



# Enhanced social security safety net

## JobSeeker Payment and other working age payments

*From 1 April 2021, a series of permanent changes has ensured job seekers have the best opportunity to secure employment.*

### 1. Increasing the rate of working age payments and the income free area for working age payments

From 1 April 2021, the rate of working age payments increased by \$50 a fortnight. This rate increase applies to the following payments:

- JobSeeker Payment
- Youth Allowance (including Youth Disability Support Pension)
- Parenting Payment
- Austudy
- ABSTUDY (Living Allowance)
- Special Benefit
- Partner Allowance
- Widow Allowance
- Farm Household Allowance, and
- Department of Veterans' Affairs Education Scheme.

The rate increase benefits around 1.9 million recipients, as of April 2021.

From 1 April 2021, the income free area for JobSeeker Payment, Youth Allowance (other) and Parenting Payment (Partnered) and related payments was permanently increased to \$150 per fortnight. These changes allow payment recipients to keep more of what they earn while receiving income support.

## 2. Strengthening mutual obligation requirements

Stronger mutual obligation requirements have been introduced to ensure job seekers continue to be engaged with the labour market, and are better supported to connect to employment, as our nation continues to recover from the economic challenges of COVID-19.

**From March 2021** – job seekers are expected to engage in compulsory face-to-face contact with service providers, where it is safe to do so.

**From April 2021** – job seekers in jobactive, DES and Online Employment Services are required to search for up to 15 jobs per month (an increase from eight per month, as introduced in September 2020).

**From 1 July 2021** – the minimum job search requirement for job seekers in jobactive, DES and Online Employment Services returned to the pre-COVID-19 requirement of up to 20 job searches per month.

**From October 2021** – job seekers will be required to participate in an activity for up to eight weeks, after six months in a service. To meet this requirement, job seekers can undertake short training courses or engage in activities such as a work experience placement, in addition to their job search.

**Also from October 2021** – job seekers in the Online Employment Services will be required to complete their Career Profile as part of the process of receiving their income support after claim, and will be required to review their profile every six months.

Other changes relating to strengthening mutual obligation requirements include:

- Job search requirements are now subject to increased monitoring to ensure job search efforts are genuine and appropriate.
- Established 6 April 2021, the Employer Reporting Line helps connect employers with local employment service providers or other departmental resources if they are experiencing difficulty in hiring staff. It also allows employers to report when a job seeker has not been genuine in their search for work. Existing safeguards will ensure job seekers are able to refuse work that is unsafe or exploitative.

## 3. Conclusion of some temporary measures

The following temporary measures ceased on 30 June 2021:

- The extension of eligibility to those self-isolating or caring for someone required to self-isolate was extended until 30 June 2021.
- The waiver of the Ordinary Waiting Period was extended for all payments until 30 June 2021.
- Temporary pension portability extensions for pensioners unable to return to their usual place of residence within 26 weeks due to circumstances beyond their control was extended until 30 June 2021.

Other temporary measures not extended beyond 31 March 2021:

- The partner income test taper rate reverted to 60 cents for every dollar above the partner income free area.
- The waiver of the Seasonal Work Preclusion Period ceased.
- The waiver of the Newly Arrived Residents' Waiting Period (NARWP) ceased. A person who received payment while the NARWP was waived was taken to have been serving the NARWP during that time and this period counts towards the completion of the NARWP.

- The waiver of the requirement to provide verification of relationship status when claiming payment ceased.
- The temporarily increased grace periods for Mobility Allowance ceased.