



JOBKEEPER INCOME SUBSIDY A MEAA Fact Sheet

On March 30, the Federal Government announced a new JobKeeper payment, following loud and united advocacy from the union movement.

At a basic level, the scheme works by providing \$1500 (before tax) per fortnight to eligible employers, to pass onto eligible employees directly, rather than requiring people to go through Services Australia (Centrelink). The scheme is currently set to operate for six months only.

The following information provides a general guide as to how this will work for some of our members. MEAA is still in active talks with the ACTU and the government as to how this will apply for those in certain freelancer employment arrangements and we will keep you updated as we learn more.

Eligibility for the payment

To receive the payment, both you and your employer must meet certain eligibility criteria.

Eligible employers

Eligible employers are businesses (including companies, partnerships, trusts and sole traders), not-for-profits and charities:

- With a turnover of less than \$1 billion that have lost 30% or more of their revenue compared to a comparable period a year ago; or
- With a turnover of greater than \$1 billion or more, who have had a 50% or greater reduction in revenue compared to a comparable period a year ago.

Eligibility - Full-time and Part-time employees

You must have been employed by an eligible employer at March 1, 2020, and be over the age of 16. You do not have to have been employed for 12 months.

Eligibility - Casual employees

You must be a long-term regular casual employed by an eligible employer. A long-term regular casual, according to the government, is a casual employee who has been employed on a regular basis for longer than twelve months as at March 1, 2020. MEAA is currently advocating for 'regular' to be clarified, and for the period of eligible casual work to be significantly reduced from the current 12 month requirement.

Need help or advice? Contact MEAA Member Central: 1300 656 513 | aid@meaa.org

Eligibility - Sole traders/freelancers

Self-employed individuals will be eligible to receive the JobKeeper payment where they have suffered or expect to suffer a 30% decline in turnover relative to a comparable period a year ago (of at least a month).

Businesses without employees will need to provide an ABN for their business, nominate an individual to receive the payment and provide that individual's Tax File Number and provide a declaration as to their recent business activity. People who are self-employed will need to provide a monthly update to the ATO to declare their continued eligibility for the payments. Payment will be made monthly to the individual's bank account.

MEAA is aware of many workers in our industry who operate as freelancers without an ABN. We are urgently seeking clarity around this arrangement from the government and advocating for all freelancers to be included.

Frequently asked questions

How does it work?

Employers must elect to participate in the scheme. They will need to make an application to the ATO and provide supporting information demonstrating a downturn in their business. In addition, employers must report the number of eligible employees employed by the business on a monthly basis.

MEAA will be contacting some employers over the next few days to seek clarity about which employers are applying.

You can also ask your employer directly, and if you have any questions arising out of their response, you can contact your union for assistance.

What if I earn less (or more) than \$1500 per fortnight normally?

The employer must pay eligible employees at minimum \$1500 per fortnight before tax. This is a flat rate. Therefore some employees, particularly part-time and casuals may receive more than their ordinary pay. The employer may top up the \$1,500 payment if you would normally receive more than this amount per fortnight.

What if I'm on a visa?

You must be either an Australian citizen, a holder of a permanent visa, a protected special category visa, a non-protected special category visa who has been residing continually in Australia for 10 years or more, or a New Zealander on a special category (subclass 444) visa to be eligible.

If you are a union member based in NSW, and have questions about your visa arising out of changes to your work MEAA can refer to you to the Unions NSW Visa Assist program for free legal advice on immigration matters. Contact MEAA Member Central for a referral.

What if I am a casual who has worked less than 12 months?

Under current government policy, you would not be eligible for the JobKeeper payment. However, the government had stated that it may change the criteria as the COVID-19 situation develops. MEAA is continuing to advocate for this requirement to be changed.

You may be eligible for different assistance from Services Australia (Centrelink) including the JobSeeker payment.

What if I was stood down as a result of COVID-19?

If you have been stood-down, but are eligible for the JobKeeper payment then you will receive it, even though you are not working.

What if I was dismissed or made redundant as a result of COVID-19?

If you were employed on March 1, 2020, but have subsequently had your employment terminated, you may be able to get re-engaged by that employer, and receive the JobKeeper payment. Contact MEAA Member Central for assistance if you have been terminated but you think your employer would be eligible for the payment.

What if I have applied to receive the JobSeeker payment (Newstart) from Services Australia (Centrelink)? Can I get both?

MEAA's understanding is that you cannot receive the JobSeeker payment (Newstart), and the JobKeeper payment simultaneously.

If you have tried to access the JobSeeker payment because you have been stood down or had your hours reduced, and you are eligible to receive the JobKeeper payment, you should advise Services Australia (Centrelink) of your change in circumstances over the phone or the internet.

What if I'm employed by multiple businesses?

Only one employer will be eligible to receive the payment. You need to notify your primary employer that they are your primary employer, and that they should claim the JobKeeper Payment on your behalf. Generally speaking, your primary employer will be the employer that you claim the tax free threshold from.

What about fixed term contracts, for example a six week event, where the event has been delayed indefinitely?

MEAA is seeking clarity from the government and employer bodies about these circumstances, which particularly affect our crew, cast and musician members in live performance and screen. We will keep you informed once we have further information.

What if the contract (Run of a Play or fixed term) has been signed but was not set to commence until April or later?

MEAA is seeking clarity from the government and employer bodies about these circumstances. We will keep you informed once we have further information.

What if I am both self-employed and eligible for the JobKeeper payment through an employer?

MEAA is seeking clarity from the government and employer bodies about what you should do in these circumstances. MEAA's understanding is that you can claim through either your own business or through an employer but not both. You should seek advice from an accountant or the ATO about the method that is best for you. We will keep you informed once we have further information.

When does the payment kick in?

The subsidy starts on March 30, 2020, with the first payments to be received by employers in the first week of May. Businesses (including self-employed individuals) can register their interest on the ATO website.

How is the payment made?

You will receive payment from your employer in the course of normal payroll processes. However, your employer will be paid the JobKeeper payment by the ATO.

What about superannuation?

If you previously earned less than \$1500 per fortnight (pre-tax), and as a result of JobKeeper, you now receive a greater amount, your employer has the discretion as to whether they pay superannuation on the additional sum you receive.

What if I am not eligible for the JobKeeper payment?

You may still be eligible for the JobSeeker payment (formerly Newstart), or for other assistance from Services Australia.



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