

# Help for temporary migrants in Victoria

[www.redcross.org.au/vicrelief](http://www.redcross.org.au/vicrelief)  
1800 855 240



## EXTREME HARDSHIP SUPPORT PROGRAM NEWSLETTER – JANUARY 2021

### Financial support for people who cannot access commonwealth income support

#### *Happy New year 2021!*

*It is with great thanks to the Victoria Government and DHSS team that we are excited to announce the continuation of the Extreme Hardship Program into 2021 and new changes in the eligibility criteria to include more vulnerable people who are impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. We continue to thank program implementing partners, over 700 stakeholders, DHSS, Red Cross and BSL teams for their tireless work in ensuring vulnerable people access the support.*

#### **Heartfelt message from EHSP applicant and family**



*Happy New Year 2021! May you have a healthy & prosperous year ahead!*

*Thank you for being one of those rare people who are willing to go that extra mile for us and for supporting us in everyway all though our hard times. We hope you know how much we appreciate you, how grateful we are for your kindness, and how deeply your thoughtfulness and consideration have touched us!*

*Love - Maric & family*

## Testimonials

Applicants shared the impact of the EHSP in their lives during the Covid pandemic;

*"I can't express it but today I have only \$9 but now my account \$2400 it so so much help for me and my babies thanks a great help for me ."*

*"When I lost my job I was scared for my children for my wife, then we had not food, we could pay the rent, but with your support we have a little money and less rent to pay. I can now look for a job."*

*"I could not understand how to do everything to get the money but with the casework support provided (by BSL) this was easier."*

*"Before I received the money I was crying all the time, I cried to you, but now I feel a little hope."*

## Background

The Extreme Hardship Support Program provides emergency financial assistance to people who are not eligible for Commonwealth Government income support. It is for people on temporary and provisional visas and undocumented migrants. It is available if you have zero or very limited savings, income or community support to help pay for food, medicine and bills during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The program started in July 2020.

It is Victorian Government assistance, delivered by Red Cross. The Brotherhood of St Laurence supports a Network of community organisations to identify and support eligible people to apply.

## Program extension and new changes on eligibility

- ◆ The Extreme Hardship Support Program continues to be available to assist people experiencing hardship due the coronavirus pandemic. It is expected to finish some time before June 2021.
- ◆ From 1 January 2021, all international students experiencing financial hardship can apply, even if they previously received assistance through the International Student Emergency Relief Fund (ISERF). This also includes international students whose applications were previously declined because they had received ISERF.

## Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must meet all of the following;

- ◆ live in Victoria
- ◆ be unable to access Commonwealth income support (including JobKeeper, Job Seeker and SRSS)
- ◆ have zero or very limited income, savings or community support
- ◆ be a temporary or provisional visa holder, or undocumented migrant

## Supporting evidence to prepare before you start your application

### A. Evidence of your current visa status

- ◆ passport number, visa grant number or Immi card number
- ◆ if you are uncertain, please leave the visa fields blank or select 'uncertain' and Red Cross will call you to discuss. Red Cross does not share personal or visa information with the government

### B. Evidence of financial hardship

- ◆ all adult members of the family must submit all current bank statements dating back one month from the date of application

- ◆ if you have joint accounts or regular transfers to other bank accounts you will need to provide bank statements for those accounts
- ◆ screenshots are acceptable only if they show your name, account number and address

If you do not have a bank account or any of the other details listed above, please call Red Cross on **1800 855 240** to talk about alternatives. Red Cross will not report personal or visa information to the government.

### Submit your application via

- ◆ the Red Cross website <https://www.redcross.org.au/vicrelief> or
- ◆ a dedicated phoneline: **1800 855 240**.

### When to apply

You can apply anytime. If you need help, apply as soon as you can. The program is available to assist people experiencing hardship due the coronavirus pandemic. It is expected to finish sometime before June 2021.

### How much money you will receive

- ◆ From 1 October 2020 a single person can receive up to \$800 for their first application and may be able to apply for another payment after two months if they are still experiencing financial hardship. Families may receive more, based on the number of people in the family and individual circumstances.
- ◆ In October 2020, the Victorian Government doubled the payment from \$400 to \$800 For more information on the program and other Covid-19 support services see the Q&As and Community service provider fact sheet on the DHSS Website: [Fact Sheet and Q&A](#)

Over 20,000 applicants have been supported since the program started in July 2020.

### Links to other available support

- ◆ Getting tested: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/getting-tested>. Testing is free even if you do not have insurance or Medicare, and you will not be asked about your visa status.
- ◆ Finding a location to get tested: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/where-get-tested-covid-19>
- ◆ Isolation payment: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/employee-isolation-payment-covid-19>
- ◆ Mental health support for temporary visas holders, including international students: [www.partnersinwellbeing.org.au](http://www.partnersinwellbeing.org.au) or **1300 375 330**
- ◆ Foodbank International Students Pop up store: <https://www.foodbank.org.au/students/?state=vic> or <https://www.studymelbourne.vic.gov.au/news-updates/free-groceries-for-all-international-students>

For Extreme Hardship Program information sessions and updates, contact Brotherhood of St Laurence on **(03) 9422 5650** or email Multicultural Communities Team (MCT) reception on [MCT.Reception@bsl.org.au](mailto:MCT.Reception@bsl.org.au)