

**Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash
Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business
Senator for Western Australia**

3 April 2020

**Weekly WRAP-UP
Covid-19**

UPDATE ON COMMERCIAL TENANCIES

National Cabinet has today made further progress on the issue of commercial tenancies.

They have agreed that a mandatory code of conduct guided by certain principles will be developed and subsequently legislated by State and Territory Governments to apply for tenancies where the tenant is eligible for the Commonwealth Government's JobKeeper assistance and is a small- or medium-sized enterprise (less than \$50 million turnover).

The principles that guide the code will be:

- a. Where it can, rent should continue to be paid, and where there is financial distress as a result of COVID-19 (for example, the tenant is eligible for assistance through the JobKeeper program), tenants and landlords should negotiate a mutually agreed outcome
- b. There will be a proportionality to rent reductions based on the decline in turnover to ensure that the burden is shared between landlords and tenants
- c. There will be a prohibition on termination of leases for non-payment of rent (lockouts and eviction)
- d. There will be a freeze on rent increases (except for turnover leases)
- e. There will be a prohibition on penalties for tenants who stop trading or reduce opening hours
- f. There will be a prohibition on landlords passing land tax to tenants (if not already legislated)
- g. There will be a prohibition on landlords charging interest on unpaid rent
- h. There will be a prohibition on landlords from making a claim to a bank guarantee or security deposit for non-payment of rent
- i. Ensure that any legislative barriers or administrative hurdles to lease extensions are removed (so that a tenant and landlord could agree a rent waiver in return for a lease extension)

For landlords and tenants that sign up to the code of conduct, States and Territories have agreed to look at providing the equivalent of at least a three month land tax waiver and three month land tax deferral on application for eligible landowners, with jurisdictions to continue to monitor the situation. Landlords must pass on the benefits of such moves to the tenants.

In cases where parties have signed to the code of conduct, the ability for tenants to terminate leases as mentioned in the National Cabinet Statement on 29 March 2020 will not apply. Mediation will be provided as needed through existing State and Territory mechanisms.

The proposed code of conduct will be discussed at the next meeting of the National Cabinet on Tuesday 7 April.

CORONAVIRUS BUSINESS SUPPORT

At www.business.gov.au we have a team of dedicated customer representatives who can help you if your business has been affected by the coronavirus. The dedicated team are available between 7.00am – 9.00pm across Australia, seven days a week.

Call 13 28 46, send them an email or use webchat on the website.

LAUNCH OF JOBS HUB

The Morrison Government has launched a new Jobs Hub, supporting businesses and those Australians looking for work. The Jobs Hub helps Australians looking for work find advertised vacancies.

An up to date list of a selection of businesses and organisations that are currently hiring, and how to contact them, can be found at: www.dese.gov.au/covid-19/jobs-hub

While many businesses have been adversely affected by COVID-19 and are reducing their workforces, there are some areas of the economy which have an increased demand for workers. This includes jobs in health and care sectors, transport and logistics, some areas of retail, mining and mining services, manufacturing, agriculture and government sectors, among others.

In addition, employers who are hiring and want support to connect with potential candidates can also contact the Department of Education, Skills and Employment at workforce@dese.gov.au to be connected directly with businesses reducing their workforces; and the employment services network to source suitable candidates.

RELIEF PACKAGE FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Around one million families are set to receive free child care during the coronavirus pandemic under a plan from the Morrison Government that will help deliver hip pocket relief and help the early childhood education and care sector make it through to the other side of this crisis.

Under the plan, the Government will pay 50% of the sector's fee revenue up to the existing hourly rate cap based on a point in time before parents started withdrawing their children in large numbers, but only so long as services remain open and do not charge families for care.

The funding will apply from 6 April 2020 based on the number of children who were in care during the fortnight leading into 2 March, whether or not they are attending services.

Child care services seeking health and situation information about COVID-19 should contact the 24/7 National Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080. Information is also available from <https://www.dese.gov.au/news/coronavirus-covid-19>

GENERAL INFORMATION

For more information on the JobKeeper Payment visit:

<https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-04/Fact sheet supporting businesses.pdf>

Employers Factsheet: <https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-04/Fact sheet Info for Employers.pdf>

Employees Factsheet: <https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-04/Fact sheet Info for Employees.pdf>

The Australian Government has released a Coronavirus app and Whatsapp channel.

The App is available on both Android and iPhones. To access the Whatsapp channel, you can go to the website here: aus.gov.au/whatsapp

For school closures (government and non-government) please refer to state and territory education authorities that can be found here: <https://www.dese.gov.au/news/coronavirus-covid-19#schools>.

For more information on Coronavirus and the Government's response, please visit: www.treasury.gov.au/coronavirus or www.australia.gov.au.

Alternatively you can contact the business.gov.au support line at 13 28 46.

Regards

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