

22 April 2020

Peter Gutwein, Premier

Support for Temporary Visa Holders

The Tasmanian Government’s number one priority is to keep Tasmanians safe from coronavirus and we will also not turn our back on temporary visa holders in our State.

We understand there are a significant number of temporary visa holders in Tasmania who have lost their jobs due to the restrictions in place to protect Tasmanians, and we know they are experiencing hardship and income loss as a result.

We have an estimated 26,000 temporary visa holders in Tasmania including students, fruit pickers and skilled workers such as chefs and health workers. In some cases due to business closures and the restrictions we have in place their incomes have now been stopped or have been severely curtailed.

Whilst not all temporary visa holders are in this position a number are and therefore to ensure temporary visa holders are also supported at this time, I am announcing a four step process to assist those who are affected.

Firstly we will immediately extend the eligibility for Pandemic Isolation Assistance Grants, 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.

Secondly, we will provide additional funding to non-government organisations to provide additional emergency relief and assistance where required.

Thirdly, whilst many of these visa holders will be unable to return to their home country due to border restrictions this is not the case in every circumstance, and for those whose country is safe to return to we will 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.

Further, we will work with industry sectors or employers who want to retain their employees because of their specialist skills in the State for when their business is able to start up again and provide additional support in partnership with them so that we don’t lose skilled workers that we need.

Up to $3 million will be allocated towards this initiative

We know that many Tasmanian businesses have benefited from employing temporary skilled visa holders, and those on other types of temporary visas also make a significant contribution to our economy, particularly to the tourism and education sectors.

The impacts of coronavirus have been widespread and there are many people doing it tough right now. We are committed to further consultation with key industry sectors to determine if there are any additional needs, because we strongly believe the support we provide to temporary workers and international students now will directly affect how these sectors recover post-pandemic.

For information on emergency support, such as the Pandemic Isolation Assistance Grants, visit: [www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au/stimulus-and-support/household/emergency-support-for-vulnerable-tasmanians](http://www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au/stimulus-and-support/household/emergency-support-for-vulnerable-tasmanians)..

To register your interest in support to return to your country of origin, call the public health hotline on 1800 671 738 by 23 May 2020.