

Workers email from Erik Locke, CEO

I want to reassure you that Incolink is continuing to support you during these uncertain times.

The building and construction industry is continuing to operate as normal, and until advised by Government, work will be able to continue.

I'd like to outline the support available to you, the new COVID-19 payment that will be available to eligible workers at the end of the week, as well as changes to our operations largely to move us to online and phone only.

Ending a worker's employment affects your access to insurance and other benefits. If employers do not have work or are unable to continue operations due to a shutdown we have informed them that they can consider standing down and not terminating workers.

The support available to workers (in addition to Government support below) is:

- Any long service leave you have and can access through Coinvest
<https://www.coinvest.com.au/>
- The ability for those in hardship to draw down on their superannuation via the ATO
- Unemployment benefits enhanced under new Government arrangements
- COVID- 19 payment from Incolink- see below

Financial Support is available from the Victorian and Australian Governments

Governments have announced a range of primary measures for individuals affected by the crisis including cash payments to employers to keep the employment of apprentices.

The goal of these payments is to keep business going and keep workers employed as much as possible.

The Victorian Government has announced a \$1.7 billion jobs and economic survival package. One aspect of this package is a Jobs board for a range of paid roles helping the State at this time. You can sign up for this work at www.vic.gov.au/workingforvictoria

The Australian Government is also providing significant support including cash payments.

The ability to withdraw super, for those who are facing coronavirus-led financial hardship. Those eligible will be able to draw down \$10,000 of their super this financial year, and \$10,000 next financial year. This can be undertaken through the ATO.

An effective doubling of income support for those on the JobSeeker payment. The payment, formerly known as Newstart, will be supplemented with an additional \$550 per fortnight, bringing it to a total of \$1,100 per fortnight. This will also apply to, for example, sole traders who have found their work has dried up due to the coronavirus. The assets test and the waiting period have been abolished. The income test still applies.

If you're not currently receiving welfare, you'll need to apply and you can find out all of the information at this list <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/centrelink>

The Government has temporarily expanded eligibility for the JobSeeker and Youth Allowance payments, meaning you may be eligible if you're:

- A permanent employee who has been stood down or lost your job
- A sole trader, self-employed, a casual or contract worker whose income has reduced
- Caring for someone who's affected by coronavirus

Income testing will still apply but if you're earning less than \$1,075 a fortnight, Centrelink should approve your claim, meaning you would get the supplement.

COVID- 19 Payment

Some workers may be affected by COVI- 19 and/ or be unable to work. To be eligible for the payment, worker members must not be earning wages or income from any other source including unemployment benefits, insurance, WorkCover, statutory leave entitlement pay including sick leave and are not covered by PSLi. Those supports should therefore be your first line of economic defense, but where they are not available, Incolink's COVID-19 payments will be in place.

The payment will be \$2000, which the ATO requires us to tax at 47% and will be available to members by Friday this week. They will be claimable via Workerlink only, not the app or paper. There are strict criteria that need to be met in order to be eligible for a COVID-19 payment:

The employer must first complete a declaration via EmployerLink to confirm the worker meets the eligibility criteria;

- The worker member is not earning an income because of site closures by their employer in direct response to COVID-19; or because the worker member is required by a medical professional to self-isolate due to exposure to COVID-19 for any period prescribed by federal or state governments; and
- They are not earning wages or income from any other source including and without limitation unemployment benefits, insurance payments, WorkCover, statutory leave entitlement pay (incl sick leave) and are not covered by PSLi

Incolink will be back in touch when this payment is ready to be paid.



Incolink's operations

As I indicated on Friday there I am advising of changes to our service. While we'll continue to support you on the phone and by email our office at Pelham Street will soon close, except for a skeleton staff who can take claims.

We will continue to provide critical incident response on site, within health guidelines.

Our counselling services will also continue over the phone and by Skype.

After hours phone counselling remains available via 1300 000 129.

As previously advised, we have suspended our Incolink Bus which provides health and skin checks on site as well as Bluehats general awareness sessions on site and Bluehats training at Pelham Street in Carlton.

While COVID-19 is causing changes across society we are keeping business as usual going as much as we can. As the Government is also reviewing the situation daily things might change. Our promise to you is to stay in touch and provide updates regularly.

If you have any questions don't hesitate to contact us on 03 9639 3000 or visit us at incolink.org.au. Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn for latest updates.

If you want to speak to someone in your language you can call 1300 462 654

For general health advice on COVID- 19 you can call the Vic Government hotline on 1800 675 398 or check out their website.

I will continue to stay in touch and provide updates

Erik Locke

CEO