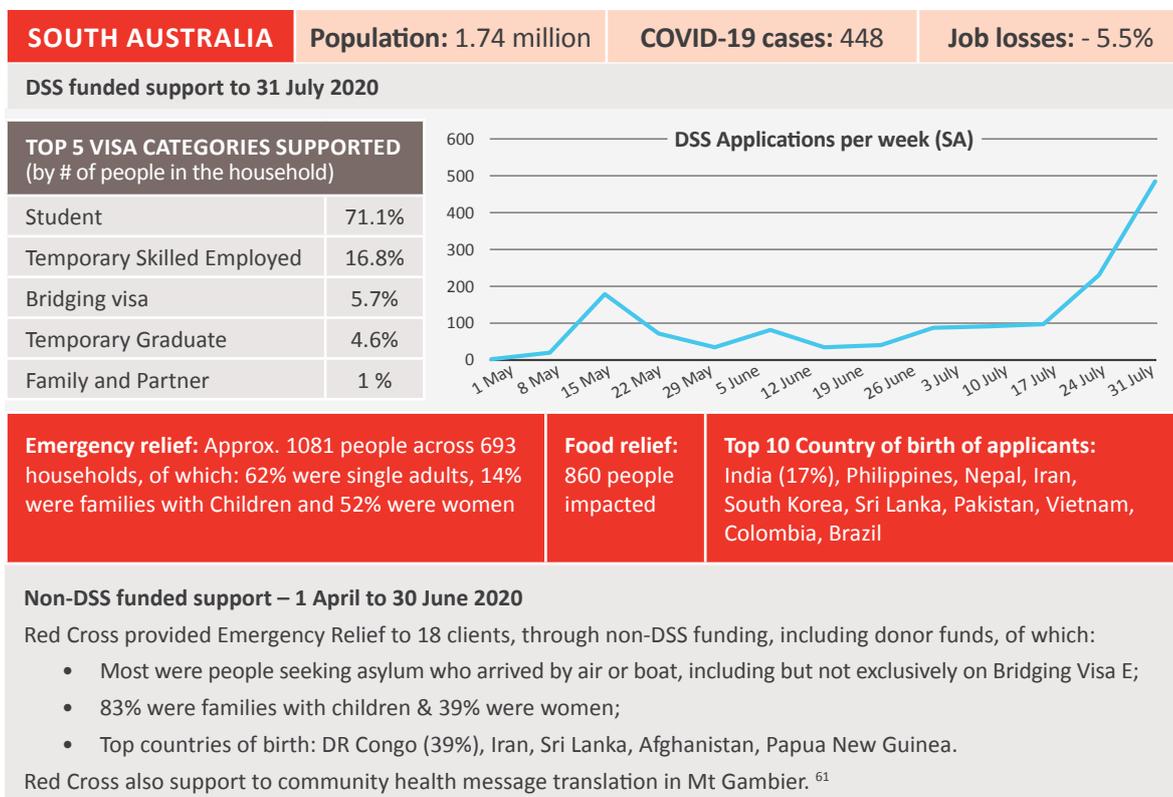
- **Waiver of hospital treatment costs** and ambulance fees for suspected COVID-19 cases.
- **International Students support package** including temporary housing scheme, increased legal support access, and a 24/7 student hotline.<sup>55</sup>
- **COVID-19 Community Grants Scheme** to community organisations to assist with basic necessities like food, transport and language support for vulnerable people.<sup>56</sup>
- **Additional funding** has been made available through Multicultural NSW to support asylum seekers in Metropolitan and regional NSW areas.



At the time of writing, Queensland has experienced fewer cases of COVID-19 overall and has few active cases. As a result, it has been able to reopen many areas of social and economic activity. Early indications were that domestic tourism could assist in boosting economic recovery, but restrictions elsewhere may reduce that likelihood.<sup>57</sup> Job losses remain substantial, as is the case nationally.

Supports offered by Queensland that extend to temporary migrants include:

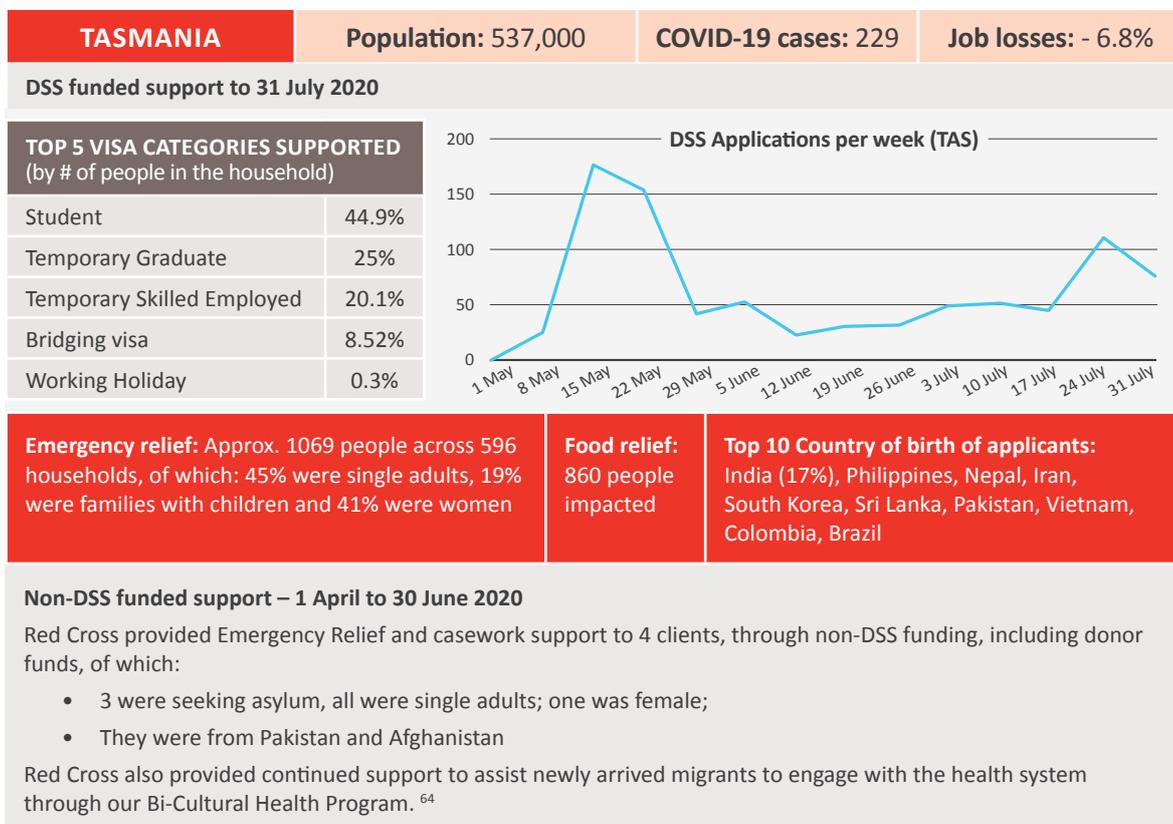
- **Waiver of hospital treatment costs** and ambulance fees for suspected COVID-19 cases.
- **Community Connections Support Package** for refugees, people seeking asylum and migrants, including a boost to existing ASRA support programs for asylum seekers to include people who have arrived by air, a collaborative partnership between seven agencies, including Red Cross, led by Communitify.<sup>58</sup>
- **Additional support for international students** in the form of funding to support international students experiencing severe financial hardship as a result of COVID-19.<sup>59</sup>
- **Medicare-ineligible asylum seekers** have access to public health services at no charge<sup>60</sup>



South Australia has maintained low COVID-19 case numbers, with several weeks of no known community transmission cases and a handful of live cases due to overseas arrivals. Many restrictions were eased in June 2020 enabling greater social and economic activity. While job losses are less severe than some other states, the state has experienced a sharp and severe drop in employment. There are also significant concerns regarding departure from the labour market and underemployment.

Supports offered by South Australia that extend to people on temporary visas include:

- **Waiver of hospital treatment costs** and ambulance fees for suspected COVID-19 cases.
- **Asylum-seekers** can access limited medical care through the SA Refugee Health Service.<sup>62</sup>
- **International Student Support Package** provides additional funding to top-up existing hardship funds operated by the state's three main universities.<sup>63</sup>
- **Food and Emergency Relief Package** for recent arrivals and people on temporary visas.
- Support through the Community and Jobs Support fund to multicultural organisations.



Tasmania has experienced some of the highest job losses per capita in the country, and faces decline in employment and economic activity. Tourism will struggle to rebound with borders opening in early August to national tourists from South Australia and Northern Territory – approximately 10 % of the national tourism dollar.<sup>65</sup> Despite higher unemployment levels, farmers fear a severe labour shortage due to the slump in backpackers and other temporary migrants who provide the short-term labour of fruit picking and other seasonal farm work in spring and summer months.<sup>66</sup>

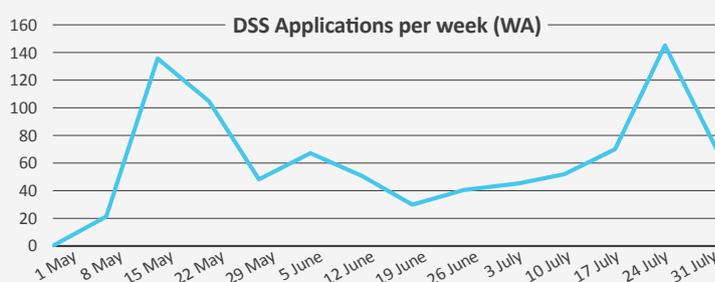
Supports offered by Tasmania that extend to people on temporary visas include:

- **Waiver of hospital treatment costs** and ambulance fees for suspected COVID-19 cases.
- **Pandemic Isolation Assistance Grants** of \$250 per individual and up to \$1000 per family have been made available to temporary migrants who meet eligibility criteria.<sup>67</sup>
- **Travel advice** for those wanting to return home & case-by-case **financial support for flights** for countries that are safe to return to for people stranded due to genuine financial hardship
- **COVID-19 Rental Relief** program providing up to \$2000 or four weeks of rent for tenants suffering severe hardship including people on temporary visas.

<b>WESTERN AUSTRALIA</b>	<b>Population: 2.64 million</b>	<b>COVID-19 cases: 661</b>	<b>Job losses: - 3.1%</b>
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**DSS funded support to 31 July 2020**

<b>TOP 5 VISA CATEGORIES SUPPORTED</b> (by # of people in the household)	
Student	61.7%
Bridging visa	15.4%
Temporary Skilled Employed	6.3%
Working Holiday	5.2%
Temporary Graduate	4.3%



<b>Emergency Relief:</b> Approx. 913 people across 541 households, of which: 67% were single adults, 22% were families with Children and 54% were women	<b>Food relief:</b> 190 people impacted	<b>Top 10 Country of birth of applicants:</b> Philippines (14%), India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Malaysia, Italy, Iraq, Brazil
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**Non-DSS funded support – 1 April to 30 June 2020**

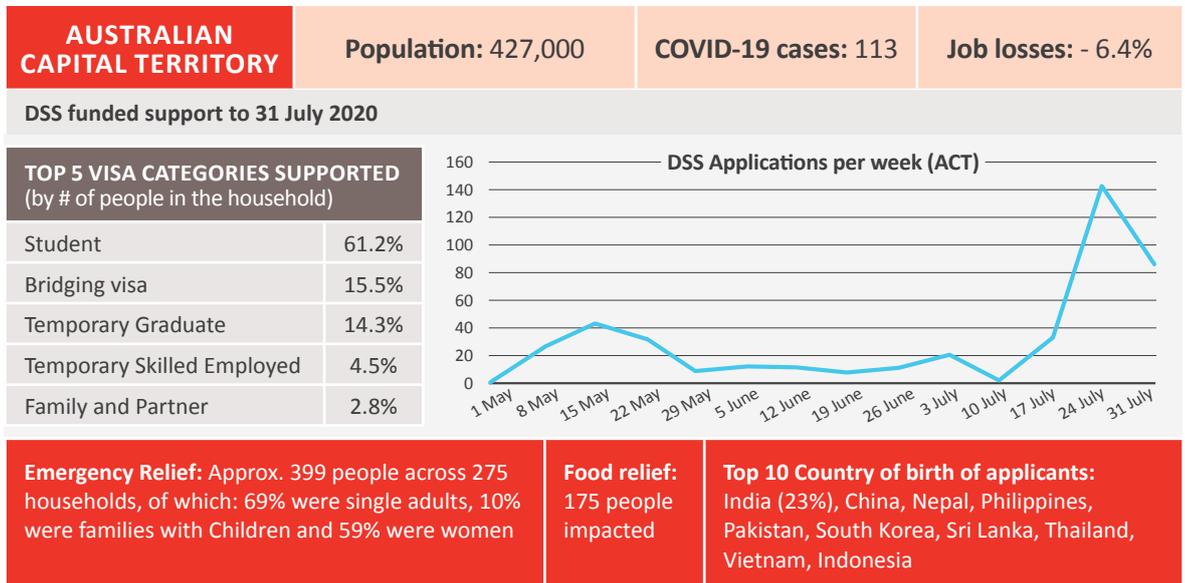
Red Cross also provided Emergency Relief and casework support to 54 clients, through non DSS funding, including donor funds, of which:

- Most were people seeking asylum who arrived by air or boat, including but not exclusively on Bridging Visa E;
- 57% were families with children, 31% single adult males & 56% were women;
- The top 10 countries of birth were: Pakistan (31%), Sri Lanka (21%), Zimbabwe, Burundi, Iraq, India, Somalia, Belgium, Iran.

Western Australia has experienced low levels of COVID-19, to date, and has re-opened previous restrictions on internal travel within the state. Its economy is benefitting from the business investment in mining,<sup>68</sup> and the current high prices of key exports such as iron ore and gold are boosting federal and state economies.<sup>69</sup> Other sectors are hampered by a severe downturn in tourism and the closure of both international and domestic borders with other states. Arrivals are expected to quarantine for 14-days on arrival. Job losses have been more modest than other states but total wages have fallen by 7.0% between 14 March and 11 July - the highest fall in the country.

Supports offered by the State of Western Australia that extend to people on temporary visas include:

- **Waiver of hospital treatment costs** and ambulance fees for suspected COVID cases.
- **Rental Relief Scheme** provides financial relief to private residential tenants experiencing financial hardship. Eligibility extends to people on a temporary protection or bridging visas.<sup>70</sup>
- **LotteryWest** funding to Red Cross Emergency Relief program rolled out from July 2020.



- The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) has had modest infection rates, with only one active case at the time of writing. It has retained an open border with the surrounding New South Wales, including Sydney, but has indicated ongoing review of this decision. Self-isolation is required for anyone arriving from Victoria or from certain hotspots in New South Wales.<sup>71</sup> ACT has experienced the third highest job losses in the country at 6.4%. While restrictions were due to ease in early July, the arrival of new COVID-19 cases delayed the removal of Stage 3 restrictions. These restrictions remained in place as of 29 July 2020, raising concerns about the likely further impact on jobs.<sup>72</sup>

Supports offered by the Australian Capital Territory that extend to people on temporary visas include:

- **Waiver of hospital treatment costs** and ambulance fees for suspected COVID-19 cases.
- **People seeking asylum** are entitled to full medical care including pathology, diagnostic, pharmaceutical, and outpatient services in the ACT's public hospitals without being billed.<sup>73</sup>
- **People on temporary visas and International Students Support Package** has funded several organisations, including Red Cross, to provide emergency relief to people on temporary visas, including people seeking asylum who are ineligible for Commonwealth assistance programs<sup>74</sup>

<b>NORTHERN TERRITORY</b>	<b>Population: 244,800</b>	<b>COVID-19 cases: 31</b>	<b>Job losses: - 3.7%</b>
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**DSS funded support to 31 July 2020**

TOP 5 VISA CATEGORIES SUPPORTED (by # of people in the household)	
Student	54.7%
Temporary Graduate	15.6%
Bridging visa	15.6%
Temporary Skilled Employed	9.4%
Working Holiday	4.12%

<b>Emergency Relief:</b> Approx. 568 people across 327 households, of whom: 51% were single adults, 21% were families with children and 53% were women	<b>Food relief:</b> 880 people impacted	<b>Top 10 Country of birth of applicants:</b> Nepal(31%), Sri Lanka, India, China, Philippines, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia
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**Non-DSS funded support – NT Worker Wellbeing Fund**

Red Cross received funding to provide emergency relief and casework support to over 590 people on temporary visas in NT through the Worker Wellbeing Fund in April 2020.

TOP 5 VISA CATEGORIES OF APPLICANTS	
Student & Temp Graduate	63.6%
Temporary Resident	22.6%
Bridging visa	6.6%
Working Holiday	3.4%
Other	3.4%

The Northern Territory has experienced very low numbers of COVID-19 infections. At the time of writing, there was no evidence of community transmission.<sup>75</sup> Relative to the rest of the country, there have been fewer restrictions on movement, enabling many social and economic activities to continue. While job losses are less severe than the national average, they have still been significant.

Supports offered by the Northern Territory that extend to people on temporary visas include:

- **Waiver of hospital treatment costs** and ambulance fees for suspected COVID-19 cases.
- **NT Worker and Wellbeing Fund** supports people, including international students and people on temporary visas, who have lost their jobs because of COVID-19 and who are not already receiving benefits, including Centrelink. Red Cross has partnered with Melaleuca Refugee Centre to provide emergency relief to this population.<sup>76</sup>

## APPENDIX II: FURTHER INFORMATION ON TEMPORARY VISA NUMBERS

We are currently experiencing an unprecedented set of changes to the arrival and departure of both citizens and migrants in Australia. In terms of people on temporary visas, new arrivals have almost ceased completely, while departures have occurred in modest numbers. The overall population of people on temporary visas has dropped by 144,000 from 2.171 million on 30 March to 2,027 million as at 30 June 2020.<sup>77</sup>

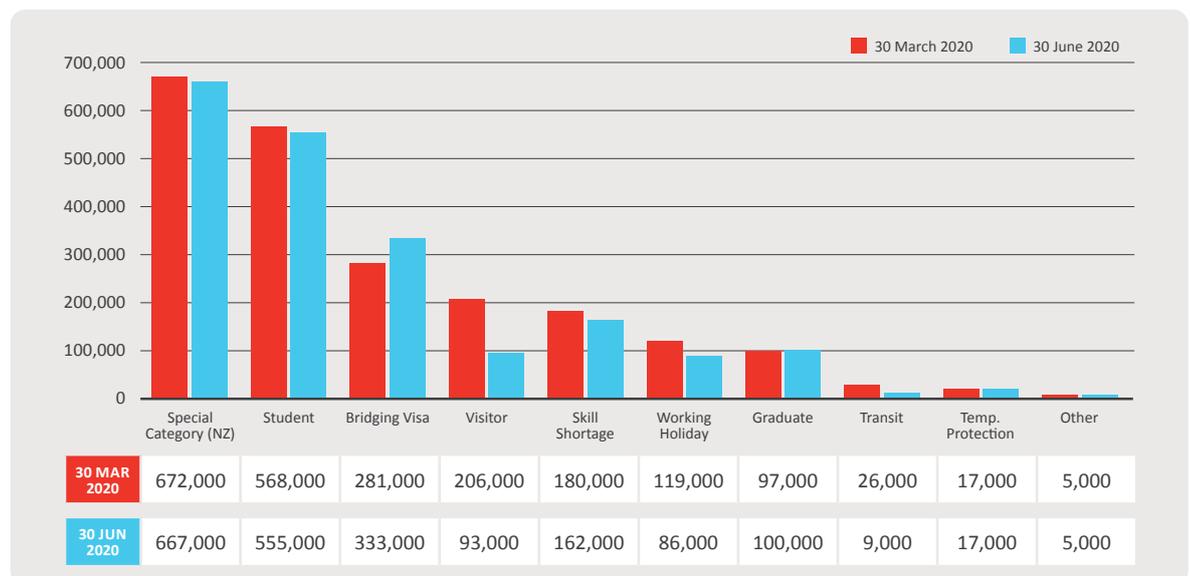
### Changes in visa categories

As seen in Table 6, for some visa categories the numbers remained relatively stable. Those with less than 1 per cent change in the size of the population were Special Category visa holders from New Zealand, Students, Skills Shortage, Graduates, Temporary Protection visa holders, and other visa holders. The only notable growth was seen in the additional 52,000 Bridging Visas issued.

There were substantial drops in the following categories across the second quarter:

- 65% drop in Transit visas (or 17,000 visas)
- 55% drop in Visitor visas (or 113,000 visas)
- 28% drop in Working Holiday visas (or 33,000 visas)

Table 6: Change in population by visa category



As noted in Barriers to departure in the body of the report, the ABS has reported a drop in the departure numbers over the period. Table 7 below show that a total of 110,000 people departed the country in this period.<sup>78</sup> The difference between the reduction of people on temporary visas and the number of people on temporary visas who departed Australia in the April to June period is likely due to some people obtaining permanent residency and others becoming undocumented during that period.

Table 7: Departures by visa category April - June 2020

TEMPORARY VISA CATEGORY	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	TOTAL
VISITOR	22,450	9,650	6,010	38,110
WORK	18,470	4,510	3,800	26,780
STUDENT	9,910	5,460	7,450	22,820
OTHER	5,330	5,240	8,890	19,460
SKILLED	900	870	1,120	2,890
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>57,060</b>	<b>25,730</b>	<b>27,270</b>	<b>110,060</b>

## APPENDIX III: INDIVIDUAL AND STRUCTURAL RISK FACTORS

There are a range of factors that come in to play when considering the impact of COVID-19 on people on temporary visas and people without visa in Australia.

As one example, job losses are affecting some demographics more than others, with ramifications for people on temporary visas who fall into those demographic categories. COVID-19 related job losses have been heavier for: women; people in their 20s or 70s; workers in accommodation and food, and arts and recreation; and workers in Victoria, Australian Capital Territory and Western Australia.<sup>79</sup> As a result, we can anticipate that a 21-year-old female student working in a café in Victoria is more likely to lose her job due to COVID-19 than a 43 year male meat factory worker in New South Wales.

The following table highlights key individual and structural risk factors affecting outcomes for people on temporary visas and people without visa in Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>80</sup>

Table 8: Individual and structural risk factors affecting people on temporary visas and people without visa

DOMAIN	INDIVIDUAL FACTORS	STRUCTURAL FACTORS
Demographic	Younger or older age	Ageing of society
	Female	Gender inequality
Employment	No right to work in Australia	No right to work in Australia
	Insecure and low-paid employment	Rising unemployment
	Unemployed or underemployed	Decline of key industries
	Exploitation including wage theft	Inadequate workplace oversight
	Skills and networks in a hard-hit industry	
Finances	Low personal wealth	Levels of poverty
	High personal debt	Levels of household debt
	Not eligible for social security	Strong national social security system
	Unaware of emergency relief options	Weak safety net for non-citizens
Housing	Living in an expensive suburb/location	High cost of housing
	Living in overcrowded housing	Housing supply
	Informal tenancy	Rental relief programs
	Previous experience of homelessness	Tenancy protections
	Barriers to negotiating with landlord	
Mental health	Suicidal thoughts / self-harming	Mental health system capacity
	Disengaged from treatment plan	Inadequate emergency care options
	Not eligible for support services	
Identity and culture	Identifies with a minority community	Levels of discrimination and racism
	Interrupted connection to culture	
	Poor English language proficiency	Monolingual society
Health	Significant illness or disability	Health inequalities
	Not eligible for public health care services	Public health care access
	Cannot afford private health care	Private health care affordability
	Avoiding COVID-19 testing and treatment	COVID-19 testing and treatment options

DOMAIN	INDIVIDUAL FACTORS	STRUCTURAL FACTORS
Family	Single parent or carer	Support for families
	Lack of contact with family	Role of extended family networks
	Conflict in family unit	Family separation
Children	Child protection needs unmet	Overwhelmed child protection service
	At risk of or experiencing exploitation	Limited access to child-services
	Not accessing education	Strained education system
Community	Isolated or weak bonding networks	New or emerging CALD community
	Isolated or weak bridging networks	Attitudes towards migrants
Safety	Domestic or Family Violence (DFV)	Levels of crime
	Sexual, psychological, physical abuse	Level of police brutality
	Victim or perpetrator of crime	
Alcohol and other drugs	Substance use is impacting functioning	Addictive substances easily available
	Substance use is impacting health	Inadequate support services
Federal	Not eligible to access welfare	Limitations on access to welfare
	Not eligible for public health care	Limitations on access to Medicare
State / Territory	Not in a state with emergency funds	Inadequate migrant emergency funds
	Not eligible for state concessions	Limitations on concession eligibility
	Not in a state with support programs	Variable state support programs
Local government	Living in an LGA with few supports	Varied local government support
	for vulnerable migrants	for vulnerable migrants
	Awaiting citizenship	Delay in citizenship ceremonies
Civil society organisation	Unaware of CSO organisations	Specialised programs run by CSOs
	Ineligible for some CSO programs	Varied access to CSO programs
Migration status	Is in immigration detention	Use of immigration detention
	Does not hold a valid visa	Status resolution options
	Is stateless	Weak statelessness protocols
	Is applying for refugee status	Temporary protection for refugees
	Does not hold a permanent visa	Barriers to permanent residency
	Not a citizen	Barriers to citizenship

# APPENDIX IV: INFO SHEET COVID-19 & SOCIAL SERVICES FOR PEOPLE ON TEMPORARY VISAS

**Disclaimer:** The information below is current as at 21 July 2020 and represents an overview based on publically available information which may be subject to change as new announcements are made at the Federal, State or Territory Level. This is a general guidance document only and should not be considered a definitive assessment. Ultimate determination of eligibility lies with appropriate authorities.

Table 9: Key Social Services related to COVID-19: Amendments & Eligibility Related to People on Temporary Visas as at 21 July 2020

Support Type	Key Details	Temporary Visa Holder (In) Eligibility	More Info & COVID Updates
<p><b>CORONAVIRUS SUPPLEMENT for Centrelink Payments:</b></p> <p><a href="#">JobSeeker Payment</a></p> <p><a href="#">Youth Allowance Jobseeker</a></p> <p><a href="#">Youth Allowance for Students and Apprentices</a></p> <p><a href="#">Austudy for Students and Apprentices</a></p> <p><a href="#">ABSTUDY for students getting Living Allowance</a></p> <p><a href="#">Farm Household Allowance</a></p> <p><a href="#">Parenting Allowance</a></p> <p><a href="#">Special Benefit</a></p>	<p><a href="#">Coronavirus supplement</a> is an additional \$550 per fortnight</p> <p>Those who are an existing or new recipient of any of the listed payments will receive the supplement automatically.</p> <p>The Coronavirus Supplement and expanded access for payments will commence from 27 April 2020.</p>	<p>Eligible:</p> <p>The following temporary visa holders <i>may be eligible</i> for the Coronavirus Supplement via <b>Jobseeker Payment, Youth Allowance, Austudy, Parenting Allowance &amp; Special Benefit</b>, if they meet the additional criteria for the specific category of payment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protected Special Category Visa (SCV) (i.e. NZ citizens on subclass 444 who arrived prior to 26 Feb 2001)</li> <li><u>Non-protected SCV holders</u> (i.e. NZ citizens arriving after 26 Feb 2001) eligible if they have lived in Australia without a break for at least 10 years. <u>Non-protected SCV holders may only get the JobSeeker Payment for one single period of up to 6 months.</u></li> <li>Temporary Protection Visa holders may be eligible for Special Benefit</li> <li>Safe Haven Enterprise Visa holders may be eligible for Special Benefit (with conditions in terms of how many months they can access Centrelink payments and remain on SHEV pathway)</li> <li>Subject to passing of legislation: Skilled Work Regional Provisional visa (subclass 491) / Skilled Employer Sponsored Regional Provisional visa (subclass 494)</li> </ul> <p>Not normally eligible due to not meeting Australian residence rules:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most Bridging Visa</li> <li>Visitor / Tourist Visa</li> <li>Student Visa</li> <li>Working Holiday Maker Visa</li> <li>Pacific and Seasonal Workers</li> <li>Temporary graduate Visa</li> <li>Temporary Resident (Skilled Employment)</li> </ul> <p>* <a href="#">Services Australia (Centrelink) website</a> notes the following may be exempt from being an Australian resident, for limited payments and concessions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>subclass 060 - Bridging visa F - subclass 785-Temporary Protection</li> <li>subclass 070 - Bridging (Removal Pending) - subclass 449 - Humanitarian Stay</li> <li>subclass 785 - Temporary Protection</li> <li>subclass 786 - Temporary (Humanitarian Concern</li> <li>subclass 790 - Safe Haven Enterprise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">15.05.20 Temporary Visa Holders and Social Security: A quick guide</a> (Parliament of Australia)</li> <li><a href="#">Visa Holder Updates from Home Affairs</a></li> <li>Coronavirus Updates from Services Australia</li> <li><a href="#">Update 04.04.20</a> - NZ on 444 visas and who arrived before 26 February 2001 will have access to welfare payments and the JobKeeper payment. 444 visa holders who arrived after 2001 have access to the JobKeeper payment. Those who have lived in Australia for 10 years or more have access to JobSeeker payments for six months.</li> <li>Newly Arrived Residents Waiting Period &amp; Seasonal Work Preclusion Periods waived for these payments as of 25 March 2020</li> <li>Partner income test for JobSeeker payment has been raised to almost 80K</li> <li>Expanded Jobseeker and Youth Allowance Jobseeker criteria applies to sole traders, self-employed, casual workers, contract workers who meet the income tests as a result COVID-19</li> <li>Asset testing waived for 6 months from 25 March 2020, except for Farm Household Allowance and Special Benefit.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Coronavirus Economic Support &amp; Crisis Payments</b></p>	<p><a href="#">1st \$750 Economic Support Payment</a></p> <p>One-off Crisis Payment</p> <p>2nd \$750 Economic Support Payment</p>	<p>Same potential eligibility (or Lack thereof) for Temporary Visa Holders as Above based on Services Australia information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1<sup>st</sup> Economic Support Payment issued if person is getting an eligible payment on any day from 12 March to 13 April 2020.</li> <li>Crisis Payment ((one week of base income support rate) available if in severe financial hardship and either: need to self-isolate or are caring for someone self-isolating.</li> <li>2<sup>nd</sup> Available from 13 July 2020 getting an eligible payment or have an eligible concession card on 10 July 2020. You will not receive if you are getting the Coronavirus supplement</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">More financial support for people affected by Coronavirus</a></p>

Support Type	Key Details	Temporary Visa Holder (In) Eligibility	More Info & COVID Updates
<b>JobKeeper Payment</b>	The JobKeeper Subsidy is a payment of \$1500 per employee to eligible businesses and non-profit organisations.	<p>Eligible employees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Holder of a permanent visa</li> <li>Protected Special Category Visa Holder (i.e. NZ citizens on 444 visa who arrived prior to 26 February 2001)</li> <li>Non-Protected SCV holders (NZ citizens on 444 visa who arrived after 26 February 2001)</li> </ul> <p>Ineligible Employees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All other temporary visa holders at this time</li> </ul> <p>*Note Employers apply for this payment directly on behalf of eligible employees. It is administered by the ATO.</p>	<p><a href="#">JobKeeper Payment Factsheet</a></p> <p><a href="#">Update 04.04.20</a> - NZ on 444 visas and who arrived before 26 February 2001 will have access to welfare payments and the JobKeeper payment. 444 visa holders who arrived after 2001 have access to the JobKeeper payment. Those who have lived in Australia for 10 years or more have access to JobSeeker payments for six months</p>
<b>Medicare</b>	<p><a href="#">What's Covered by Medicare</a></p> <p><a href="#">Medicare Eligibility and Enrollment Process</a></p>	<p>Eligible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NZ citizens (SCV holders – protected and non-protected)</li> <li>A temporary resident with a visa covered by a <a href="#">Ministerial Order</a>:</li> </ul> <p>Fulbright scholars / Witness Protection (Trafficking) Temporary visa (subclass 787)/ De facto partners of Australian citizens or permanent residents / Support for Victims of People Trafficking Program / Temporary Humanitarian Concern visa (subclass 786) / Contributory Parent visas (subclasses 173, 143, 884, 864) /Temporary Protection visa (subclass 785) / Removal Pending Bridging visa (subclass 070) /Illegal maritime arrivals holding a Bridging E (Class WE) visa / Illegal maritime arrivals holding a Humanitarian Stay visa (subclass 449) /Secondary Movement Offshore Entry visa XB (subclass 447) /Safe Haven Enterprise visa (subclass 790 / Skilled Work Regional Provisional visa (subclass 491) / Skilled Employer Sponsored Regional Provisional visa (subclass 494)</p> <p>Not Eligible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students, Working Holiday Maker, Visitors / Tourists, Pacific and seasonal workers / Temporary Graduate</li> <li>- Bridging Visa holders (with the exception of BVE), unless their initial substantive visa upon arrival in Australia had Medicare entitlements, which is unlikely</li> </ul>	<p><b>UPDATE:</b> COVID19-related fees for testing and treatment have been waived in all States and Territories for persons who are Medicare ineligible. See the Table 3 below.</p> <p>Residents of some countries may qualify for access to Medicare via <a href="#">Reciprocal Health Care Agreements (RHCA)</a>. (Belgium, Finland, Italy, Malta or the Maltese Islands, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Republic of Ireland, Slovenia, Sweden, United Kingdom) <a href="#">Country specific information</a>.</p>
<b>Temporary Early Release of Superannuation</b>	From 25 March 2020, changes will allow employees to submit two applications for up to \$10,000 each from their Superannuation fund (1/FY)	<p>Eligible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Australian citizens and permanent residents as well as NZ citizens with Australian held super can access 10,000/FY for this year and next</li> </ul> <p>Eligible <b>temporary residents</b> are able to apply to access up to \$10,000 of their super until 30 June 2020. To apply for early release as a temporary resident, you must satisfy one or more of the following requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You hold a student visa that you have held for 12 months or more and you are unable to meet immediate living expenses.</li> <li>You are a temporary skilled work visa holder, your working hours have reduced to zero and you remain engaged with your employer.</li> <li>You are a temporary resident visa holder (excluding student or skilled worker visas) and you cannot meet immediate living expenses.</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">More information here.</a></p>

Table 10: State and Territory Government Funding Announcements for people on temporary visas, including international students

<p><b>VIC</b></p>	<p><b><u>Australian Red Cross</u></b></p> <p>Australian Red Cross has received Victorian Government funding specifically to support people who do not have access to Commonwealth income support (including Job Seeker and Job Keeper) or the Victorian Government’s International Student Emergency Fund.</p> <p><b><u>International Student Emergency Relief Fund</u></b></p> <p>The VIC Government is providing Emergency Support For Victoria’s International Students by establishing a \$45 million International Student Emergency Relief Fund.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· The fund will provide one-off payments of up to \$1100 to students in need while expanding emergency provisions for those experiencing exceptional circumstances.</li> <li>· 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 coronavirus pandemic could benefit from the relief payment.</li> <li>· The payments will require co-contributions from university hardship funds, build on existing Victorian Government support provided to international students through the Study Melbourne Student Centre such as free legal aid and mental health services</li> </ul> <p><b>More information:</b> Applications are still open. Visit the specific Study Melbourne homepage <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p><b><u>Coronavirus (COVID-19) rent relief grant</u></b></p> <p>The VIC Government established an \$80 million rental assistance fund to provide rent relief payments of up to \$2,000 to Victorians experiencing rental hardship due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. There are no citizenship or permanent residency requirements for applicants. Eligibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· 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.</li> <li>· 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.</li> </ul> <p><b>More information:</b> If you have lodged your new rental agreement with Consumer Affairs Victoria, you can apply for a <a href="#">Rent Relief Grant online</a>.</p>
<p><b>ACT</b></p>	<p><b><u>Temporary visa holders and international students support package</u></b></p> <p>Temporary visa holders and international students affected by COVID-19 who are ineligible for Commonwealth assistance programs, are able to access support through a \$450,000 ACT Government support package.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Under the new funding package, the RASH Coordination Committee – made up of groups working with asylum seekers including Companion House – will receive \$140,000 to provide urgent support to asylum seekers living in Canberra.</li> <li>· The Australian Red Cross will also see an extension to their existing emergency support program, receiving \$160,000 to assist other temporary visa holders including people on temporary work visas and safe haven enterprise visas.</li> <li>· The Red Cross will also work with tertiary institutions to provide \$150,000 in ACT Government support to international students who have been impacted by COVID-19 and fallen onto financial hardship.</li> </ul> <p><b>More information:</b></p> <p>People seeking asylum can contact Companion House on 02 6251 4550 or via email : <a href="mailto:info@companionhouse.org.au">info@companionhouse.org.au</a></p> <p>Temporary visa holders and international students can contact 02 6234 7695 or via email: <a href="mailto:hspanberra@redcross.org.au">hspanberra@redcross.org.au</a>.</p>
<p><b>NT</b></p>	<p><b><u>International Students and Visa Holders Emergency Relief</u></b></p> <p>The Northern Territory Government has established the Worker and Wellbeing Fund Worker for people who have lost their jobs because of coronavirus (COVID-19) are not already receiving financial and/or wellbeing support, including Centrelink benefits. It includes support for International students and temporary visa holders.</p> <p>Red Cross have partnered with Melaleuca Refugee Centre to provide emergency relief for international students and visa holders and Territorians who have lost their job or their income has been reduced because of coronavirus (COVID-19) and are not eligible for other supports including Centrelink.</p> <p><b>More information:</b> Please contact Red Cross on 0403 987 018 to access emergency relief and support</p>

QLD	<p><b><u>\$900,000 COVID-19 package to support vulnerable communities</u></b></p> <p>On 22 May, the QLD Government announced a dedicated \$900,000 COVID-19 connections package for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. The <b>Community Connections Support Package</b> includes \$132,000 to scale up the I Speak Your Language telephone support program delivered by the Multicultural Communities Council Gold Coast and \$141,000 to fund a community connector role in the Australian Red Cross. Other funding for existing programs includes \$420,000 to Community Queensland to respond to increased demand from people seeking asylum who are on temporary visas, and a \$90,000 boost for providers funded through the Community Action for a Multicultural Society (CAMS) program to support technology enhancements enabling online service provision and engagement.</p> <p><b>More information</b> on the QLD Government response to COVID-19: <a href="http://www.covid19.qld.gov.au">www.covid19.qld.gov.au</a></p> <p><b><u>Additional Support for International Students</u></b></p> <p>As announced by Study Queensland on 20 May 2020, the QLD Government has boosted its state-wide international education assistance and recovery package to \$15 million. As part of this, an additional \$10 million will now be made available to support international students experiencing severe financial hardship as a result of COVID-19. Currently, the Queensland Government is working on a process to distribute: additional funding to Queensland-based universities and TAFE Queensland to top-up their bursaries and student support services and one-off payments to private VET and ELICOS students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>University and TAFE Queensland students</b> are advised to contact their institution student support teams which will undertake a process to assess eligibility for financial support.</li> <li>• <b>International students at private education and training providers</b> may be eligible for a one-off \$500 payment. Application is via online portal which will be open soon. The portal will remain open until all allocated funding is exhausted. <a href="#">Eligibility information</a></li> </ul> <p><b>More information:</b> Follow the <a href="#">Study Queensland Facebook page</a> to know when the portal is open and to keep up to date with announcements.</p> <p>The <a href="#">Queensland government has allocated \$2.2 million to helping international students</a>. The package covers access to professional support counsellors, isolation care-packs, pre-prepared meals and other living expense payments to students. Students will be able to connect with professional support counsellors through the Online Student Hub – a digital platform that will link caseworkers with students to guide them through mental health, visa, crisis accommodation and other essential needs. Multicultural Australia will provide the online counselling resources. Students in demonstrated financial hardship may also be referred to GIVIT for emergency assistance.</p> <p><b>More Information:</b> Visit the <a href="#">Online Student Hub</a> or contact 1 800 QSTUDY (1800 778 839)</p>
SA	<p><b><u>International Student Support Package</u></b></p> <p>The SA government will provide further funding, on top of the funds made available by the University of Adelaide, Flinders University and the University of South Australia. Each university will distribute funds to international students both currently enrolled or studying in a pathway course, and suffering hardship. The International Student Support Package will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$10 million fund for university students significantly impacted by COVID-19 restrictions at the University of Adelaide, Flinders University and University of South Australia to distribute to their pathway and international students.</li> <li>• A \$500 emergency cash grant to other international students significantly impacted by the restrictions, currently enrolled in a course, living in South Australia and who meet the criteria.</li> <li>• And a one-off \$200 assistance payment per student living with South Australian families provided to homestay families.</li> </ul> <p><b>More information:</b> Visit <a href="http://www.studyadelaide.com">www.studyadelaide.com</a> or to register your details please click <a href="#">here</a>.</p>
TAS	<p><b><u>Temporary Visa holders support – Pandemic Isolation Assistance Grants</u></b></p> <p>The Tasmanian government announced up to \$3million to assist temporary visa holders affected by COVID-19, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• immediate extension of eligibility for <a href="#">Pandemic Isolation Assistance Grants</a>, if they can demonstrate genuine financial hardship as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. This will provide an immediate payment of \$250 per individual or up to \$1000 per family</li> <li>• for those whose country is safe to return to, assist with travel advice, and if necessary due to genuine financial hardship we will on a case by case basis assist with financial support to do so.</li> </ul> <p><b>More information:</b> To register your interest in support to return to your country of origin, call the public health hotline on <a href="tel:1800671738">1800 671 738</a> by 23 May 2020</p> <p><b><u>COVID19 Rental Relief Fund</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up to \$2000 or four weeks rent for tenants suffering from extreme hardship.</li> <li>• Assistance to tenants paying more than 30% of their income in rent and with less than \$5000 in savings.</li> <li>• Eligible: Tenants covered by the Residential Tenancy Act 1997, tenants who rent rooms, are part of a share-house or are sub-tenants, migrants and temporary visa holders subject to them meeting all other eligibility criteria.</li> <li>• Payments will be made to landlords and it will be a requirement they pass on this level of assistance to their tenant via rent reductions.</li> <li>• Administered by Communities Tasmania through Housing Connect.</li> </ul>

NSW	<p><b>NSW Government supporting international students through COVID-19:</b> The NSW Government announced on 15 May 2020, that it will fund temporary crisis accommodation for stranded international students as part of a \$20 million package. The package includes a temporary housing scheme, targeted at students in genuine need and delivered through approved student accommodation or homestay providers. It also provides increased support via the International Legal Service NSW, making available 50,000 free subscriptions to the multilingual My Legal Mate student app. A new 24/7 international student support service, through the NSW Government COVID-19 hotline (13 77 88), will offer free advice and information about other measures, including the moratorium on rental evictions and medical, mental health, legal and emergency support.</p> <p><b>More information:</b> Contact the NSW Government COVID-19 hotline (13 77 88)</p> <p><b>Multicultural NSW COVID19 Community Support Grants Program</b></p> <p>On 3 June, the NSW Government announced it would <u>provide over \$6 million to support multicultural communities</u>, including migrants and temporary visa holders, affected by COVID-19. The NSW Government will distribute <u>Funding to Support Multicultural Communities during COVID-19</u> to specialist migrant and settlement NGOs, and multicultural community organisations. Multicultural community organisations are encouraged to apply for over \$500,000 in funding to provide immediate assistance for basic necessities like food, transport and language support for vulnerable people. Applications are now open and close 9am, 13 June 2020.</p> <p><b>More information:</b> Visit the Multicultural NSW Grants <a href="#">webpage</a>.</p>
WA	<p><b>Rental Relief Scheme</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· The State Government is making available <u>\$30 million for grants of up to \$2,000</u> for Western Australian private residential tenants who lost their jobs on or after 20 March 2020 and are facing financial hardship due to the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic.</li> <li>· Eligibility: The scheme is open to tenants or sub-tenants who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- are a permanent resident, Australian citizen, or have a temporary or permanent protection visa or bridging visa</li> <li>- live in a private residential property, rooming house or residential park</li> <li>- have, or shortly will have, lodged a tenancy bond with the Bond Administrator</li> <li>- are in 'financial hardship', meaning: have lost their job on or after 20 March 2020 due to COVID-19; have applied for or are receiving Centrelink income support; applicant and all tenants have less than \$10,000 of total household savings; applicant and all tenants contribute more than 25 per cent of the total household income (after-tax) towards rent</li> <li>- have agreed to a reduction in rent with the landlord or have engaged in Consumer Protection's conciliation service</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>More information</b> is available <a href="#">here</a>.</p>

Table 11: State and Territory Access to Healthcare for People on Temporary Visas

VIC	<p><b>COVID-19 WAIVER OF FEES – What if I am from overseas and not eligible for Medicare?</b></p> <p>Overseas travellers who fall ill in Australia (and are not eligible for Medicare) often have health or travel insurance.</p> <p>For those who do not have adequate insurance coverage, <b>Victorian hospitals will waive the costs of treatment.</b> 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</p> <p>All people seeking asylum are entitled to free medical care in Victorian hospitals. For more information: <a href="https://www.rch.org.au/immigranthealth/clinical/Asylum_seekers">https://www.rch.org.au/immigranthealth/clinical/Asylum_seekers</a> &amp; <a href="https://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/dental-services">https://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/dental-services</a>  <a href="https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/hospitals-and-health-services/patient-care/ambulance-and-nept/ambulance-payment/payment-responsibilities">https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/hospitals-and-health-services/patient-care/ambulance-and-nept/ambulance-payment/payment-responsibilities</a></p>
NSW	<p><b>COVID-19 WAIVER OF FEES -What if I don't have Medicare?</b></p> <p>Most people that are not eligible for Medicare will have health or travel insurance. For those that do not have adequate insurance coverage, <b>NSW Health will waive these costs.</b> This includes the waiving of payment and debt recovery procedures for ambulance transfers of people suspected to have COVID-19 infection, who are taken to NSW Health facilities for assessment.</p> <p>As of October 2009, asylum-seekers that are not Medicare-eligible can have their fees waived for some public health services in NSW. These services are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· emergency care for acute medical and surgical conditions, including admission</li> <li>· some elective surgery (for conditions listed as Clinical Priority Categories 1 &amp; 2)</li> <li>· ambulatory and outpatient care required to maintain health status of asylum seekers with acute and chronic health conditions (eg diabetes)</li> <li>· maternity services, including pregnancy care, delivery, and post-natal care mental health services (inpatient and community based). (See <a href="#">NSW Health</a>)</li> </ul>
ACT	<p><b>COVID-19 – access to medical care</b></p> <p>The Act Government has announced that during the COVID-19 pandemic, Medicare ineligible people requiring testing, treatment or other public health supports related to COVID19 will have free access to medical care. This includes pathology, diagnostic, pharmaceutical and outpatient care in the ACT public health system.</p> <p>People seeking asylum are entitled to full medical care including pathology, diagnostic, pharmaceutical, and outpatient services in the ACT's public hospitals without being billed. <a href="https://www.health.act.gov.au/search?search=asylum%20seeker">https://www.health.act.gov.au/search?search=asylum%20seeker</a></p>
WA	<p><b>COVID-19 WAIVER OF FEES What if I don't have Medicare?</b></p> <p>Most travellers to WA will have travel insurance. To support the WA Health response to COVID- 19, the Minister for Health has confirmed that those people who are <b>not eligible for Medicare AND who present to WA Health facilities for assessment in relation to COVID-19 infection, will not be charged out of pocket expenses.</b></p>
SA	<p><b>COVID-19 WAIVER OF FEES -What if I'm not eligible for Medicare?</b></p> <p>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, <b>South Australian hospitals will waive the costs of diagnosis and treatment of coronavirus (COVID-19).</b> This includes waiving payment and debt recovery procedures for ambulance transfers of people suspected to have COVID-19, who are taken to South Australian 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.</p> <p>Asylum-seekers can access limited medical care through the SA Refugee Health Service  <a href="https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/Public+Content/SA+Health+Internet/Health+services/Refugee+Health+Service/">https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/Public+Content/SA+Health+Internet/Health+services/Refugee+Health+Service/</a></p>
QLD	<p><b>COVID-19 WAIVER OF FEES-What if I don't have Medicare cover?</b></p> <p>Most people who are not eligible for Medicare will have health or travel insurance. To support Queensland's response to COVID-19, people who do not have adequate insurance coverage and are not eligible for Medicare <b>will not be charged out of pocket expenses</b> if they present to any Queensland Health facility for assessment and treatment in relation to COVID-19 infection. These arrangements have been put in place to ensure payment issues are not a barrier for people from overseas to protect their own and their families' health and to play their part in reducing transmission of the disease.</p> <p>The Queensland Government provides Medicare ineligible asylum seekers with access to public health services at no charge. <a href="https://www.health.qld.gov.au/public-health/groups/multicultural/refugee-services">https://www.health.qld.gov.au/public-health/groups/multicultural/refugee-services</a> and <a href="http://www.refugeehealthnetworkqld.org.au/asylum-seekers/">http://www.refugeehealthnetworkqld.org.au/asylum-seekers/</a></p>
NT	<p><b>COVID-19 WAIVER OF FEES</b></p> <p>Testing and treatment for coronavirus (COVID-19) is free for everyone including those who are ineligible for Medicare. See <a href="#">here</a> for more information.</p>
TAS	<p><b>COVID-19 WAIVER OF FEES -What if I'm from overseas and I'm not eligible for Medicare</b></p> <p>Overseas travellers who get sick in Australia (and are not eligible for Medicare) often have health or travel insurance.</p> <p>For those who do not have adequate insurance coverage, <b>Tasmanian hospitals will waive the costs of treatment and testing for COVID-19.</b> This includes waiving payment and debt recovery procedures for ambulance transfers of people suspected to have coronavirus, who are taken to Tasmanian hospitals for assessment. These arrangements have been put in place to ensure payment issues are not a barrier for people from overseas with symptoms of COVID-19 seeking early medical advice.</p>

## **Additional Resources**

**Reciprocal Health Care 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 Medicare while in Australia, information for each country is available [here](#):

- Belgium, Finland, Italy, Malta or the Maltese Islands, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Republic of Ireland, Slovenia, Sweden, United Kingdom

## **Temporary Visa Categories Covered by Ministerial Orders (eligible for Medicare):**

You can enrol in Medicare if you have a valid temporary visa covered by 1 of these Ministerial Orders:

- Witness Protection (Trafficking) Temporary visa (subclass 787)
- De facto partners of Australian citizens or permanent residents
- Support for Victims of People Trafficking Program
- Temporary Humanitarian Concern visa (subclass 786)
- Contributory Parent visas (subclasses 173, 143, 884, 864)
- Temporary Protection visa (subclass 785)
- Removal Pending Bridging visa (subclass 070)
- Illegal maritime arrivals holding a Bridging E (Class WE) visa
- Illegal maritime arrivals holding a Humanitarian Stay visa (subclass 449)
- Secondary Movement Offshore Entry visa XB (subclass 447)
- Safe Haven Enterprise visa (subclass 790)
- Skilled Work Regional Provisional visa (subclass 491)
- Skilled Employer Sponsored Regional Provisional visa (subclass 494)

# ENDNOTES

- 1 A useful timeline of events can be found [here](#).
- 2 Department of Home Affairs (2020) "Covid and the border" <https://covid19.homeaffairs.gov.au/>.
- 3 Department of Social Services (2020) *Guide to coronavirus measures* [here](#) Additional DSS info [here](#).
- 4 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2020) "Temporary entrants visa holders pivot table" 30 June 2020. Last updated 30.07.2020. Available [here](#). Also: Note that New Zealand citizen 444 visa holders who arrived after February 2001 are not eligible for JobSeeker. Broadly, we were seeing about 25,000 per year net migration of people in this group since 2001 (i.e. approx. 450,000 arrived post-2001). People from New Zealand can access Medicare.
- 5 See <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/foi/files/2019/fa180801356-document-released.PDF> & Refugee Council of Australia (2020) "Statistics on people seeking asylum in the community" 12 June 2020. Available [here](#).
- 6 See also here: <https://www.redcross.org.au/getmedia/3d7cd42b-fa1e-441b-8da7-050cc1737585/Ext-Overview-COVID19-Support-Temporary-Migrants-Eligibility-210720.pdf.aspx>
- 7 Coleman, David (2020) "Media release: Coronavirus and temporary visa holders" 04.04.2020 Available <https://minister.homeaffairs.gov.au/davidcoleman/Pages/Coronavirus-and-Temporary-Visa-holders.aspx>
- 8 Coleman (2020) "Coronavirus and temporary visa holders"
- 9 For example, the cap on arrivals is reported [here](#), while difficulties in getting home are reported [here](#).
- 10 For up-to-date details, see IOM's Travel Restrictions database at: <https://migration.iom.int/>.
- 11 Red Cross uses this term to describe people, who have either recently arrived in Australia, or who are here with temporary or no legal status, including people seeking asylum, students, partner visa holders, working visa holders, people who have been trafficked, people in immigration detention and stateless persons. In particular, Red Cross refers to those with specific vulnerabilities, whose survival, dignity, physical or mental health is under threat including those who due to their visa status, cannot access mainstream supports and services to enable them to participate in the broader community.
- 12 See *Appendix I: State and Territory Snapshots* for more details
- 13 See here: <https://www.redcross.org.au/get-help/help-for-migrants-in-transition/help-for-migrants-in-transition>.
- 14 For example see: <https://www.redcross.org.au/coronavirus#poster>.
- 15 See here: <https://www.dss.gov.au/communities-and-vulnerable-people-programs-services-emergency-relief/emergency-relief-national-coordination-plan>.
- 16 International Monetary Fund (2019) *World Economic Outlook Database, October 2019*. Available [here](#).
- 17 Coleman (2020) "Media release: Coronavirus and temporary visa holders" Note: As far as Red Cross is aware there is no publically available data set to determine how many people on Special Category Visas are eligible for JobSeeker, Special Benefit or other Centrelink payments.
- 18 Parliamentary Library blogpost *Temporary migration figures: The quarter before COVID-19 hit*. Available [here](#).
- 19 Based on clients receiving DSS funded Emergency Relief as at 31 July 2020.
- 20 Frydenberg, Josh (2020) "National Press Club Address, Canberra" 24 July 2020. Available [here](#).
- 21 Red Cross Strengths and Needs Assessment Framework is a practice framework that supports and guides assessments across Red Cross Migration Support Programs. It enables identification of clients' strengths and needs to support targeted service planning, with a view to optimising client wellbeing and safety.
- 22 Based on clients receiving DSS funded Emergency Relief as at 31 July 2020.
- 23 AHURI (2020) *Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs Inquiry on Homelessness: Submission 139. 24 June 2020*. p. 2 & 33 Available [here](#).
- 24 AHURI (2020) *Submission 139* p. 36; Howe and Singh (2020) *COVID-19 and undocumented workers in horticulture*. p. 9-12.
- 25 Howe, Joanna and Ankur Singh (2020) *Covid-19 and Undocumented Workers in the Horticulture Industry*. United Workers Union. Available [here](#).
- 26 Refugee Council of Australia (2020) "Statistics on people seeking asylum in the community" 12 June 2020. Available [here](#).
- 27 Brown, Andrew (2020) "Coronavirus: Lifeline crisis hotline calls surge over COVID-19 fears" *The Canberra Times*. 19 March 2020. Available [here](#).
- 28 ABS (2020) *4940.0 ABS Household Impacts of COVID-19 Survey, 24-29 June*. Released 13.7.20 [here](#)
- 29 Momartin, Shakeh et al. (2006) "A comparison of the mental health of refugees with temporary versus permanent protection visas" *Medical Journal of Australia* 185(7): 357-361. doi: 10.5694/j.1326-5377.2006.tb00610.x
- 30 Momartin et al. (2006) "A comparison of the mental health of refugees with temporary versus permanent protection visas"; Nickerson, A., Byrow, Y., O'Donnell, M., Mau, V. et al. (2019) "The association between visa insecurity and mental health, disability and social engagement in refugees living in Australia" *European Journal of Psychotraumatology* 10(1): doi: 10.1080/20008198.2019.1688129.
- 31 Nickerson et al. (2019) "The association between visa insecurity and mental health, disability and social engagement"
- 32 Farbenblum and Berg (2020) *International students and wage theft in Australia*; Howe and Singh (2020) *COVID-19 and undocumented workers in the horticulture industry*.
- 33 Clayton, Rachel (2020) "No paid pandemic leave for healthcare workers forces some to come to work sick" *ABC News* 14 July 2020. Available [here](#)
- 34 See also: <http://www.premier.tas.gov.au/releases/paid-pandemic-leave-for-tasmanians> and <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/covid-19-worker-support-payment>
- 35 See <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/foi/files/2019/fa180801356-document-released.PDF>
- 36 Refugee Council of Australia (2020) "Statistics on people seeking asylum in the community" 12 June 2020. Available [here](#).
- 37 For instance, as at 31 March there were 2,275 people in the community waiting for the grant of a further Bridging Visa E. Reasons include administrative delay, or awaiting Ministerial approval.
- 38 Examples include a couple on a Regional Skilled Visa in Warrigal separated with one spouse in Mexico ([here](#)), and an Indian man who is separated from his wife and 4 year-old daughter ([here](#)).
- 39 Davis, Ken (2020) "Temporary visa holders miss out when companies falter" *The Canberra Times*. 20 July 2020. Available [here](#). Vedelago, Chris and Cameron Houston (2020) "George Calombaris restaurant empire's collapse costs taxpayers \$1 million" *The Age*. 29 June 2020. Available [here](#).
- 40 ABS (2020) *Overseas Travel Statistics, Provisional April*. Last updated 13.05.2020; ABS (2020) *Overseas Travel Statistics, Provisional May*. Last updated 16.06.2020; ABS (2020) *Overseas Travel Statistics, Provisional July*. Last updated 17.08.2020. All available [here](#).
- 41 See: <https://data.gov.au/data/dataset/overseas-arrivals-and-departures>.
- 42 IOM *COVID-19 Global Mobility Database* available at: <https://migration.iom.int/>
- 43 For example, certain working visas require the person to remain employed by the company which sponsored their move to Australia. Removing conditions 8107 and 8607 would enable skilled workers on 457 and 482 visas to remain in Australia without jeopardising their sponsoring employer.
- 44 Further information: <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/what-we-do/status-resolution-service/help-to-leave>
- 45 Debts and re-entry bans have been shown to inhibit departure rates.

- 46 Doherty, Ben (2020) "Victoria latest state to help temporary migrants excluded from federal coronavirus support" *The Guardian Australia*. 30 April 2020. Available [here](#).
- 47 Differences in job losses by electorate as of 28.05.20 by the Grattan Institute: [here](#).
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- 50 Information available at: <https://www.housing.vic.gov.au/help-renting/rentrelief>.
- 51 Information available at: <https://www.studymelbourne.vic.gov.au/help-and-support/support-for-students-coronavirus/international-student-emergency-relief-fund#>.
- 52 Information available at: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/covid-19-worker-support-payment>.
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- 54 AHURI (2020) *Submission 139* p. 35.
- 55 Information is available at: <https://education.nsw.gov.au/news/media-releases/nsw-government-supporting-international-students-through-covid-19>.
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- 58 More information at: [www.covid19.qld.gov.au](http://www.covid19.qld.gov.au) & <https://communify.org.au/asylum-circle/>.
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- 61 See: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-05-08/making-coronavirus-messages-more-accessible-for-migrants/12214956>
- 62 See: <https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/Public+Content/SA+Health+Internet/Health+services/Refugee+Health+Service/>
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