



# ANMF INFORMATION SHEET: RETENTION BONUS

On 20 March 2020 the Federal Government announced \$444.6m to go towards supporting Aged Care providers, residents, staff and families. As part of this support funding the government indicated that \$234.9m will be dispersed as payments to eligible workers in residential care and home care during COVID-19 to help retain them in the workforce.

**\*\*Update\*\*** On 31 August 2020 the government announced a further \$154.5m would be directed towards a third payment of the retention bonus. This payment will be based on staffing levels as at 30 November.

*Facilities are receiving financial support from the Federal Government throughout the COVID-19 crisis. If you see hours being cut, inappropriate staffing or an inadequate supply of PPE at your facility – **let your union know.***

## Applications for the AGED CARE WORKFORCE RETENTION BONUS closed on 14 August 2020

### Retention Bonus

The aged care retention bonus will be paid as follows:

- Eligible residential care workers will receive up to \$800 before tax, per quarter, for three quarters.
- Eligible home care workers will receive up to \$600 before tax, per quarter, for three quarters.

**\*\*note:** *the retention bonus was originally announced as an after-tax payment. This position has since been reneged on by government with the payment now being considered as income and subject to income tax.*

### How will I receive the payment?

Employers (i.e. approved aged care providers and agencies who provide aged care staff) must apply for a grant to receive the payment on behalf of all their eligible workers.

It is then the responsibility of the employer to pass on the payment to eligible staff.

Employers are required to,

- maintain evidence that the payment has been provided to the eligible worker, and;
- keep the records that were used in determining the grant application amount and evidence related to the claim.

Employers may be audited,

- The payment will be subjected to an active audit program which will be a combination of random and targeted audits.
- Targeted audits will, in part, be based on analysis of complaints or feedback.

If you feel you have received an incorrect payment,

- **Let your union know!**
- The government suggest you meet with your employer and provide evidence for hours worked in the four weeks prior to application.
- The government has also implemented a complaint handling process, with further detail provided below.

Contract/Agency staff not directly employed by the aged care provider are included in the payment however the Agency, and not the provider, must make the application.

If you change jobs before the second payment is made, it is intended that you will receive the second payment from your new employer.

If you are eligible for both payments then you can receive both this payment and the JobKeeper payment.

### **When will the payment be made?**

The first payment to employers was expected to be made in July 2020 and the second payment is expected to be made in September 2020. The delivery of the payment will be dependent on the time your employer made an application, with earlier applications paid first.

On average it is expected payments will be made four weeks after an application has been submitted. Employers are required to make payment to staff within two pay periods from the time they receive the payment.

The announced third payment will be based on staffing as at 30 November, it has not been specified when this payment will be made.

### **If you have a problem with your payment**

It's okay to ask about your payment if you think it is wrong, or you haven't got a payment and believe you should.

#### Step 1. Talk to your employer

It is important that you talk to your employer first. In most cases, they can resolve the problem quickly because they have all the information.

If you are not sure how to talk to your employer, it may help to:

- write an email or letter to your employer to explain the problem (this also means you have a written record)
- focus on the facts
- ask for help from a friend or family member

If needed, you can use the [Translating and Interpreting Service](#) or the [National Relay Service](#).

If you feel you can't talk to your employer, go to step 2 below.

#### Step 2. Contact the Department of Health

Fill in the [Aged Care Workforce Retention Payment enquiry form](#) with as much information as you can. In the form, tell them if they can contact your employer.

Send the completed form to [Aged.Care.Workforce.Retention.Payment.Enquiries@health.gov.au](mailto:Aged.Care.Workforce.Retention.Payment.Enquiries@health.gov.au). You will receive an automatic reply to confirm they have received your form.

If the Department of Health cannot help you, they will let you know straight away. If they can help you, they will:

1. contact your employer, if you let them, to find out more (they will tell you when they do this)
2. look at all the information from you and your employer and make a decision
3. let you know the outcome (if they contacted your employer, the timing of this will depend on when the employer responds)

If the evidence shows wrongdoing by your employer, the Department of Health may take audit action. If this happens, they may not tell you about the outcome.

If you are not happy with the Department of Health's decision or the way they handled your enquiry, you can [submit a complaint](#) or [contact the Commonwealth Ombudsman](#).

If you are an ANMF member you can also contact your Branch for assistance.

## How do I know if I'm eligible to receive the payment?

### Residential Aged Care

'Direct care' workers in residential care facilities are eligible. Direct care workers are defined by government as personal care workers, enrolled nurses, registered nurses and allied health who are working in residential care. To be eligible for the payment these staff are required to be directly in contact with the resident to assist with dressing, showering, wound management, medication, movement, feeding, hygiene and grooming or similar direct care activities.

### In-home Care

Workers in Home Care are eligible if they provide clinical care, personal care (showering, dressing, etc), cleaning, home support activities and meal preparation, social support, shopping, community access and transport, allied health or respite.

\*\*Note: In both instances above the government considers an allied health worker to be eligible if they are an audiologist, chiropractor, diabetes educator, dietitian, exercise physiologist, mental health worker, occupational therapist, osteopath, physiotherapist, podiatrist, psychologist or speech pathologist. Their services must also be delivered face-to-face and not by telehealth or any form of indirect contact.

### Other eligibility criteria

Full Time, Part Time and Casual Staff are eligible.

Payments will be made on a pro-rata basis and so part-time workers will receive a fractional payment in-line with the percentage of full-time work they completed. The payment is based on hours worked in the four weeks before the application date. Where a worker has been employed for less than four weeks, they are still eligible. Their payment will be based on their average hours in a week since their employment commenced. Further detail is provided in the table below.

Hours	Percentage of payment received
Between 3 and 7.5 hours per week	20%
More than 7.5 and up to 15 hours per week	40%
More than 15 and up to 22.5 hours per week	60%
More than 22.5 and up to 30 hours per week	80%
More than 30 hours per week	100%

As the payment amount differs between those working in Residential Aged Care and Home Care, workers can expect to receive a before tax (gross) payment in July and September in-line with the following,

<b>Before tax (gross) payment to eligible workers (\$ per payment)</b>	<b>Between 3 and 7.5 hours per week</b>	<b>More than 7.5 and up to 15 hours per week</b>	<b>More than 15 and up to 22.5 hours per week</b>	<b>More than 22.5 and up to 30 hours per week</b>	<b>More than 30 hours per week</b>
<b>Residential Aged Care</b>	\$160	\$320	\$480	\$640	\$800
<b>Home Care</b>	\$120	\$240	\$360	\$480	\$600

Staff must be employed by the grant recipient (their employer) at the time the application is made, i.e. mid-June 2020 and for the second payment, be employed at August 31st 2020. Eligibility for the third payment will be based on staffing as at 30 November 2020.

Eligible State/Local Government employees in commonwealth funded (under the Aged Care Act) residential or home care are included.

Employees of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care (NATSI) Program and Multi-Purpose Services (MPS) are included.

### **Sick Leave**

Fulltime and part time Eligible Aged Care Workers that take paid or unpaid leave of absence due to self-isolation, sick leave or approved personal leave are eligible for payment of the retention bonus.

The amount of the retention bonus in respect to those employees is based on the number of hours they would usually be employed to work over the four-week period preceding the applicable Census Date.

If an eligible worker is on approved paid leave, these hours contribute to the eligible hours.

Casual Eligible Aged Care Workers who would usually be rostered on or offered work during the four-week period preceding the applicable Census Date (but for their being unavailable due to self-isolation, quarantine or illness) are eligible for payment of the retention bonus.

The amount of the grant in respect of those employees is based on the number of hours they would usually be employed to work over the four-week period preceding the applicable Census Date, based on reasonable estimates (such as rosters).

### **Who can apply for the grant?**

Approved Residential Aged Care Providers, Approved Home Care Providers, Approved state/local government residential or home care providers, Approved National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program providers, Approved Multi-Purpose Services (MPS) providers and Agencies who employ staff working for residential or home care providers (the agency, not the provider, applies) may apply for the grant.

Commonwealth funded programs including the Commonwealth Home Support Program, Short Term Restorative Care and Transition Care are excluded from the grant.

Although two separate payments will be delivered, employers are only required to apply for the grant once.

### **When is an employer required to make a variation for the second payment in September?**

The payment an employer receives for their employees in September will be the same as the payment made in July unless your employer submits a variation. The criteria for when an employer must submit a variation is outlined below.

An employer should submit a variation when,

- There has been an increase in funding (by application) for total hours staff have worked from the time of the original application (for example through increased average hours of existing staff or additional staff)

**\*\*Note: this variation is not compulsory! Ensure your employer is aware they must submit a variation if total hours staff have worked at the time of application exceeds the total hours staff worked at the time of initial submission.**

An employer must submit a variation when,

- There is a decrease of more than 10% in funding (by application) for total hours staff have worked from the time of the original application (for example through decreased average hours or staff have left)

**\*\*Note: this variation is compulsory, however if the decrease is less than 10% your employer is expected to use the remaining funds to promote workforce retention.**

## **Government resources**

The government fact sheets relating to the retention bonus are located here:

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/workforce-retention-bonus-grant-residential-care-and-home-care>

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/aged-care-workforce-retention-bonus-frequently-asked-questions-for-residential-and-in-home-aged-care-workers>

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/aged-care-workforce-retention-bonus-frequently-asked-questions-for-residential-and-in-home-aged-care-providers-and-agencies>