

**Date: 06/1/2021**

## Continued impact of COVID-19

Noting the continued impact of COVID-19 on specific communities, Provider staff must ensure job seekers'/participants' Job/Participation Plans are tailored and reflect their individual personal circumstances and local labour markets. This includes any health advice and/or restrictions due to COVID-19. It's critical that Job/Participation Plans are tailored and appropriate to ensure any requirements being set are achievable.

In setting requirements and assessing whether there is a valid reason for a mutual obligation failure, providers must take into account:

- advice from local health authorities including the ability for the job seeker to meet mutual obligation requirements in light of any restrictions;
- any health conditions the job seeker has or that those in their household may have;
- caring responsibilities;
- travel requirements — where the person may have to travel by public transport; and
- any other personal circumstances.

The department will continue to monitor the appropriateness of Job/Participation Plans to ensure they are tailored and suitable and review the application of penalties and suspensions applied under the Targeted Compliance Framework.

**Content Author Team:** Job Seeker Compliance    **Content Author Branch:** JS Participation & Compliance Branch

**Date: 11/1/2021**

## Supporting Greater Brisbane (Qld) through COVID-19

Mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants in Greater Brisbane, Queensland are lifted from 8 January to Sunday, 17 January 2021.

These arrangements apply over this period in the following Employment Regions for jobactive and ParentsNext:

- Brisbane South East
- Somerset
- Wivenhoe

This means that job seekers and participants residing in Greater Brisbane will not be subject to compliance action or payment suspensions if they are unable to meet requirements for this period. This will apply to both job seekers and participants with a residential address in the area or managed by a provider site located in the area.

Where job seekers and participants can, and it is safe to do so in line with health advice, they can engage with their employment service provider.

Special circumstances exemptions will continue to be available from Services Australia for job seekers and participants who require them, including for people directly impacted by COVID-19.

If you have questions or concerns about the current arrangements, please speak to your Account or Contract Manager.

**Content Author Team:** Job Seeker Compliance   **Content Author Branch:** JS Participation & Compliance Branch

**Date: 23/2/2021**

## Changes to Mutual Obligation and face-to-face Servicing Requirements

The Australian Government has announced changes to mutual obligation requirements for job seekers in specified employment services programs, including jobactive, Transition to Work and Disability Employment Services. Other changes will affect how job seekers in these programs, as well as participants in ParentsNext, will receive services.

Please note these changes do not take immediate effect.

- On 9 March 2021, face-to-face servicing with providers will recommence subject to local health advice and state and territory COVID-19 requirements.
- In early April 2021, the minimum number of job searches for job seekers will rise to 15, increasing to 20 jobs per month in early July 2021.

Current mutual obligation requirement arrangements remain in effect until further notice.

From the beginning of April 2021, there will be an increase in the auditing of job seekers' job search quality to identify those who are submitting non-genuine or deliberately poor-quality applications in order to meet job search targets.

Where it is identified that a job seeker is deliberately submitting non genuine or poor-quality applications, they can face consequences under the Targeted Compliance Framework (TCF), including payment penalties.

Further updates and program-specific information on the above changes to mutual obligation and servicing requirements will be made available shortly. The changes may not apply to all programs, for example, job search requirements do not apply to participants in the ParentsNext program.

The department will send an SMS directly to job seekers and participants advising them of the upcoming changes.

It is important to continue following the advice issued by the Department of Health and your State Health Authority. The mutual obligations that you require job seekers to meet must comply with this advice.

If you have questions or concerns about the current arrangements, please speak to your Account or Contract Manager.

**Content Author Team:** Job Seeker Activation Team    **Content Author Branch:** JS Participation & Compliance Branch

**Date: 03/3/2021**

## Job seeker/participant messaging on the return to face-to-face servicing

In line with the [CEO letter - Changes to Mutual Obligation and face-to-face Servicing Requirements](#) of 23 February 2021, the department is sending all job seekers/participants with Mutual Obligation Requirements an SMS and jobactive inbox message to advise on the return to face-to-face servicing from Tuesday 9 March 2021.

Messaging is being released in batches from Tuesday 2 March 2021 through to Friday 5 March 2021, by when all relevant job seekers will have been contacted.

The communications to job seekers will be supported through social media activity on the department's social media channels.

For your information, the messaging for each cohort is as follows:

Method and target cohort	Content
SMS - jobactive	From 9 March jobactive services will return to being delivered in person, where appropriate. Contact your provider or see <a href="http://jobactive.gov.au/jobseekers/inbox">jobactive.gov.au/jobseekers/inbox</a>
SMS - ParentsNext	From 9 March your ParentsNext services will return to being face to face. Please contact your provider if you have any questions
SMS – Transition to Work	Hi {{JSKR F NAME}} from 9 March 2021 you need to attend face-to-face services with your provider. See <a href="http://dese.gov.au/transition-work">dese.gov.au/transition-work</a> or talk to your provider
Inbox – jobactive	<p>{{JSKR F NAME}} from 9 March 2021, it is important that you attend appointments and activities face-to-face where your employment service provider advises this is required.</p> <p>Your provider may contact you shortly to confirm if there is anything you need to do. For more information you can contact your provider or see the updated <a href="#">Face-to-Face Factsheet online</a>.</p>

Inbox – Transition to Work	<p>Hi {{JSKR F NAME}} from 9 March 2021, you will need to attend appointments and activities (including training) face-to-face unless told not to by your provider.</p> <p>Your provider may contact you shortly to let you know if there is anything you need to do, or you can contact your provider to find out more.</p> <p>If you have a valid reason to not attend face-to-face servicing, such as a health or COVID-19 related issue, please call or email your provider.</p>
Inbox - ParentsNext	<p>{{JSKR F NAME}} from 9 March 2021, it is important that you attend appointments and activities face-to-face where your provider advises this is required.</p> <p>Your provider may contact you shortly to confirm if there is anything you need to do. For more information you can contact your provider or see the <a href="#">DESE COVID-19 information for job seekers page</a>.</p>

The following have been updated to support the return to face-to-face servicing:

- [Participant factsheet - Return to Face-to-face Servicing](#)
- [Provider factsheet - Return to Face-to-face Servicing Factsheet](#)

**Content Author Team:** Stakeholder & Contract Management Advice

**Content Author Branch:** Providers and Purchasing Branch

**Date: 30/3/2021**

## Supporting Greater Brisbane through COVID-19

Mutual obligation requirements will be lifted for job seekers and participants currently affected by the snap three-day lockdown in Greater Brisbane from **29 March 2021 to Tuesday, 6 April 2021 inclusive**.

These arrangements apply over this period for jobactive, Online Employment Services and ParentsNext.

This means that job seekers and participants residing in Ipswich, Logan, Redlands, Moreton Bay and Brisbane Local Government Areas will not be subject to compliance action or payment suspensions if they are unable to meet requirements for this period. This will apply to both job seekers and participants with a residential address in the area or managed by a provider site located in the area.

Where job seekers and participants can, and it is safe to do so in line with health advice, they can engage with their employment service provider.

During this challenging time we encourage job seekers to remain in contact with their employment services provider, to ensure they are supported to access the full range of assistance available including mental health services, if required.

Special circumstances exemptions will continue to be available from Services Australia for job seekers and participants who require them, including for people directly impacted by COVID-19.

If you have questions or concerns about the current arrangements, please speak to your Account or Contract Manager.

**Content Author Team:** Job Seeker Compliance   **Content Author Branch:** JS Participation & Compliance Branch

**Date: 27/5/2021**

## Supporting Victoria through COVID-19

Mutual obligation requirements have been suspended for job seekers and participants in Victoria. These arrangements will be in place from today Thursday, 27 May 2021 to Monday, 7 June 2021 inclusive.

These arrangements apply over this period for jobactive, Online Employment Services, ParentsNext and Disability Service Participants.

These arrangements mean that job seekers and participants residing in the Victoria will not be subject to compliance action or payment suspensions if they are unable to meet requirements for this period. This will apply to both job seekers and participants with a residential address in the area or managed by a provider site located in the area.

During this challenging time we encourage providers to remain in contact with their job seekers and participants in line with local health advice, to ensure they are supported to access the full range of assistance available including mental health services, if required.

Special circumstances exemptions will continue to be available from Services Australia for job seekers and participants who require them, including for people directly impacted by COVID-19.

If you have questions or concerns about the current arrangements, please speak to your Account or Contract Manager.

**Content Author Team:** Job Seeker Compliance   **Content Author Branch:** JS Participation & Compliance Branch

**Date: 07/6/2021**

## Update on mutual obligation requirements for Greater Melbourne and Regional Victoria

The suspension of mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants in Greater Melbourne has been extended until **Tuesday 15 June 2021** (inclusive).

These arrangements apply over this period for jobactive, Online Employment Services, ParentsNext and Disability Employment Service Participants.

The Local Government Areas in Greater Melbourne included in these arrangements are:

Banyule, Bayside, Boroondara, Brimbank, Cardinia, Casey, Darebin, Frankston, Glen Eira, Greater Dandenong, Hobsons Bay, Hume, Kingston, Knox, Manningham, Maribyrnong, Maroondah, Melbourne, Melton, Monash, Moonee Valley, Moreland, Mornington Peninsula, Nillumbik, Port Phillip, Stonnington, Whitehorse, Whittlesea, Wyndham, Yarra, Yarra Ranges.

These arrangements mean that job seekers and participants residing or serviced in affected areas will not be subject to compliance action or payment suspensions if they are unable to meet requirements for this period.

Mutual obligation requirements will return for job seekers and participants in Regional Victoria from **Tuesday 8 June 2021**. Requirements must be tailored to individual personal circumstances and delivered in line with local health advices and any restrictions.

Special circumstances exemptions continue to be available from Services Australia for job seekers and participants who require them.

If you have questions or concerns about the current arrangements, please speak to your Account or Contract Manager.

**Content Author Team:** Job Seeker Compliance   **Content Author Branch:** JS Participation & Compliance Branch



**Date: 25/6/2021**

## Increase to maximum job search requirements from 1 July 2021

As announced by the Australian Government and advised in the Department's CEO letter on 23 February 2021, job search requirements will increase from 15 per month to the pre-COVID-19 level of 20 job searches per month from 1 July 2021.

Prior to 1 July, job seekers will receive an SMS, email and Inbox message advising them that their requirements may change.

From 1 July 2021, Providers should review, discuss and if appropriate, re-negotiate Job Plans with job seekers at their next provider appointment. Providers are reminded that Job Plans, including job search requirements, must be tailored to individual job seekers' personal circumstances and the local labour market conditions.

To assist job seekers with the best chance to secure employment, improve quality job search and to reduce unnecessary burden on businesses, Providers are required to review and confirm the quality of job search efforts. When reviewing the quality of job searches, providers should ensure that the job seeker's skills and experience meet the requirements of the position and address any issues with the job seeker.

## Cessation of crediting Annual Activity Requirement hours from 1 July 2021

Since 28 September 2020, the Department has allowed providers to manually credit job seekers' Annual Activity Requirements (AAR) hours in instances where they were unable to place the job seeker into a safe and suitable activity. This temporary adjustment acknowledged the constraints on the availability of suitable activities.

From 1 July 2021 this temporary measure will cease, except in extenuating circumstances, such as sudden COVID-19 health restrictions, or where allowable under current provisions in the [Managing and Monitoring Mutual Obligation Requirements Guideline](#). This change will support job seekers in the Work for the Dole phase to upskill, gain work experience and progress towards employment.

The Department requires Providers to ensure that activities, including face-to-face delivery, are carried out in a safe manner, including having COVID-19 Safe Plans in place. Refer to the [Direction on return to Face-to-Face Service Delivery](#) for further information.

Providers should note that although Star Ratings, including the two AAR measures, were ceased, the Department will continue to monitor provider performance around timely commencement in approved activities and completion of AAR hours through other mechanisms. Further information about monitoring performance will be provided separately.

**Content Author Team:** Job Seeker Activation Team

**Content Author Branch:** JS Participation & Compliance Branch

**Date: 28/6/2021**

## Supporting New South Wales through COVID-19

Mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants affected by the lockdown and restrictions in the Local Government Areas of **City of Sydney, Waverley, Randwick, Canada Bay, Inner West, Bayside and Woollahra** are suspended from **Friday 25 June to Tuesday 13 July 2021** (inclusive).

Mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants are also suspended from **Sunday 27 June to Tuesday 13 July 2021** (inclusive) in areas under COVID-19 hotspot arrangements, including **Greater Sydney, Blue Mountains, Central Coast and Wollongong, including Shellharbour**.

These arrangements apply over these periods for jobactive, Online Employment Services, ParentsNext and Disability Employment Services.

This means that job seekers and participants residing in these areas will not be subject to compliance action or payment suspensions but should continue to check when their requirements are due or scheduled to occur after the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends. This includes Job Search Requirements. This will apply to both job seekers and participants with a residential address in the area or managed by a provider site located in the areas.

Where job seekers and participants can, and it is safe to do so in line with health advice, they can engage with their employment service provider. Please ensure the services you deliver are safe and in line with all local health advice for that area. Job seekers and participants can continue to voluntarily participate in non face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice.

Special circumstances exemptions will continue to be available from Services Australia for job seekers and participants who require them, including for people directly impacted by COVID-19.

If you have questions or concerns about the current arrangements, please speak to your Account or Contract Manager.

**Content Author Team:** Job Seeker Compliance   **Content Author Branch:** JS Participation & Compliance Branch

**Date: 30/6/2021**

## Suspension of Mutual Obligation Requirements for job seekers and participants in Queensland affected by COVID-19 lockdowns

Mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants affected by the lockdown in the Local Government Areas of Townsville, Brisbane, Gold Coast, Ipswich, Lockyer Valley, Logan, Moreton Bay, Noosa, Redland, Scenic Rim, Somerset and Sunshine Coast are suspended from **today, Wednesday 30 June to Tuesday 6 July 2021 (inclusive)**.

This arrangement applies for jobactive, Online Employment Services, ParentsNext and Disability Employment Services programs over this period.

This means that job seekers and participants residing in these areas will not be subject to compliance action or payment suspensions but should continue to check when their requirements are due or scheduled to occur after the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends. This includes Job Search Requirements. This will apply to both job seekers and participants with a residential address in the area or managed by a provider site located in the areas.

Where job seekers and participants can, and it is safe to do so in line with health advice, they can engage with their employment service provider. Please ensure the services you deliver are safe and in line with all local health advice for that area. Job seekers and participants can continue to voluntarily participate in non face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice.

Special circumstances exemptions will continue to be available from Services Australia for job seekers and participants who require them, including for people directly impacted by COVID-19.

If you have questions or concerns about the current arrangements, please speak to your Account or Contract Manager.

**Content Author Team:** Job Seeker Compliance    **Content Author Branch:** JS Participation & Compliance Branch

**Date: 30/6/2021**

## Suspension of Mutual Obligation Requirements for Job Seekers and Participants in Western Australia and the Northern Territory affected by COVID-19 lockdowns

Mutual obligation requirements for **Western Australian** job seekers and participants are suspended from **today, Tuesday 29 June to Tuesday 6 July 2021 (inclusive) in the Perth Region and Peel Region.**

Mutual obligation requirements for **Northern Territory** job seekers and participants in the Local Government Areas of the City of Darwin and **the City of Palmerston are suspended from yesterday, Monday 28 June to Tuesday 6 July 2021 (inclusive).**

This arrangement applies over this period for jobactive, Online Employment Services, ParentsNext and Disability Employment Services.

This means that job seekers and participants residing in these areas will not be subject to compliance action or payment suspensions but should continue to check when their requirements are due or scheduled to occur after the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends. This includes Job Search Requirements. This will apply to both job seekers and participants with a residential address in the area or managed by a provider site located in the areas.

Where job seekers and participants can, and it is safe to do so in line with health advice, they can engage with their employment service provider. Please ensure the services you deliver are safe and in line with all local health advice for that area. Job seekers and participants can continue to voluntarily participate in non face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice.

Special circumstances exemptions will continue to be available from Services Australia for job seekers and participants who require them, including for people directly impacted by COVID-19.

If you have questions or concerns about the current arrangements, please speak to your Account or Contract Manager.

**Content Author Team:** Job Seeker Compliance   **Content Author Branch:** JS Participation & Compliance Branch

**Date: 01/7/2021**

## **Suspension of mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants in Alice Springs affected by a COVID-19 lockdown**

Mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants affected by the lockdown in the Local Government Area of Alice Springs Town Council are suspended from **today, Thursday 1 July to Tuesday 6 July 2021 (inclusive)**.

This arrangement applies for jobactive, Online Employment Services, ParentsNext and Disability Employment Services programs over this period.

This means that job seekers and participants residing in these areas will not be subject to compliance action or payment suspensions but should continue to check when their requirements are due or scheduled to occur after the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends. This includes Job Search Requirements. This will apply to both job seekers and participants with a residential address in the area or managed by a provider site located in the areas.

Where job seekers and participants can, and it is safe to do so in line with health advice, they can engage with their employment service provider. Please ensure the services you deliver are safe and in line with all local health advice for that area. Job seekers and participants can continue to voluntarily participate in non face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice.

Special circumstances exemptions will continue to be available from Services Australia for job seekers and participants who require them, including for people directly impacted by COVID-19.

If you have questions or concerns about the current arrangements, please speak to your Account or Contract Manager.

**Content Author Team:** Job Seeker Compliance   **Content Author Branch:** JS Participation & Compliance Branch

**Date: 08/7/2021**

## Further supporting New South Wales through COVID-19

The suspension of mutual obligation requirements has been extended for New South Wales job seekers and participants affected by the lockdown and restrictions in the Local Government Areas of **Bayside, Blue Mountains, Canada Bay, Central Coast, City of Sydney, Greater Sydney, Inner West, Randwick, Shellharbour, Waverley, Wollongong and Woollahra** and will be in place until Tuesday 20 July 2021 (inclusive).

These arrangements apply over these periods for jobactive, Online Employment Services, ParentsNext and Disability Employment Services.

This means that job seekers and participants residing in these areas will not be subject to compliance action or payment suspensions. This will apply to both job seekers and participants with a residential address in the area or managed by a provider site located in the areas.

If in contact with your job seekers please advise them they should continue to check when their requirements are due or scheduled to occur after the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends. This includes Job Search Requirements.

Where job seekers and participants can, and it is safe to do so in line with health advice, they can engage with their employment service provider. Please ensure the services you deliver are safe and in line with all local health advice for that area. Job seekers and participants can continue to voluntarily participate in non face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice.

Special circumstances exemptions will continue to be available from Services Australia for job seekers and participants who require them, including for people directly impacted by COVID-19.

If you have questions or concerns about the current arrangements, please speak to your Account or Contract Manager.

**Content Author Team:** Job Seeker Compliance    **Content Author Branch:** JS Participation & Compliance Branch

**Date: 15/7/2021**

## Update on suspension of mutual obligation requirements for New South Wales

The suspension of mutual obligation requirements has been extended for New South Wales job seekers and participants affected by the lockdown and restrictions in the regions of **Bayside, Blue Mountains, Canada Bay, Central Coast, City of Sydney, Greater Sydney, Inner West, Randwick, Shellharbour, Waverley, Wollongong and Woollahra** and will be in place until Tuesday 3 August 2021 (inclusive).

These arrangements apply over these periods for jobactive, Online Employment Services, ParentsNext and Disability Employment Services.

This means that job seekers and participants residing in these areas will not be subject to compliance action or payment suspensions. This will apply to both job seekers and participants with a residential address in the area or managed by a provider site located in the areas.

If you are in contact with your job seekers please advise them they should continue to check when their requirements are due or scheduled to occur after the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends. This includes Job Search Requirements.

Where job seekers and participants can, and it is safe to do so in line with health advice, they can engage with their employment service provider. Please ensure the services you deliver are safe and in line with all local health advice for that area. Job seekers and participants can continue to voluntarily participate in non face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice.

Special circumstances exemptions will continue to be available from Services Australia for job seekers and participants who require them, including for people directly impacted by COVID-19.

If you have questions or concerns about the current arrangements, please speak to your Account or Contract Manager.

**Content Author Team:** Job Seeker Compliance   **Content Author Branch:** JS Participation & Compliance Branch

**Date: 16/7/2021**

## Temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements for Victoria

Mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants affected by the lockdown in Victoria are temporarily suspended from today and will be in place until Thursday 22 July 2021 (inclusive).

These arrangements apply over this period for jobactive, Online Employment Services, ParentsNext and Disability Employment Services.

This means that job seekers and participants residing in these areas will not be subject to compliance action or payment suspensions. This will apply to both job seekers and participants with a residential address in the area or managed by a provider site located in the areas.

If you are in contact with your job seekers, please advise them they should continue to check when their requirements **are due or scheduled to occur after** the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends. This includes Job Search Requirements.

Where job seekers and participants can, and it is safe to do so in line with health advice, they can engage with their employment service provider. Please ensure the services you deliver are safe and in line with all local health advice for that area. Job seekers and participants can continue to voluntarily participate in non face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice.

Special circumstances exemptions will continue to be available from Services Australia for job seekers and participants who require them, including for people directly impacted by COVID-19.

If you have questions or concerns about the current arrangements, please speak to your Account or Contract Manager.

**Content Author Team:** Job Seeker Compliance    **Content Author Branch:** JS Participation & Compliance Branch



**Date: 21/7/2021**

## Suspension of mutual obligation requirements SA/VIC

Mutual obligation requirements for **South Australian** job seekers and participants affected by the lockdown in South Australia are temporarily suspended from yesterday and will be in place until Tuesday 3 August 2021 (inclusive).

Current suspension of mutual obligation requirements for **Victorian** job seekers and participants have been extended and will be in place until Tuesday 3 August 2021 (inclusive).

These arrangements apply over this period for jobactive, Online Employment Services, ParentsNext and Disability Employment Services.

This means that job seekers and participants residing in these areas will not be subject to compliance action or payment suspensions. This will apply to both job seekers and participants with a residential address in the area or managed by a provider site located in the areas.

If you are in contact with your job seekers, please advise them they should continue to check when their requirements **are due or scheduled to occur after** the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends. This includes Job Search Requirements.

Where job seekers and participants can, and it is safe to do so in line with health advice, they can engage with their employment service provider. Please ensure the services you deliver are safe and in line with all local health advice for that area. Job seekers and participants can continue to voluntarily participate in non face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice.

Special circumstances exemptions will continue to be available from Services Australia for job seekers and participants who require them, including for people directly impacted by COVID-19.

If you have questions or concerns about the current arrangements, please speak to your Account or Contract Manager.

**Content Author Team:** Job Seeker Compliance   **Content Author Branch:** JS Participation & Compliance Branch

**Date: 22/7/2021**

## Suspension of mutual obligation requirements CW NSW

Mutual obligation requirements for **Central West New South Wales** job seekers and participants affected by the lockdown in the **Blayney, Cabonne and Orange Local Government Areas** are temporarily suspended from yesterday and will be in place until Tuesday 3 August 2021 (inclusive).

These arrangements apply over this period for jobactive, Online Employment Services, ParentsNext and Disability Employment Services.

This means that job seekers and participants residing in these areas will not be subject to compliance action or payment suspensions. This will apply to both job seekers and participants with a residential address in the area or managed by a provider site located in the areas.

If you are in contact with your job seekers, please advise them they should continue to check when their requirements **are due or scheduled to occur after** the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends. This includes Job Search Requirements.

Where job seekers and participants can, and it is safe to do so in line with health advice, they can engage with their employment service provider. Please ensure the services you deliver are safe and in line with all local health advice for that area. Job seekers and participants can continue to voluntarily participate in non face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice.

Special circumstances exemptions will continue to be available from Services Australia for job seekers and participants who require them, including for people directly impacted by COVID-19.

If you have questions or concerns about the current arrangements, please speak to your Account or Contract Manager.

**Content Author Team:** Job Seeker Compliance    **Content Author Branch:** JS Participation & Compliance Branch

## **COVID-19 Flexibilities for jobactive and NEST Employment Outcomes**

Providers are reminded that jobactive and NEST Outcome flexibilities introduced in March 2020 are still available to providers in areas impacted by COVID-19.

The following arrangements remain in place as outlined in the *COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions for Employment Services Providers* document on the Provider Portal.

### **Flexible Documentary evidence requirements for PSVOs (Pay Slip Verified Outcomes)**

- Where the Provider is satisfied that the Participant has worked enough to achieve Outcome requirements, but has no pay slip because of COVID-19, a signed and dated written statement (or email) from the Participant or employer will be accepted.
- This document must include all of the information outlined in the Documentary Evidence section of the jobactive Vacancies and Outcomes Guideline or NEST - Enhanced Services Provider Payments and Vacancies Guideline.
- The documentary evidence must be uploaded onto ESSWeb at the time of claim.

### **Permissible Breaks for Employment Outcomes affected by COVID-19**

- Under normal circumstances, two Permissible Breaks are allowed across the 4, 12 and 26 Week Outcome period, where a participant returns to the same job.
- For Outcomes impacted by COVID-19, providers may access an additional six Permissible Breaks where a participant:
  - Was in isolation or quarantine and unable to work, and/or
  - Has lost their job or is working reduced hours, and needs to find a new or supplementary job.
- A maximum of eight Permissible Breaks may be available as per the conditions above.

### **Documentary Evidence requirements for Permissible Breaks in relation to COVID-19**

- The Provider must retain Documentary Evidence of the Permissible Break, in the form of a signed and dated written statement (or email) from the Employer or Participant confirming:
  - the Permissible Break in Employment, including the reason (e.g. loss of employment/reduced hours/unable to work due to COVID-19 Pandemic),
  - the duration of the Permissible Break, including the start and end dates, and
  - that the Participant is employed in the same position following the Permissible Break, or has taken up new employment with a different employer following the Permissible Break.

### **Education Outcomes (jobactive only)**

- Where a participant cannot continue their course due to closures of educational institutions, providers should hold off claiming Outcomes until requirements are met.

- If the participant has completed their requirements but the provider is unable to obtain documentary evidence due to the closure of an institution, and email or statement from the participant indicating they have completed course or participant requirements will be accepted.

**Site:**

**Content Author Team:** jobactive Operations and Outcomes    **Content Author**

**Branch:** Assessment, Services and Outcomes Branch

**Date: 30/7/2021**

## Update on suspension of mutual obligation requirements NSW

The suspension of mutual obligation requirements has been extended for New South Wales job seekers and participants affected by the lockdown and restrictions in the areas of **Greater Sydney, Blue Mountains, Central Coast, Wollongong, and Shellharbour** and will be in place until Tuesday 31 August 2021 (inclusive).

These arrangements apply over these periods for jobactive, Online Employment Services, ParentsNext and Disability Employment Services.

This means that job seekers and participants residing in these areas will not be subject to compliance action or payment suspensions. This will apply to both job seekers and participants with a residential address in these areas or managed by a provider site located in the areas.

If you are in contact with your job seekers, please advise them they should continue to check when their requirements are due or scheduled to occur after the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends. This includes job search requirements.

Where job seekers and participants can, and it is safe to do so in line with health advice, they can engage with their employment service provider. Please ensure the services you deliver are safe and in line with all local health advice for that area. Job seekers and participants can continue to voluntarily participate in non face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice.

Special circumstances exemptions will continue to be available from Services Australia for job seekers and participants who require them, including for people directly impacted by COVID-19.

If you have questions or concerns about the current arrangements, please speak to your Account or Contract Manager.

**Content Author Team:** Job Seeker Compliance

**Content Author Branch:** JS Participation & Compliance Branch

**Date: 02/8/2021**

## Temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements for South-East Queensland

Mutual obligation requirements for **South-East Queensland** job seekers and participants affected by the lockdown in the **Brisbane, Moreton Bay, Gold Coast, Ipswich, Lockyer Valley, Logan City, Noosa, Redlands, Scenic Rim, Somerset, and Sunshine Coast Local Government Areas** are temporarily suspended from 31 July and will be in place until Thursday 12 August 2021 (inclusive).

These arrangements apply over this period for jobactive, Online Employment Services, ParentsNext and Disability Employment Services.

This means that job seekers and participants residing in these areas will not be subject to compliance action or payment suspensions. This will apply to both job seekers and participants with a residential address in the area or managed by a provider site located in the areas.

If you are in contact with your job seekers, please advise them they should continue to check when their requirements **are due or scheduled to occur after** the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends. This includes Job Search Requirements. It is expected that job seeker mutual obligations are tailored to their personal circumstances and the local labour market.

Where job seekers and participants can, and it is safe to do so in line with health advice, they can engage with their employment service provider. Please ensure the services you deliver are safe and in line with all local health advice for that area. Job seekers and participants can continue to voluntarily participate in non face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice.

Special circumstances exemptions will continue to be available from Services Australia for job seekers and participants who require them, including for people directly impacted by COVID-19.

If you have questions or concerns about the current arrangements, please speak to your Account or Contract Manager.

**Content Author Team:** Job Seeker Compliance

**Content Author Branch:** JS Participation & Compliance Branch

**Date: 06/8/2021**

## Temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements for VIC and the NSW Hunter and Upper Hunter Regions.

Mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants in the state of Victoria and the Hunter and Upper Hunter Regions of New South Wales affected by the lockdown in the **Cessnock, Dungog, Lake Macquarie, Maitland, Muswellbrook, Newcastle, Port Stephens, and Singleton Local Government Areas** are temporarily suspended from 5 August and will be in place until Tuesday 17 August 2021 (inclusive).

These arrangements apply over this period for jobactive, Online Employment Services, ParentsNext and Disability Employment Services.

This means that job seekers and participants residing in these areas will not be subject to compliance action or payment suspensions. This will apply to both job seekers and participants with a residential address in the area or managed by a provider site located in the areas.

If you are in contact with your job seekers, please advise them they should continue to check when their requirements **are due or scheduled to occur after** the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends. This includes Job Search Requirements. It is expected that job seeker mutual obligations are tailored to their personal circumstances and the local labour market.

Where job seekers and participants can, and it is safe to do so in line with health advice, they can engage with their employment service provider. Please ensure the services you deliver are safe and in line with all local health advice for that area. Job seekers and participants can continue to voluntarily participate in non face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice.

Special circumstances exemptions will continue to be available from Services Australia for job seekers and participants who require them, including for people directly impacted by COVID-19.

If you have questions or concerns about the current arrangements, please speak to your Account or Contract Manager.

**Content Author Team:** Job Seeker Compliance    **Content Author Branch:** JS Participation & Compliance Branch

**Date: 09/8/2021**

## Temporary suspension of MORs for NSW and QLD

Mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants in regions affected by COVID-19 lockdowns over the weekend.

The below outlines the mutual obligation requirement arrangements the Australian Government has put in place over the weekend to support job seekers and participants affected by COVID-19 lockdowns. This includes the temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements:

- in **New South Wales** for job seekers and participants in the **Armidale Regional Local Government Area**, applying from Saturday 7 August 2021 until Tuesday 17 August 2021 inclusive.
- in **Queensland** for job seekers and participants in the **Cairns and Yarrabah Local Government Areas**, applying from Sunday 8 August 2021 until Tuesday 17 August 2021 inclusive.

These arrangements apply over this period for jobactive, Online Employment Services, ParentsNext and Disability Employment Services.

This means that job seekers and participants residing in these areas will not be subject to compliance action or payment suspensions. This will apply to both job seekers and participants with a residential address in the area or managed by a provider site located in the areas.

If you are in contact with your job seekers, please advise them they should continue to check when their requirements **are due or scheduled to occur after** the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends. This includes Job Search Requirements. It is expected that job seeker mutual obligations are tailored to their personal circumstances and the local labour market.

Where job seekers and participants can, and it is safe to do so in line with health advice, they can engage with their employment service provider. Please ensure the services you deliver are safe and in line with all local health advice for that area. Job seekers and participants can continue to voluntarily participate in non face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice.

Special circumstances exemptions will continue to be available from Services Australia for job seekers and participants who require them, including for people directly impacted by COVID-19.

If you have questions or concerns about the current arrangements, please speak to your Account or Contract Manager.

**Content Author Team:** Job Seeker Compliance

**Content Author Branch:** JS Participation & Compliance Branch





**Date: 10/8/2021**

## Temporary suspension of MORs Tamworth & Northern Rivers

Mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants currently affected by the lockdown and restrictions in the **Tamworth Regional Local Government Area** in New South Wales are suspended from **Monday 9 August** to **Tuesday 17 August 2021 inclusive**.

For job seekers and participants in the **Byron Shire, Richmond Valley, Lismore and Ballina Shire Local Government Areas**, the temporary mutual obligation suspension applies from **Tuesday 10 August** and will remain in place until **Thursday 19 August 2021 inclusive**.

These arrangements apply over this period for jobactive, Online Employment Services, ParentsNext and Disability Employment Services.

This means that job seekers and participants residing in these areas will not be subject to compliance action or payment suspensions. This will apply to both job seekers and participants with a residential address in these areas or managed by a provider site located in these areas.

If you are in contact with your job seekers, please advise them they should continue to check when their requirements **are due or scheduled to occur after** the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends. This includes Job Search Requirements. It is expected that job seeker mutual obligations are tailored to their personal circumstances and the local labour market.

Where job seekers and participants can, and it is safe to do so in line with health advice, they can engage with their employment service provider. Please ensure the services you deliver are safe and in line with all local health advice for that area. Job seekers and participants can continue to voluntarily participate in non face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice.

Special circumstances exemptions will continue to be available from Services Australia for job seekers and participants who require them, including for people directly impacted by COVID-19.

If you have questions or concerns about the current arrangements, please speak to your Account or Contract Manager.

**Content Author Team:** Job Seeker Compliance

**Content Author Branch:** JS Participation & Compliance Branch

**Date: 12/8/2021**

## Temporary suspension of MORs for Melbourne & Dubbo

Mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants affected by the lockdowns in **Metropolitan Melbourne** and the **Dubbo Local Government Area of New South Wales** are temporarily suspended from 11 August and will be in place until Tuesday 24 August 2021 (inclusive).

These arrangements apply over this period for jobactive, Online Employment Services, ParentsNext and Disability Employment Services.

This means that job seekers and participants residing in these areas will not be subject to compliance action or payment suspensions. This will apply to both job seekers and participants with a residential address in the area or managed by a provider site located in these areas.

If you are in contact with your job seekers, please advise them they should continue to check when their requirements **are due or scheduled to occur after** the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends. This includes Job Search Requirements. It is expected that job seeker mutual obligations are tailored to their personal circumstances and the local labour market.

Where job seekers and participants can, and it is safe to do so in line with health advice, they can engage with their employment service provider. Please ensure the services you deliver are safe and in line with all local health advice for that area. Job seekers and participants can continue to voluntarily participate in non face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice.

Special circumstances exemptions will continue to be available from Services Australia for job seekers and participants who require them, including for people directly impacted by COVID-19.

If you have questions or concerns about the current arrangements, please speak to your Account or Contract Manager.

**Content Author Team:** Job Seeker Compliance

**Content Author Branch:** JS Participation & Compliance Branch

**Date: 13/8/2021**

## Temporary suspension of MORs - ACT & Far North NSW

Mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants affected by the lockdown in the **Australian Capital Territory, except Jervis Bay**, are temporarily suspended from **Thursday 12 August** until **Tuesday 24 August 2021** inclusive.

Mutual obligation requirements for **Far North New South Wales** job seekers and participants affected by the lockdown in the Local Government Areas of **Bogan, Bourke, Brewarrina, Coonamble, Gilgandra, Narromine, Walgett and Warren**, are temporarily suspended from **Thursday 12 August** until **Tuesday 24 August 2021** inclusive.

These arrangements apply over this period for jobactive, Online Employment Services, ParentsNext and Disability Employment Services.

This means that job seekers and participants residing in these areas will not be subject to compliance action or payment suspensions. This will apply to both job seekers and participants with a residential address in the area or managed by a provider site located in these areas.

If you are in contact with your job seekers, please advise them they should continue to check when their requirements **are due or scheduled to occur after** the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends. This includes Job Search Requirements. It is expected that job seeker mutual obligations are tailored to their personal circumstances and the local labour market.

Where job seekers and participants can, and it is safe to do so in line with health advice, they can engage with their employment service provider. Please ensure the services you deliver are safe and in line with all local health advice for that area. Job seekers and participants can continue to voluntarily participate in non face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice.

Special circumstances exemptions will continue to be available from Services Australia for job seekers and participants who require them, including for people directly impacted by COVID-19.

If you have questions or concerns about the current arrangements, please speak to your Account or Contract Manager.

**Content Author Team:** Job Seeker Compliance

**Content Author Branch:** JS Participation & Compliance Branch

**Date: 16/8/2021**

## Temporary suspension of MORs for regional NSW

Mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants in regional New South Wales (NSW) are temporarily suspended from 15 August and will be in place until Tuesday 31 August 2021 (inclusive). This timing aligns with the ending of the current temporary suspension of mutual obligations in Greater Sydney.

These arrangements apply over this period for jobactive, Online Employment Services, ParentsNext and Disability Employment Services.

This means that all job seekers and participants in NSW will not be subject to compliance action or payment suspensions. This will apply to both job seekers and participants with a residential address in the area or managed by a provider site located in NSW.

If you are in contact with your job seekers, please advise them they should continue to check when their requirements **are due or scheduled to occur after** the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends. This includes Job Search Requirements. It is expected that job seeker mutual obligations are tailored to their personal circumstances and the local labour market.

Where job seekers and participants can, and it is safe to do so in line with health advice, they can engage with their employment service provider. Please ensure the services you deliver are safe and in line with all local health advice for that area. Job seekers and participants can continue to voluntarily participate in non face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice.

Special circumstances exemptions will continue to be available from Services Australia for job seekers and participants who require them, including for people directly impacted by COVID-19.

If you have questions or concerns about the current arrangements, please speak to your Account or Contract Manager.

**Content Author Team:** Job Seeker Compliance

**Content Author Branch:** JS Participation & Compliance Branch

## Temporary suspension of MORs - Darwin, Melbourne & ACT

Mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants currently affected by the lockdown and restrictions in **Greater Darwin** are suspended from **Monday 16 August to Tuesday 24 August 2021 inclusive**.

For job seekers and participants in the **Australian Capital Territory** and **Metropolitan Melbourne**, mutual obligation requirements are now suspended until **Tuesday 7 September 2021 inclusive**.

This means that job seekers and participants residing in this area will not be subject to compliance action or payment suspensions. This will apply to both job seekers and participants with a residential address in the area or managed by a provider site located in this area.

If you are in contact with your job seekers, please advise them they should continue to check when their requirements **are due or scheduled to occur after** the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends. This includes Job Search Requirements. It is expected that job seeker mutual obligations are tailored to their personal circumstances and the local labour market.

Where job seekers and participants can, and it is safe to do so in line with health advice, they can engage with their employment service provider. Please ensure the services you deliver are safe and in line with all local health advice for that area. Job seekers and participants can continue to voluntarily participate in non face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice.

Special circumstances exemptions will continue to be available from Services Australia for job seekers and participants who require them, including for people directly impacted by COVID-19.

If you have questions or concerns about the current arrangements, please speak to your Account or Contract Manager.

**Site:** DES, ParentsNext

**Content Author Team:** Job Seeker Compliance   **Content Author Branch:** JS Participation & Compliance Branch

**Date: 17/8/2021**

## Temporary suspension of MORs - Darwin, Melbourne & ACT

Mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants currently affected by the lockdown and restrictions in **Greater Darwin** are suspended from **Monday 16 August** to **Tuesday 24 August 2021 inclusive**.

For job seekers and participants in the **Australian Capital Territory** and **Metropolitan Melbourne**, mutual obligation requirements are now suspended until **Tuesday 7 September 2021 inclusive**.

This means that job seekers and participants residing in this area will not be subject to compliance action or payment suspensions. This will apply to both job seekers and participants with a residential address in the area or managed by a provider site located in this area.

If you are in contact with your job seekers, please advise them they should continue to check when their requirements **are due or scheduled to occur after** the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends. This includes Job Search Requirements. It is expected that job seeker mutual obligations are tailored to their personal circumstances and the local labour market.

Where job seekers and participants can, and it is safe to do so in line with health advice, they can engage with their employment service provider. Please ensure the services you deliver are safe and in line with all local health advice for that area. Job seekers and participants can continue to voluntarily participate in non face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice.

Special circumstances exemptions will continue to be available from Services Australia for job seekers and participants who require them, including for people directly impacted by COVID-19.

If you have questions or concerns about the current arrangements, please speak to your Account or Contract Manager.

**Content Author Team:** Job Seeker Compliance

**Content Author Branch:** JS Participation & Compliance Branch

**Date: 24/8/2021**

## New process for informing providers on contingency

Individual Provider Portal notices per suspension of mutual obligation event will no longer be published, instead relevant information is now available on the COVID-19 information page. This page can be accessed from the left-hand navigation menu on the jobactive, NEST, ParentsNext and DES Program Portal sites of which temporary suspension of Mutual Obligation Requirements relate to.

This will assist providers to see information at a glance without having to search through Portal posts (current practice) or clicking through pages trying to find the COVID-19 information.

When you are on the COVID-19 webpage you will see that we have included advice for when mutual obligation requirements are temporarily suspended due to COVID-19. This includes a link to the job search page which has a table with all the current events and dates. There is also a document on this COVID-19 webpage that has useful information for the application of the Targeted Compliance Framework during temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements.

**Content Author Team:** Job Seeker Compliance

**Content Author Branch:** JS Participation & Compliance Branch



## Portal Notice – Temporary suspension of MORs – NSW

Due to the ongoing weather event in New South Wales, mutual obligation requirements have been temporarily suspended for impacted participants in the New South Wales local government areas (LGAs) of:

- Moree Plains
- Narrabri

from **Wednesday 26 October to Wednesday 23 November 2022** (inclusive).

Participants residing in these LGAs will not be subject to compliance action or payment suspensions. This will apply to both participants with a residential address in the area or managed by a provider site located in the areas.

If you are in contact with your participants, please advise them they should continue to check when their requirements are due or scheduled to occur after the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends. It is expected that participants' mutual obligations are tailored to their personal circumstances and the local labour market. Participants should be reminded that if they get an income support payment from Centrelink, they must still report any income they and their partner get.

Where participants can, and it is safe to do so, they can engage with their provider. Please ensure the services you deliver are safe and in line with emergency advice for that area.

Special circumstances exemptions will continue to be available from Services Australia for participants who require them.

Find more details about the changes, including key dates and what you need to do at [Temporary suspension of obligations](#).

If you have questions or concerns about the current arrangements, please speak to your Provider Lead or Account Manager.

**Site:** DES, ParentsNext, Workforce Australia Services

**Content Author Team:** Compliance   **Content Author Branch:** Access & Participation Branch



#### Advice for when mutual obligation requirements are temporarily suspended due to COVID-19

To view current States and locations with temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements and advice for job seekers on Job Search, Points Period, attending appointments and activities, during suspension of mutual obligation requirements go to: <https://jobsearch.gov.au/mor>. This information is current as of **29 April 2022**.

## Temporary site closures advice for providers

### Purpose

This document outlines:

- when it is acceptable for providers to close a site temporarily
- what the provider must do when they need to close a site temporarily.

It includes a [template](#) providers can use to provide site closure advice to the department.

### Accepted reasons for closing sites

As a provider, you are required to operate physical sites in line with the agreed work order or deed schedule. The department acknowledges that in some situations a site may need to be temporarily closed. These closures are generally unplanned and are due to circumstances outside of a provider's control.

Below are circumstances when the department accepts temporary site closures.

#### Natural disaster

When a natural disaster impacts a site, for example, flooding, fire, or evacuation orders.

#### Emergency

Situations when it is unsafe for staff to continue operations due to a localised fire, bomb threat or accident on the site. Such situations usually include an order from emergency services to evacuate an area.

#### COVID-19 or pandemic

Short-term impacts of COVID-19 or other declared pandemics, including isolation or stay-at-home requirements, which makes it unable to operate the physical site temporarily.

#### Building faults

This includes power and telecommunication outages that are outside of your control. It can also be a building fault that poses Work Health and Safety concerns and makes it unsafe to work at the site until the issue is rectified.

#### Culturally significant events for First Nations people

If there is a funeral for a prominent member of community, a physical site may be closed out of respect to the community.

## Local and regional public holidays

This may include a regional show day. Before closing the site, you will need to notify the Employment Region Lead and make alternate servicing arrangements.

## Participant incident

If a participant shows violent, aggressive, or threatening behaviour, you may temporarily close the affected site until the situation is resolved or you are satisfied the threat no longer exists.

You must notify the local Services Australia office as soon as practicable about the incident if there is a safety threat to Services Australia staff.

If you do not have contact details for the local Services Australia office, you may call the Services Australia Security Hotline number 1800 046 021.

For more information on servicing participants with challenging behaviours, refer to Chapter 5 of the [Workforce Australia Universal Guidelines](#).

## Staff availability issues

This will only be accepted for unexpected staff absences in regional, remote or outreach sites in non-metropolitan locations where it is not easy or fast to deploy alternate staff on the same day due to distance between sites.

This is for exceptional circumstances only and would not be considered reasonable if the situation occurs again. You need to have appropriate contingency arrangements in place to maintain site operations in line with the deed schedule.

## Other reasons

If you wish to temporarily close a site for any reason not specified in this advice, you must first seek written approval from the department via the Employment Region Lead. You should seek approval at least **10 business days** before the proposed closure date.

## Servicing participants during site closure

You must establish alternative servicing arrangements if a temporary site closure will disrupt servicing to participants.

You may:

- direct participants to:
  - one of your other sites in the region
  - local facilities (such as a library) where they can access free internet to do job search activities
- offer servicing via phone or online.

## Notifying participants

You must:

- arrange signage on the closed site (where safe and practicable to do so) that shows:
  - details of reopening (if known)
  - alternative servicing sites and arrangements
  - contact details for more information
- call or SMS participants who have appointments or activities scheduled during the closure. If required, reschedule requirements, or ensure activity requirements do not apply.

If a closure will be for an extended period, you may also choose to write to participants about the closure and alternative servicing arrangements.

## Providing site closure advice to the department

When you decide to close a site temporarily, you must:

- advise the relevant Employment Region Lead in writing as soon as practicable (within 24 hours)
- provide ongoing advice about the site closure to the Employment Region Lead, including anticipated site reopening and any mitigation strategies.

You can use the template provided below to advise about the site closure.

The advice must include:

- site codes of impacted sites and all programs impacted
- reason for the closure
- date of the closure and expected duration
- confirmation that you have, or you will contact, impacted participants about the site closure
- details of alternative servicing arrangements that you have put in place.

### If multiple sites are closing

You can send one written notification to advise the department about multiple affected sites (and multiple employment regions), for example, when there is a natural disaster, national or regional emergency.

### Reopening sites

You must notify the department in writing as soon as practicable (within 24 hours) when you reopen a site except if the closure was due to a local public holiday.

Template – Temporary site closure advice

Programs affected	Site Code	Site Name	Employment Region	State or Territory	Date of Closure or Expected Re-opening	Reasons for Closure	Clients notified and alternate servicing – Y/N