



Australian Government
**Department of Education,
Skills and Employment**

**Deputy Secretary
Nathan Smyth**

Dear Chief Executive Officer

COVID-19—Greater Brisbane Queensland (Qld)

As announced by Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, the Australian Government has lifted mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants in the Greater Brisbane area. This encompasses the Brisbane South East, Somerset and Wivenhoe Employment Regions. These arrangements will be in place from today, 8 January 2021 until Sunday, 17 January 2021.

These arrangements mean all mutual obligation requirements will be voluntary— no compliance action will be taken and no one's payments will be suspended. Job seekers and participants will not be penalised for not meeting their mutual obligation requirements, such as signing their Job Plan, attending, or reporting their attendance at appointments or activities.

Special Circumstances Exemptions continue to be available through Services Australia for job seekers who require them.

These arrangements apply to job seekers and participants with mutual obligations across employment services programs - jobactive, Online Employment Services, Disability Employment Services and ParentsNext.

Job seekers and participants can continue to voluntarily participate in provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice. This will allow job seekers and participants to stay connected with their employment services providers to ensure they are supported to access the full range of assistance, including mental health services, if required.

The department will send an SMS to job seekers and participants advising them of this update.

This arrangement will be closely monitored and reviewed prior to 17 January 2021, giving consideration to advice from the Queensland Government and the evolving nature of the situation.

I urge you and your staff to continue to follow the guidance of health officials during this time.

If you have any questions, please contact your Account Manager.

Yours sincerely

Nathan Smyth
8 January 2021



Australian Government
**Department of Education,
Skills and Employment**

**Deputy Secretary
Nathan Smyth**

Dear Chief Executive Officer

COVID-19—Perth Western Australia

As announced by Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, the Australian Government has lifted mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants in the Perth Metropolitan, Peel and South West regions of Western Australia. These arrangements will be in place from today, 1 February 2021 until at least Tuesday 9 February 2021.

These arrangements mean all mutual obligation requirements will be voluntary— no compliance action will be taken and no one's payments will be suspended. Job seekers and participants will not be penalised for not meeting their mutual obligation requirements, such as signing their Job Plan, attending, or reporting their attendance at appointments or activities.

Special Circumstances Exemptions continue to be available through Services Australia for job seekers who require them.

These arrangements apply to job seekers and participants with mutual obligations across employment services programs - jobactive, Online Employment Services, Disability Employment Services and ParentsNext.

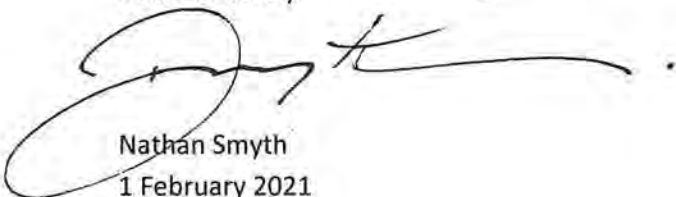
The department will send an SMS directly to job seekers and participants advising them of this update.

This arrangement will be closely monitored and reviewed prior to 9 February 2021, giving consideration to advice from the Western Australian Government and the evolving nature of the situation.

I urge you and your staff to continue to follow the guidance of health officials during this time.

If you have any questions, please contact your Account Manager.

Yours sincerely



Nathan Smyth
1 February 2021



Australian Government
**Department of Education,
Skills and Employment**

**Deputy Secretary
Nathan Smyth**

Dear Chief Executive Officer

COVID-19 — VICTORIA

As announced by Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash and Senator the Hon Anne Ruston, today the Australian Government has temporarily lifted mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants in Victoria. These arrangements will be in place from today, 12 February 2021 until Monday 22 February 2021.

These arrangements mean all mutual obligation requirements will be voluntary— no compliance action will be taken and no one's payments will be suspended. Job seekers and participants will not be penalised for not meeting their mutual obligation requirements, such as signing their Job Plan, attending, or reporting their attendance at appointments or activities.

Special Circumstances Exemptions continue to be available through Services Australia for job seekers who require them.

These arrangements apply to job seekers and participants with mutual obligations across employment services programs - jobactive, Online Employment Services, Disability Employment Services and ParentsNext.

The department will send an SMS directly to job seekers and participants advising them of this update.

Providers are required to ensure the services they 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. I encourage your organisation to revisit your existing COVID-19 safe plan to ensure participants' and your staff members' safety.

This arrangement will be closely monitored and reviewed prior to 22 February 2021, giving consideration to advice from the Victorian Government and the evolving nature of the situation.

I urge you and your staff to continue to follow the guidance of health officials during this time.

If you have any questions, please contact your Account Manager.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Smyth'.

Nathan Smyth
12 February 2021



Deputy Secretary
Nathan Smyth

Dear Chief Executive Officer

CHANGES TO MUTUAL OBLIGATIONS AND PROVIDER SERVICING REQUIREMENTS

As announced today by the Prime Minister, the Hon Scott Morrison MP, and Senators the Hon Michaelia Cash and the Hon Anne Ruston, the Australian Government is making a number of changes to mutual obligation requirements to assist job seekers to secure employment as our nation continues to recover from the economic challenges of COVID-19.

These changes reflect the importance of ensuring job seekers are well prepared and assisted to actively take advantage of increased job opportunities as the labour market continues to improve.

Resumption of Mandatory Face-to-Face Servicing – from 9 March 2021

The Australian Government is reintroducing nationwide face-to-face service delivery for job seekers in the department's employment services (including ParentsNext), with effect from 9 March 2021.

For job seekers who have been out of work for longer periods of time, meeting a job service provider face-to-face can provide a significant benefit in discussing potential employment and training options and preparing for their next job.

While the pandemic will undoubtedly continue to present challenges, governments across Australia have well-established responses in place for managing localised COVID-19 outbreaks and social restrictions. COVID-safe plans are required practice for businesses, individuals are aware of the importance of mitigations such as social distancing and vaccination programs are being progressively rolled out. This, combined with the importance of delivering personalised support for job seekers who require provider assistance, has informed a decision to resume mandatory face-to-face servicing where safe to do so.

Accordingly, you will find attached to this letter a new direction from the department that cancels the current direction issued on 18 September 2020, with effect from 9 March 2021. The existing direction came into effect on 28 September and allows providers to operate face-to-face services subject to specific conditions, while enabling job seekers to opt-in to this mode of delivery.

The new direction removes the job seeker opt-in arrangement and requires your organisations to deliver services face-to-face where previously specified by deeds and consistent with the requirements of relevant State or Territory governments in the ongoing health response to COVID-19. Special circumstances exemptions will also continue to be available through Services Australia for job seekers who require them – including those directly impacted by COVID-19.

The department is issuing the new direction today so that you can take appropriate operational decisions to ensure your organisation can pivot back to face-to-face delivery to meet the needs of the job seekers on your caseloads. In the interim, it is imperative that your staff continue to abide by the current direction, until the replacement direction comes into effect on 9 March. The department will send an SMS to job seekers and participants before the new direction takes effect advising them of the return of compulsory face-to-face servicing arrangements.

Increased Job Search Requirements and Quality Assurance – from early April 2021

With promising signs of economic recovery and businesses hiring staff, it is appropriate to continue to implement mutual obligation requirements for job seekers which were in place prior to the pandemic, as well as providing additional support to ensure that job seekers have the best opportunity to secure employment.

The minimum job search requirement will increase from 8 per month (as is currently the case) to 15 per month from April 2021. This will then increase to a requirement for a minimum of 20 job searches per month from July 2021. This means that all Job Plans for jobactive job seekers will need to be revised, noting providers will retain discretion to, and be expected to, adjust job search requirements to each individual's personal circumstances, capacity and the local labour market conditions.

As the minimum job search requirements increase, your staff will continue to play a critical role in supporting job seekers to submit quality applications to meet their required job searches. To ensure job search activities are actively monitored, the department will increase assurance activities related to the work undertaken by jobactive providers to confirm both the quality and quantity of job search. Additional assurance of online job seekers' job search will also be undertaken by the Digital Services Contact Centre (DSCC). The department's approach will focus on the factors outlined in the relevant legislative instrument, such as the assessment that a job seeker is looking for different roles, at a variety of levels and using a range of methods.

New Employer Reporting Line – from early April 2021

The department will stand up a new Employer Reporting Line from April 2021 to create a dedicated channel for employers to inform Government should people on income support decline the offer of a job. The new Reporting line also provides an opportunity to more proactively assist employers to find appropriate staff and to link employers with jobactive providers in their communities to assist them with their recruitment needs.

Staff on the Employer Reporting Line will verify that the information provided relates to a job seeker with mutual obligation requirements and provide feedback to employment service providers or the DSCC for investigation and compliance action, as appropriate. Where a provider or the DSCC verifies a 'work refusal', in line with current policy and practice, this would then be reported to Services Australia for potential application of a payment penalty.

Stronger Contractual Action to Drive Performance – from early April 2021

With business confidence improving and strong demand for additional workers, we need to support job seekers in every way possible to take up the opportunities this presents for them.

It is now more critical than ever that employment programs deliver effective, high quality services for employers and job seekers.

In support of this aim, the department will take stronger contractual action where needed to drive peak performance of employment service providers.

The department, which already uses a range of mechanisms to drive and assess provider performance and compliance, will work closely with you to set out clear guidance on the requirements.

A contractual notice (to take effect from the beginning of April 2021) will advise all jobactive providers that performance will be monitored and assessed against critical contractual obligations that go to how actively you deliver services to employers and job seekers.

These will likely include target areas such as prompt commencement of new job seekers in services, and referrals to activities to improve job seeker's employability (such as training). They will also focus on proactive follow up of job interview attendance and job search quality.

Current guidelines will be varied to require your organisation to take additional action to investigate and take compliance action for job seeker non-attendance at job interviews where your staff become aware (whether scheduled by the provider or not).

The department intends to use existing remedies under the jobactive deed where your organisation does not perform to the required standards, having first been given an opportunity to improve its performance.

New Activity for Job Seekers After 6 Months – from October 2021

From October 2021, there will be an additional requirement for job seekers who have been participating in jobactive and Online Employment Services for six months to undertake an activity (such as a short training course, or an 8-week version of Work for the Dole).

This new requirement recognises the benefits of an activity earlier in a job seeker's period of assistance to help them attain the skills and work-like experience critical to securing a job. (Annual Activity Requirements will still apply for those job seekers who remain in employment services at 12 months after commencement.)

Some job seekers will already be meeting their activity requirement through part-time work or training and will be exempt from these requirements. For those who are not, you will need to refer them to short training courses, such as those available through JobTrainer, or through other Government programs such as Employability Skills Training, Career Transition Assistance or Skills for Education and Employment.

Another option is a work experience placement, such as through a PaTH Internship, National Work Experience Program placement or volunteer work.

An 8-week Work for the Dole placement will be the default activity if no other activity is selected.

Job seekers in Online Employment Services who do not enrol themselves in training or other activity such as Employability Skills Training, will be referred to a provider for an activity to be arranged.

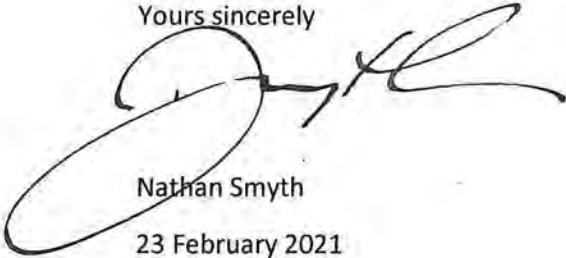
To help job seekers make decisions about training, the functionality in the jobactive digital services system will be enhanced to make training recommendations. This will be matched to available information on the job seeker's employment history, regional jobs in demand and local courses, such as those available through JobTrainer.

Further Information

Further guidance on the above changes to mutual obligation and servicing requirements will be available shortly through provider and participant Fact Sheets and operational advice on the provider portal. I encourage you and your staff to check the [Provider Portal](#) and the [departmental website](#) for updates and program-specific information over the coming weeks.

I will host a special CEO livestream to discuss these changes and provide the opportunity for questions and answers at **4.00pm today, Tuesday 23 February 2021**.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nathan Smyth', with a large, stylized initial 'N'.

Nathan Smyth

23 February 2021



23 February 2021

Direction on return to Face-to-Face Service Delivery

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment (the department) considers that, with signs of economic recovery, businesses hiring staff and COVID-19 restrictions continuing to ease across Australia, it is appropriate to commence the return to normal servicing arrangements for job seekers.

Accordingly, the department directs that, with effect from **9 March 2021**, Participant opt-in requirements cease and Providers **must** deliver Services face-to-face where this is required by the Deed and consistent with relevant health advice.

This new direction cancels the direction issued on 18 September 2020, which had permitted Providers to deliver Services, including all Activities (including Work for the Dole) face-to-face, provided that several conditions were met, including that Participants must opt-in to participate in the Services face-to-face.

Subject to the below conditions and qualifications, the department now directs that:

- (a) the Provider must ensure that face-to-face delivery is carried out in a safe manner and is appropriate for the relevant Participant, the Provider's staff and others from a work health and safety perspective. In this regard, the Provider must:
 - (i) consult guidance and information published by Safe Work Australia and the relevant work health and safety regulator;
 - (ii) have a COVID-Safe plan, in accordance with the requirements specified by the relevant State and Territory government, in place for each of the Sites where face-to-face delivery will be provided;
 - (iii) ensure that face-to-face Services are delivered in accordance with the Provider's relevant COVID-Safe plan;
 - (iv) ensure that each relevant Activity Host Organisation or Host Organisation has a COVID-Safe plan (or similar), in accordance with the requirements specified by the relevant State and Territory government, in place for each Activity which involves face-to-face participation prior to the Provider placing a Participant into that Activity; and
 - (v) continue to deliver non face-to-face servicing for participants who are unable to meet the minimum COVID-Safe requirements set by each State or Territory Government.
- (b) where face-to-face delivery is **partially restricted** by the requirements of a relevant State or Territory government, Providers must provide face-to-face servicing up to the limit of the relevant restriction until the restriction is revoked, and provide services remotely by phone, video or online where face-to-face services cannot otherwise be delivered.
- (c) where face-to-face delivery is **entirely prevented** by the requirements of a relevant State or Territory government, non- face-to-face services may be delivered until the relevant requirement is revoked, and for four weeks after the revocation date for non-face-to-face activities booked during the restriction period.
- (d) to the extent that face-to-face service delivery is restricted or prevented by the requirements of a relevant State or Territory government, the department:

- (i) waives obligations to deliver Services face-to-face; and
 - (ii) agrees to the Provider using alternative means to deliver the relevant Services, including by phone, video and/or online.
- (e) as part of a transition period, Activities (including courses where relevant) that have been arranged on or before the date of this direction to be delivered in a non face-to-face format, *and* scheduled to commence prior to 30 April 2021, may be still be delivered in a non face-to-face format. Where a currently scheduled Activity is to commence after 30 April 2021, providers must conduct these activities face-to-face and advise participants accordingly.
- (f) If face-to-face delivery is impacted in the future by local events such as natural disasters or the requirements of Commonwealth, State or Territory governments or local authorities, the Provider may to seek agreement from the department to alter service delivery arrangements for the period of the relevant local event.

Further advice on the application of this direction in relation to specific programs is available on the Provider Portal.

For more information on your local COVID-19 advice, safe practices and workplace principles, please refer to www.australia.gov.au, www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au, and your relevant State or Territory health authority information.

Links to enforceable government health and emergency directions and COVID Safe plans is available at: <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces/other-resources/covid-19-public-health-directions-and-covidsafe>



**Deputy Secretary
Nathan Smyth**

Dear Chief Executive Officer

COVID-19 — GREATER BRISBANE

As announced today, the Australian Government will lift mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants in Ipswich, Logan, Redlands, Moreton Bay and Brisbane from today 29 March 2021 to Tuesday 6 April 2021 inclusive.

This follows an announcement by the Queensland Government that Greater Brisbane is under a snap three-day lockdown from 5pm today to curb a COVID-19 outbreak in the area.

These arrangements mean all mutual obligation requirements will be voluntary— no compliance action will be taken and no one's payments will be suspended. Job seekers and participants will not be penalised for not meeting their mutual obligation requirements, such as signing their Job Plan, attending, or reporting their attendance at appointments or activities.

Special Circumstances Exemptions continue to be available through Services Australia for job seekers who require them.

These arrangements apply to job seekers and participants with mutual obligations across employment services programs - jobactive, Online Employment Services, Disability Employment Services and ParentsNext.

The department will send an SMS directly to job seekers and participants advising them of this update.

We expect that you will continue to encourage job seekers to remain in contact with your organisation during this period, to ensure they are supported to access the full range of assistance including mental health services, if required.

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. I encourage your organisation to revisit your existing COVID-19 safe plan to ensure participants' and your staff members' safety.

This arrangement will be closely monitored and reviewed prior to 6 April 2021, giving consideration to advice from the Queensland Government and the evolving nature of the situation.

I urge you and your staff to continue to follow the guidance of health officials during this time and stay safe.

If you have any questions, please contact your Account Manager.

Yours sincerely

Nathan Smyth

29 March 2021



Deputy Secretary

Nathan Smyth

Dear Chief Executive Officer

Update - Mutual Obligation Requirements

As announced by the Australian Government on 2 April 2021, lifting of mutual obligation requirements for job seekers affected by floods and storms in NSW has been extended until Sunday 11 April 2021. The full list of Local Government Areas where mutual obligation requirements have been lifted is at [affected Local Government Areas](#).

Providers operating in affected Local Government Areas should also continue to offer services other than through face-to-face delivery until 11 April. Extending the support your organisations can provide through phone or online contact will be critical, with job seekers encouraged to remain connected to access a full range of support services, including mental health services over this period.

As foreshadowed in the CEO letter of 23 February 2021, job search requirements are increasing as part of the gradual return of mutual obligation requirements and pre-COVID servicing arrangements. From today, 6 April 2021, job seekers will be required to undertake 15 job searches per month (where appropriate), increasing to 20 job searches on 1 July 2021. Job seekers in the Points Based Activation System in the New Employment Services Trial will also have an increase to their Points Target on these corresponding dates.

As you work with job seekers to update their Job Plans, Providers must ensure that mutual obligation requirements, including job search and points requirements, are tailored and appropriate to individual job seekers' personal circumstances and local labour market conditions. This includes for example the impact on local communities and businesses across the east coast of Australia due to the recent floods and storms. The department expects you to adjust Job Plans to ensure any requirements being set are achievable, appropriate and have a range of activities to maximise the job seeker's opportunity to secure paid work. The department will continue to monitor the appropriateness and tailoring of Job Plans and job seeker requirements to individual circumstances.

Providers must also ensure the quality and variety of job search efforts of job seekers is reviewed in line with the ongoing operational advice from the department, including the recent Guideline updates published to the Provider Portal last week in support of the targeted monitoring of key performance measures. It is as important as ever that you assist job seekers with quality job search efforts in a competitive labour market and to reduce impacts on business.

From 1 April 2021, Services Australia has ceased granting exemptions for sole traders and other self-employed job seekers. Exemptions for current sole trader/self-employed job seekers will end progressively over a 13-week period from 31 March 2021. Sole traders and other self-employed job seekers in receipt of income support will be required to meet mutual obligation requirements, as

was the case with pre-COVID-19 arrangements. Again, their requirements must be tailored to their circumstances, including taking into account effort in running their small business in line with current job seeker requirements.

Notwithstanding this, exemptions are still available to job seekers who require them, including those effected by the recent floods or those who are required to self-isolate, or care for someone self-isolating due to COVID-19. The staggered end date for Sole Trader exemptions means the flow of new commencements will be spread out over the coming months.

To ensure job seekers understand their mutual obligations requirements in this next phase of the gradual return of mutual obligations, the department is distributing a suite of communication material via website updates, SMS, email and inbox communications.

More information about the next phase of the gradual return of mutual obligations is available for job seekers and your staff at <https://www.dese.gov.au/covid-19/job-seekers>.

I would like to take this opportunity thank you and your organisations for the work you have done to support the Government's initiatives in employment services.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nathan Smyth', followed by a period.

Nathan Smyth
6 April 2021



Deputy Secretary
Nathan Smyth

Key measures in the 2021–22 Budget

Dear Chief Executive Officer

I am writing to you about important changes introduced by the Australian Government as part of the 2021–22 Budget.

The Government has announced a range of targeted measures as part of the 2021–22 Budget to boost job creation and drive the unemployment rate as low as possible.

The New Employment Services Model is the biggest transformational reform of employment services in 20 years. These transformational changes to employment services are critical to the ongoing economic recovery and demonstrate the importance of helping more Australians to find work.

The Government has also announced measures that adjust a range of policy and program settings to further support providers to help people in need, as well as initiatives that will drive local solutions, increased focus on workforce and help prevent job seekers from being left behind. These new measures build on the changes to JobSeeker Payment and mutual obligation arrangements announced in February 2021.

As employment and related services providers, you will have a central role in delivering many of these initiatives or will have a direct interest in them. You can find information about these measures attached to this letter, with more detail available on the Department of Education, Skills and Employment website (www.dese.gov.au/budget).

I look forward to discussing these and other matters with you at the National CEO Forum scheduled for Wednesday 19 May.

Yours sincerely



Nathan Smyth
12 May 2021

New Employment Services Model

The Government is transforming employment services in Australia, investing \$5.9 billion over the next four years to implement the New Employment Services Model (new model), replacing jobactive from 1 July 2022.

As foreshadowed in the Proposed licensing system Discussion paper, procurement for the new services is expected to commence in the third quarter of this year following the release of the Exposure Draft.

The new model will deliver a modern and sophisticated service, enabling job ready job seekers to self-manage through Digital Services. This will allow for increased investment to be targeted to job seekers most in need, who will be supported by Enhanced Services providers. Leveraging technology to improve services to all users, while increasing investment in disadvantaged job seekers, will improve the efficiency of the system and help to reduce long-term unemployment.

Enhanced Services providers will deliver tailored case management to job seekers who need the most assistance to gain employment. Job seekers in Enhanced Services will have access to the range of tools and online learning available in Digital Services, plus additional support through access to flexible wage subsidies, a larger and more flexible Employment Fund, and a strengthened Work for the Dole program. Providers will support job seekers into employment through quality relationships with local employers and strong links with local community services.

All job seekers with mutual obligation requirements will use the new Points Based Activation System (PBAS). PBAS gives job seekers greater agency and flexibility in managing their mutual obligation requirements. Job seekers will be required to meet a certain number of points per reporting period by undertaking tasks from an approved list, such as job search, attending interviews, study and training and voluntary work.

A new payment structure will support Enhanced Services providers to deliver intensive services to caseloads that will be smaller and more disadvantaged than under jobactive. The payment structure recognises the longer-term and sustained investment required to achieve outcomes for hard to place job seekers.

A new provider licensing system will streamline procurement processes and simplify the approach for providers to enter and exit the market. A panel of suitable organisations will be established, with contractual licences offered to the most suitable organisations in each Employment Region to deliver Enhanced Services. Licences will be issued for an initial three years, with high performing providers to receive early and regular licence extensions. In Employment Regions where there is sufficient demand, specialist providers will support job seekers from over-represented cohorts such as Indigenous Australians, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and refugees.

Employers will be able to seek support to fulfil their recruitment needs, as well as targeted industry projects and solutions, via a range of avenues. This will include the digital platform, Enhanced Services providers and Workforce Specialists. The new model will include a panel of Workforce Specialists to deliver projects to meet the workforce needs of identified key industries and occupations, connecting them to suitable job seekers in Digital Services and Enhanced Services with payment arrangements tailored to the requirements of each project.

A Workforce Connections Plan will be developed to identify key priority industries and occupations for targeted investment as part of this initiative. The Plan will be developed by the department in consultation with industry, employers, state and territory governments and the National Skills Commission.

Workforce Specialists may also be used to respond to more immediate workforce opportunities or challenges (such as natural disasters or pandemics).

To support greater diversity in the provider market, assistance will be provided to new entrants to the market to meet accreditation requirements and establish themselves under the new model, through establishment of a \$5 million capacity-building fund.

A new Provider Performance Framework will be introduced to ensure employers and job seekers receive a quality service that meets their needs. The framework will use a mix of quantitative and qualitative data, that will draw on job seeker and employer perspectives of the service.

New Employment Services Model: Supporting Youth in the New Employment Services Model

As part of the 2021-22 Budget the Government is providing an additional \$481.2 million to improve youth employment services as part of the new model. From 1 July 2022 the successful Transition to Work (TtW) youth employment service will expand and will operate as the Government's youth-specialist employment service for young people who need services from a provider in the new model. This will ensure more young people (aged 15-24) have access to specialist youth employment services and have the best opportunity to become work ready and secure employment.

As current TtW contracts expire 30 June 2022, an open procurement will be undertaken in late 2021 to contract TtW providers for a period of five years, commencing from 1 July 2022. A consultation paper will be released prior to this procurement exercise to engage stakeholders and ensure changes to service settings are implemented in a manner which maintains the positive culture and success of the service.

The Government is also investing \$7.5 million over four years to continue the Youth Advisory Sessions (YAS) for young job seekers in Digital Services from 1 July 2022. Introduced as a time-limited measure in the 2020-21 Budget, the YAS is currently providing young people in Online Employment Services access to up to three advisory sessions delivered by TtW providers.

New Employment Services Model: Digital Services Contact Centre

The Government is investing \$80.8m over five years in the Digital Services Contact Centre to support job seekers in Digital Services as part of the new model. The Digital Services Contact Centre will continue to be delivered by the Department of Education, Skills and Employment.

The ongoing investment in the Digital Services Contact Centre complements the support available to digital job seekers through the Digital Employment Services Platform and ensures job seekers who are self-managing their way back to employment can access person-to-person support if they need it.

The Digital Services Contact Centre will assist job seekers with information and technical assistance, managing their mutual obligation requirements and connecting with complementary support. The Digital Services Contact Centre also ensures job seekers who are unable to manage in Digital Services can be referred to a more suitable service.

New Employment Services Model: Aligning payment commencement arrangements for online-serviced and provider-serviced job seekers

From 1 July 2022, job seekers will be paid income support from either the date they agree to their Job Plan or the date they attend an initial appointment with their provider. This will encourage job seekers who are referred to online employment services to connect as soon as possible.

Importantly, it will address the current inequity between job seekers who are referred to online employment services and job seekers who are referred to a provider.

Currently, the start date for job seekers' income support depends on whether they are referred to an employment services provider or are referred to online employment services.

- Job seekers who are referred to online employment services are paid unemployment payments from the date they made a claim for income support.
- Job seekers who are referred to an employment services provider are paid unemployment payments from the date they attend their initial appointment with their provider.

As a result, job seekers in online employment services receive more income support than those who are referred to an employment services provider.

The measure is expected to reduce by two days the average time taken for job seekers in online employment services to agree to a Job Plan.

Delivery of Self-Employment Services in the New Employment Services Model

The Government will invest \$504.4 million over four years to enhance and streamline the delivery of self-employment services from 1 July 2022. This will give more Australians the opportunity to create their own job by starting a new small business.

From 1 July 2022, New Business Assistance with NEIS will continue to be delivered nationally. It will provide flexible services which are tailored to the individual needs of each participant and their business. For example, participants can choose to access workshops to determine if self-employment is right for them, or an element of accredited training, support to develop a business plan or personalised mentoring. More people will be able to access this assistance, with 12,000 NEIS places available each financial year.

From 1 July 2022, Entrepreneurship Facilitator services will continue to be delivered in 23 locations around Australia. The services will focus on supporting people through group workshops and networking events. Services will be available for anyone considering self-employment or already running a small business and will encourage greater collaboration at the local level by referring participants to relevant services and the New Business Assistance with NEIS program.

Getting vulnerable Australians back into work – Earn and / or Learn

The Government will extend the Earn and/or Learn measure for a further six months, to align with the start of the new model in July 2022.

The measure was introduced on 28 September 2020 to support Australians who had lost their job as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, giving them more flexibility to count study or training towards their mutual obligation requirements. Earn and/or Learn has enabled both provider-managed job seekers and job seekers in online employment services to take better advantage of education and training opportunities in areas of anticipated employment growth, while upholding their requirements to look for work.

This measure was originally scheduled to end in December 2021. This would have created a six-month gap until additional flexibility in requirements will be available under the new model from July 2022. Extending this measure will also mean smoother transition into arrangements under the new model.

There is evidence that having job seekers participate in study and training increases their likelihood of employment. Continuing to provide more flexibility for job seekers to study and train while still looking for work will help keep job seekers engaged, reduce skills loss, and help to address potential skills gaps.

Getting vulnerable Australians back into work – Higher Wage Subsidies for Eligible Participants

Currently, wage subsidies for some job seeker cohorts are \$6,500, while other cohorts are eligible for wage subsidies of \$10,000 (GST inclusive). From 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022, all wage subsidies available through jobactive, Transition to Work and ParentsNext programs will be \$10,000 (GST inclusive). Higher wage subsidies will provide employers with a greater incentive to hire a disadvantaged job seeker. We will also include streamlined payments to minimise the administrative burden on employers.

Increasing all wage subsidies to \$10,000 brings wage subsidy settings closer to the approach that will apply under the new model. A single wage subsidy of up to a maximum of \$10,000 will be introduced under the new model from 1 July 2022.

Getting vulnerable Australians back into work – Local Jobs Program

COVID-19 is having an unprecedented impact on the Australian economy and the impact is being felt in varying ways across the different regions across the country. The Australian Government recognises the importance of taking an approach that considers a region's specific needs to best help people take advantage of new job opportunities as the economic recovery gathers pace.

The Government is investing \$213.5 million in the national rollout of the Local Jobs Program, which will expand its reach to all 51 Employment Regions from 1 June 2021. The program will also be extended to run until 30 June 2025.

The Local Jobs Program focusses on reskilling, upskilling, and establishing employment pathways for those looking for work, to help them enter into employment as quickly as possible. The Program includes three key elements: Employment Facilitators, Local Jobs and Skills Taskforces, and the Local Recovery Fund.

The national rollout will also include a fourth component - a National Priority Funding Pool of \$50 million over four years to assist regions to address structural barriers and skills and labour mismatches that may emerge in the post-pandemic economy.

To respond quickly to local needs, this national flexible funding pool will be established within the already well set up network of the Local Jobs Program. This will provide \$12.5 million per year to support work with key stakeholders, such as local government, that will complement job creation opportunities and tackle other structural barriers to employment (e.g. transportation).

Local Employment Facilitators are already in 25 Employment Regions. This national rollout will engage them in the remaining 26 Employment Regions to cover all 51 Employment Regions.

Getting vulnerable Australians back into work – Jobs Fairs

The Government will provide \$6.2 million in additional funding to support the delivery of up to 26 Jobs Fairs across Australia from June 2021 to June 2022.

This is part of the Government's commitment to help Australians get into work, particularly following the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and flows on from with the successful series of Jobs Fairs held over the last year.

The Government's Jobs Fairs provide opportunities for job seekers to talk with local employers who have real job vacancies available.

***Getting vulnerable Australians back into work – additional support for job seekers:
Incentivising Servicing of Job Seekers Moving from Online Employment Services to
Providers***

The Government is investing \$7.9 million over three years to adjust servicing arrangements for job seekers who are referred to providers from Online Employment Services.

From 12 May 2021, Stream A job seekers who are referred to a provider after three months or more in Online Employment Services will be immediately eligible for Outcome Payments, rather than after three months of provider servicing currently.

This change recognises that jobactive policy settings were changed in 2020 so that the most job-ready job seekers spend up to twelve months self-managing in Online Employment Services. The measure aims to ensure these job seekers receive appropriate support after transfer.

***Getting vulnerable Australians back into work – additional support for job seekers:
Additional New Business Assistance with NEIS places***

The Government will provide \$15.5 million over two years from 2020-21 to provide more people the opportunity to explore and start their own small business from 1 March 2021 to 30 June 2021, by providing an additional 1,000 places under the New Business Assistance with the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme program and an additional 350 places under the Exploring Being My Own Boss Workshop program.

***Getting vulnerable Australians back into work – additional support for job seekers:
AgMove***

Following consultation with the agricultural industry the Government is delivering a new more flexible approach to its Relocation Assistance to Take Up a Job program for short term agricultural work. Assistance to support individuals take up short-term agricultural work will be delivered through a support to be called 'AgMove'. The new approach will accommodate short, but intense, harvesting seasons and provide the right incentives to get job seekers to give agricultural work a go with a helping hand from the Government.

Under AgMove, the Government is introducing more flexible incentives which will see Australians eligible for up to \$2,000 in relocation assistance (or \$650 for temporary visa holders) when they complete just 40 hours of agricultural work over a two-week period. This reduces the existing initial eligibility period for reimbursement from six weeks to just two.

If workers continue in agricultural work and complete 120 hours across a period of at least four weeks, they will hit the second eligibility point where they will be able to access reimbursement of up to \$6,000 for Australian workers and up to \$2,000 for temporary visa holders.

Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) program – improving access and outcomes

The Government will invest \$20.6 million in the SEE program to further improve access and outcomes for job seekers that require language, literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy training. This includes expanding the number of available places and eligibility to include job seekers not on income support such as volunteer job seekers, retrenched workers, and job seekers on carer's payments. The investment will also accelerate the integration of digital literacy training in the program delivery and trial various innovative delivery practices to better reach and train job seekers to improve their foundation, employability, and vocational skills for higher skilled employment outcomes.

In addition to the SEE program, the government is also providing an additional \$2 million to the Reading Writing Hotline to expand its role in providing information on assistance to more Australians on their literacy and numeracy needs.

JobTrainer

As announced at Budget, the Australian Government will offer states and territories an additional \$500 million over two years to extend the JobTrainer Fund from its current end date of 30 September 2021 to 31 December 2022, contingent on matched funding from states and territories.

The JobTrainer Fund extension will support around 163,000 additional low-fee and free training places in areas of identified skills need. This includes around 33,800 places in aged care qualifications for any Australian who wants to work in the aged care sector, or who already works in the aged care sector, and around 10,000 digital skills training places, to help grow Australia's digital workforce.

This will build on the success of the existing JobTrainer Fund in supporting the economic recovery by providing free and low-fee training to job seekers and young people.

Boosting Apprenticeship Commencements

As announced at Budget, the Australian Government announced a further \$1.5 billion to extend the commencement period for the Boosting Apprenticeship Commencements wage subsidy from 1 October 2021 to 31 March 2022.

This recognises that the apprenticeships sector requires further support to return to business as usual and ensures a pipeline of skills necessary for economic recovery is maintained.

Disability Employment Services (DES) reform

The Government has announced it is developing a new disability employment support model to replace the current DES program, with consultations to begin in mid-2021 to ensure the new DES model is designed with people with disability at the centre.

In the interim, the Government has announced that from 1 January 2022, job seekers who are eligible for DES, and who can self-manage their employment search, will be able to choose to participate in mainstream digital employment services, instead of DES.

This recognises that job seekers with disability should have choice and control over how they receive services, while ensuring the services meet their needs and requirements.

Eligible job seekers will retain the ability to opt out of mainstream digital employment services at any time and be referred to a DES provider. In addition, if a job seeker does not get a job within 12 months of using digital services, they will be referred back to a DES provider.

Job seekers with disability who choose mainstream digital employment services will retain access to disability specific supports through JobAccess and the Employment Assistance Fund.

Changes to Indigenous employment support and Community Development Program (CDP) reform

The Government will introduce a new remote jobs program in 2023, replacing the CDP. As a first step, the National Indigenous Australians Agency will pilot a new remote jobs program in a number of locations from late 2021 following a co-design process. Program features will be co-designed with Indigenous Australians and key stakeholders in the coming months, with more information to be announced about these processes.

In addition, the Government announced in the 2021-22 Budget a commitment to develop a new place-based Indigenous Skills and Employment Program (ISEP) to replace the Vocational Training and Employment Centres, Tailored Assistance Employment Grants and Employment Parity Initiative from 1 July 2022. The new ISEP will contribute to closing the gap in employment by supporting pathways to meaningful and sustainable employment for Indigenous Australians, through flexible, place-based investment. The program will increase economic opportunities for Indigenous Australians and drive actions that connect Indigenous Australians to jobs, targeted skills acquisition, and career advancement opportunities. ISEP will be co-designed with Indigenous Australians, in consultation with key stakeholders.



Australian Government
**Department of Education,
Skills and Employment**

Deputy Secretary
Nathan Smyth

Dear Chief Executive Officer

COVID-19—Victoria

As announced today, the Australian Government has suspended mutual obligation requirements 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.

This follows an announcement by the Victorian Government that Victoria is under a seven-day lockdown from midnight tonight to curb a COVID-19 outbreak in the state.

These arrangements mean all mutual obligation requirements have been lifted — no compliance action will be taken and no one's payments will be suspended. Job seekers and participants will not be penalised for not meeting their mutual obligation requirements, such as signing their Job Plan, attending, or reporting their attendance at appointments or activities.

Special Circumstances Exemptions continue to be available through Services Australia for job seekers who require them.

These arrangements apply to job seekers and participants with mutual obligation requirements across employment services programs - jobactive, Online Employment Services, Disability Employment Services and ParentsNext.

The department will send an SMS directly to job seekers and participants advising them of this update.

We expect that you will continue to encourage job seekers to remain in contact with your organisation during this period, to ensure they are supported to access the full range of assistance including mental health services, if required.

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. I encourage your organisation to revisit your existing COVID-19 safe plan to ensure participants' and your staff members' safety.

This arrangement will be closely monitored, giving consideration to advice from the Victorian Government and the evolving nature of the situation.

I urge you and your staff to continue to follow the guidance of health officials during this time and stay safe during this challenging time.

If you have any questions, please contact your Account Manager.

Yours sincerely



Nathan Smyth
27 May 2021



Australian Government
**Department of Education,
Skills and Employment**

Deputy Secretary
Nathan Smyth

Dear Chief Executive Officer

Update on mutual obligation requirements for Greater Melbourne and Regional Victoria

Today the Australian Government announced mutual obligation requirements will continue to be suspended for job seekers and participants in Greater Melbourne until Tuesday 15 June 2021 (inclusive).

These arrangements apply to job seekers and participants across jobactive, Online Employment Services, Disability Employment Services and ParentsNext. The department will send an SMS directly to job seekers and participants advising them of this update.

The department encourages you to remain in contact with your job seekers and participants in line with local health advice, to ensure they are supported across the full range of assistance available including mental health services, if required. Job seekers and participants in Greater Melbourne can continue to voluntarily participate in non face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice.

Mutual obligation requirements will return for job seekers and participants in Regional Victoria from Tuesday 8 June 2021. Providers are reminded mutual obligation requirements must be tailored to individual personal circumstances and comply with local health advice and any restrictions in place.

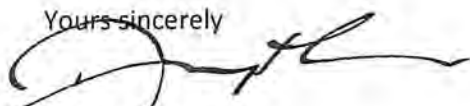
Special Circumstances Exemptions continue to be available through Services Australia for job seekers who require them.

I encourage your organisation to revisit your existing COVID-19 safe plan to ensure participants' and your staff members' safety.

These arrangements will be closely monitored, giving consideration to advice from the Victorian Government and the evolving nature of the situation.

If you have any questions, please contact your Account Manager and stay safe during this challenging time.

Yours sincerely



Nathan Smyth
7 June 2021



Deputy Secretary
Nathan Smyth

Dear Chief Executive Officer

COVID-19 - Alice Springs

The Australian Government has temporarily suspended mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants in the Northern Territory Local Government Area of **Alice Springs Town Council**, from Thursday 1 July until Tuesday 6 July 2021 inclusive.

These arrangements are in addition to, and aligned with, the temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements in the Local Government Areas of the Cities of Darwin and Palmerston that I wrote to you about yesterday.

The above arrangements apply to job seekers and participants with mutual obligation requirements across employment services programs - jobactive, Online Employment Services, Disability Employment Services and ParentsNext.

These arrangements mean all mutual obligation requirements have been lifted — no compliance action will be taken and no one's payments will be suspended. Job seekers and participants will not be penalised for not meeting their mutual obligation requirements, such as signing their Job Plan, attending, or reporting their attendance at appointments or activities.

Job seekers whose Job Search Periods end during the lifting of mutual obligation requirements will not be required to complete their Job Search requirement.

The Department will send an SMS directly to all impacted job seekers and participants advising them of this temporary suspension.

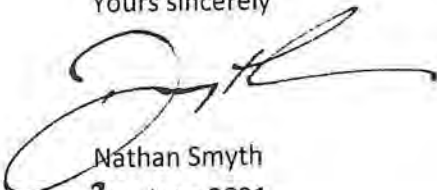
Special Circumstances Exemptions also continue to be available through Services Australia for job seekers who require them.

As previously advised, the Department will take a "no disadvantage approach" in relation to assessing provider performance in the relevant reporting period. This means that wherever mutual obligation requirements for job seekers are suspended, the Department will take this into consideration when assessing performance.

I urge you and your staff to continue to follow the guidance of health officials and stay safe during this challenging time.

If you have any questions, please contact your Account Manager.

Yours sincerely



Nathan Smyth
30 June 2021



Dear Chief Executive Officer

COVID-19 - Mutual Obligation Arrangements – New South Wales

The Australian Government has extended the suspension of mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants in regions of New South Wales until Tuesday 3 August 2021 (inclusive).

These arrangements apply to job seekers and participants with mutual obligation requirements across employment services programs - jobactive, Online Employment Services, Disability Employment Services and ParentsNext 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.

These arrangements mean all mutual obligation requirements for affected job seekers and participants have been suspended — no compliance action will be taken and no one's payment will be suspended. Job seekers and participants will not be penalised for not meeting their mutual obligation requirements, such as signing their Job Plan, attending, or reporting their attendance at appointments or activities.

Job seekers whose Job Search Periods end during the suspension of mutual obligation requirements will not be required to complete their Job Search requirement. However, actively looking for work remains a fundamental.

Job seekers whose Job Search requirements are due after the end of the temporary suspension are required to complete their agreed Job Search requirement before it is due. Their requirements, however, should be tailored to the personal circumstances of the job seeker and the local labour market. Reasonable excuse provisions continue to apply in these circumstances.

The Department will send an SMS directly to all impacted job seekers and participants advising them of the extension of this temporary suspension.

Special Circumstances Exemptions continue to be available through Services Australia for job seekers who require them.

Servicing

As I previously advised, the Department expects that you will continue to ensure job seekers and participants are supported to access the full range of assistance available - including mental health services, if required. Your job seekers and participants should also be encouraged to continue to check their mutual obligation requirements including when they are due/or scheduled, after the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends.

Please ensure that services are delivered by your organisation safely, and in line with all local health advice in that area. Job seekers and participants whose mutual obligations have been suspended can continue to voluntarily participate in non-face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice. I encourage your organisation to revisit your existing COVID-Safe plan to ensure participants' and your staff members' safety.

Your organisation should consider the stay at home orders and movement restrictions in place when deciding Acceptable and Valid Reasons for all job seekers and participants.

Providers must only operate face-to-face servicing where it is permissible by relevant State or Territory Governments. As restrictions differ across Australia, providers should be aware what restrictions apply to their service sites and act accordingly.

That is, where face-to-face delivery is restricted by the requirements of a relevant State or Territory Government, your organisation must provide face-to-face servicing up to the limit of the relevant restriction until the restriction is revoked, and provide services remotely by phone, video or online where face-to-face services cannot otherwise be delivered.

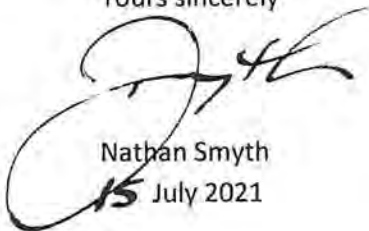
As previously advised, the Department will take a "no disadvantage approach" in relation to assessing provider performance in the relevant reporting period. This means that wherever mutual obligation requirements for job seekers are suspended, the Department will take this into consideration when assessing performance.

The Department also continues to monitor developments across the rest of Australia, considering advice from State and Territory Governments and the evolving nature of the situation.

I urge you and your staff to continue to follow the guidance of health officials and stay safe during this challenging time.

If you have any questions, please contact your Account Manager.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nathan Smyth', with a large, stylized flourish extending from the end of the signature.

Nathan Smyth
15 July 2021



Dear Chief Executive Officer

COVID-19 - Mutual Obligation Arrangements – Victoria

The Australian Government has suspended mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants in Victoria from today, Friday 16 July until Thursday 22 July 2021 (inclusive).

These arrangements apply to job seekers and participants with mutual obligation requirements across employment services programs - jobactive, Online Employment Services, Disability Employment Services and ParentsNext.

This means all mutual obligation requirements for affected job seekers and participants have been suspended — no compliance action will be taken and no one's payment will be suspended. Job seekers and participants will not be penalised for not meeting their mutual obligation requirements, such as signing their Job Plan, attending, or reporting their attendance at appointments or activities.

Job seekers whose Job Search Periods end during the suspension of mutual obligation requirements will not be required to complete their Job Search requirement. However, actively looking for work remains a fundamental for job seekers.

Job seekers whose Job Search requirements are due after the end of the temporary suspension are required to complete their agreed Job Search requirement before it is due. Their requirements, however, should be tailored to the personal circumstances of the job seeker and the local labour market. Reasonable excuse provisions continue to apply in these circumstances.

The Department will send an SMS directly to all impacted job seekers and participants advising them of the extension of this temporary suspension.

Special Circumstances Exemptions continue to be available through Services Australia for job seekers who require them.

Servicing

As I previously advised, the Department expects that you will continue to ensure job seekers and participants are supported to access the full range of assistance available - including mental health services, if required. Your job seekers and participants should also be encouraged to continue to check their mutual obligation requirements including when they are due/or scheduled, after the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends.

Please ensure that services are delivered by your organisation safely, and in line with all local health advice in that area. Job seekers and participants whose mutual obligations have been suspended can continue to voluntarily participate in non-face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice. I encourage your organisation to revisit your existing COVID-Safe plan to ensure participants' and your staff members' safety.

Your organisation should consider the stay at home orders and movement restrictions in place when deciding Acceptable and Valid Reasons for all job seekers and participants.

Providers must only operate face-to-face servicing where it is permissible by relevant State or Territory Governments. As restrictions differ across Australia, providers should be aware of what restrictions apply to their service sites and act accordingly.

That is, where face-to-face delivery is restricted by the requirements of a relevant State or Territory Government, your organisation must provide face-to-face servicing up to the limit of the relevant restriction until the restriction is revoked, and provide services remotely by phone, video or online where face-to-face services cannot otherwise be delivered.


As previously advised, the Department will take a "no disadvantage approach" in relation to assessing provider performance in the relevant reporting period. This means that wherever mutual obligation requirements for job seekers are suspended, the Department will take this into consideration when assessing performance.

The Department also continues to monitor developments across the rest of Australia, considering advice from State and Territory Governments and the evolving nature of the situation.

I urge you and your staff to continue to follow the guidance of health officials and stay safe during this challenging time.

If you have any questions, please contact your Account Manager.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nathan Smyth', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Nathan Smyth

16 July 2021



Dear Chief Executive Officer

COVID-19 - Mutual Obligation Arrangements – South Australia and Victoria

The Australian Government has suspended mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants in regions affected by COVID-19 lockdowns announced in South Australia and Victoria today.

The temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements in **South Australia** is in place from today, Tuesday 20 July 2021 and will remain in place until Tuesday 3 August 2021 inclusive.

For **Victoria**, the current temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements has been extended until Tuesday 3 August 2021 inclusive.

These arrangements apply to job seekers and participants with mutual obligation requirements across employment services programs - jobactive, Online Employment Services, Disability Employment Services and ParentsNext.

This means all mutual obligation requirements for affected job seekers and participants have been suspended — no compliance action will be taken and no one's payment will be suspended. Job seekers and participants will not be penalised for not meeting their mutual obligation requirements, such as signing their Job Plan, attending, or reporting their attendance at appointments or activities.

Job seekers whose Job Search Periods end during the suspension of mutual obligation requirements will not be required to complete their Job Search requirement. However, actively looking for work remains a fundamental for job seekers.

Job seekers whose Job Search requirements are due after the end of the temporary suspension are required to complete their agreed Job Search requirement before it is due. Their requirements, however, should be tailored to the personal circumstances of the job seeker and the local labour market. Reasonable excuse provisions continue to apply in these circumstances.

The Department will send an SMS directly to all impacted job seekers and participants advising them of the extension of this temporary suspension.

Special Circumstances Exemptions continue to be available through Services Australia for job seekers who require them.

Providers should take into consideration whether job seekers or participants who are unable to return home or to their place of residence, or who are in mandatory isolation following the end of the temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements, should have their requirements amended or set to no longer required.

Servicing

As I previously advised, the Department expects that you will continue to ensure job seekers and participants are supported to access the full range of assistance available - including mental health services, if required. Your job seekers and participants should also be encouraged to continue to check their mutual obligation requirements including when they are due/or scheduled, after the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends.

Please ensure that services are delivered by your organisation safely, and in line with all local health advice in that area. Job seekers and participants whose mutual obligations have been suspended can continue to voluntarily participate in non-face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice. I encourage your organisation to revisit your existing COVID-Safe plan to ensure participants' and your staff members' safety.

Your organisation should consider the stay at home orders and movement restrictions in place when deciding Acceptable and Valid Reasons for all job seekers and participants.

Providers must only operate face-to-face servicing where it is permissible by relevant State or Territory Governments. As restrictions differ across Australia, providers should be aware of what restrictions apply to their service sites and act accordingly.

That is, where face-to-face delivery is restricted by the requirements of a relevant State or Territory Government, your organisation must provide face-to-face servicing up to the limit of the relevant restriction until the restriction is revoked, and provide services remotely by phone, video or online where face-to-face services cannot otherwise be delivered.

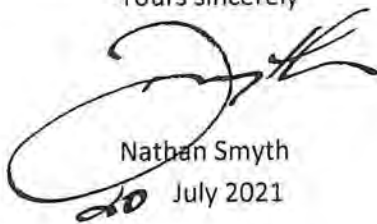
As previously advised, the Department will take a "no disadvantage approach" in relation to assessing provider performance in the relevant reporting period. This means that wherever mutual obligation requirements for job seekers are suspended, the Department will take this into consideration when assessing performance.

The Department also continues to monitor developments across the rest of Australia, considering advice from State and Territory Governments and the evolving nature of the situation.

I urge you and your staff to continue to follow the guidance of health officials and stay safe during this challenging time.

If you have any questions, please contact your Account Manager.

Yours sincerely



Nathan Smyth
July 2021



Dear Chief Executive Officer

COVID-19 - Mutual Obligation Arrangements – Central West New South Wales

The Australian Government has temporarily suspended mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants in the **Blayney, Cabonne and Orange** Local Government Areas of New South Wales until Tuesday 3 August 2021 inclusive.

These arrangements apply to job seekers and participants with mutual obligation requirements across employment services programs - jobactive, Online Employment Services, Disability Employment Services and ParentsNext.

This means all mutual obligation requirements for affected job seekers and participants have been suspended — no compliance action will be taken and no one's payment will be suspended. Job seekers and participants will not be penalised for not meeting their mutual obligation requirements, such as signing their Job Plan, attending, or reporting their attendance at appointments or activities.

Job seekers whose Job Search Periods end during the suspension of mutual obligation requirements will not be required to complete their Job Search requirement. However, actively looking for work remains a fundamental requirement for job seekers.

Job seekers whose Job Search requirements are due after the end of the temporary suspension are required to complete their agreed Job Search requirement before it is due. Their requirements, however, should be tailored to the personal circumstances of the job seeker and the local labour market. Reasonable excuse provisions continue to apply in these circumstances.

The Department will send an SMS directly to all impacted job seekers and participants advising them of the extension of this temporary suspension.

Special Circumstances Exemptions continue to be available through Services Australia for job seekers who require them.

Providers should take into consideration whether job seekers or participants who are unable to return home or to their place of residence, or who are in mandatory isolation following the end of the temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements, should have their requirements amended or set to no longer required.

Servicing

As I previously advised, the Department expects that you will continue to ensure job seekers and participants are supported to access the full range of assistance available - including mental health services, if required. Your job seekers and participants should also be encouraged to continue to check their mutual obligation requirements including when they are due/or scheduled, after the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends.

Please ensure that services are delivered by your organisation safely, and in line with all local health advice in that area. Job seekers and participants whose mutual obligations have been suspended can continue to voluntarily participate in non-face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice. I encourage your organisation to revisit your existing COVID-Safe plan to ensure participants' and your staff members' safety.

Your organisation should consider the stay at home orders and movement restrictions in place when deciding Acceptable and Valid Reasons for all job seekers and participants.

Providers must only operate face-to-face servicing where it is permissible by relevant State or Territory Governments. As restrictions differ across Australia, providers should be aware of what restrictions apply to their service sites and act accordingly.

That is, where face-to-face delivery is restricted by the requirements of a relevant State or Territory Government, your organisation must provide face-to-face servicing up to the limit of the relevant restriction until the restriction is revoked, and provide services remotely by phone, video or online where face-to-face services cannot otherwise be delivered.

As previously advised, the Department will take a "no disadvantage approach" in relation to assessing provider performance in the relevant reporting period. This means that wherever mutual obligation requirements for job seekers are suspended, the Department will take this into consideration when assessing performance.

The Department also continues to monitor developments across the rest of Australia, considering advice from State and Territory Governments and the evolving nature of the situation.

I urge you and your staff to continue to follow the guidance of health officials and stay safe during this challenging time.

If you have any questions, please contact your Account Manager.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nathan Smyth', with a large, stylized initial 'N'.

Nathan Smyth

21 July 2021



Dear Chief Executive Officer

COVID-19 - Mutual Obligation Arrangements

The Australian Government has suspended mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants in regions across Australia affected by COVID-19 lockdowns. The below outlines the mutual obligation requirement arrangements the Australian Government has put in place to support job seekers and participants in affected States and Territories during this time. This includes the temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements:

- in **Western Australia** for the Perth Region and Peel Region is in place from Tuesday 29 June until Tuesday 6 July 2021 inclusive.
- in the **Northern Territory** for job seekers and participants in the City of Darwin and the City of Palmerston is in place, applying from Monday 28 June until Tuesday 6 July 2021 inclusive.
- in **New South Wales** for job seekers and participants in the Local Government Areas of Greater Sydney, Blue Mountains, Central Coast, Wollongong, and Shellharbour is in place, applying from Sunday 27 June 2021 until Tuesday 13 July 2021 inclusive.
- in **New South Wales** for job seekers and participants in the Local Government Areas of City of Sydney, Waverley, Randwick, Canada Bay, Inner West, Bayside and Woollahra is in place, applying from Friday 25 June 2021 until Tuesday 13 July 2021 inclusive.

Please note, the Australian Government will also temporarily suspend mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants in **Queensland** Local Government Areas of Townsville, Brisbane, Gold Coast, Ipswich, Lockyer Valley, Logan, Moreton Bay, Noosa, Redland, Scenic Rim, Somerset and Sunshine Coast, from Wednesday 30 June until Tuesday 6 July 2021 inclusive.

The above arrangements apply to job seekers and participants with mutual obligation requirements across employment services programs - jobactive, Online Employment Services, Disability Employment Services and ParentsNext.

These arrangements mean all mutual obligation requirements have been lifted — no compliance action will be taken and no one's payments will be suspended. Job seekers and participants will not be penalised for not meeting their mutual obligation requirements, such as signing their Job Plan, attending, or reporting their attendance at appointments or activities.

Job seekers whose Job Search Periods end during the lifting of mutual obligation requirements will not be required to complete their Job Search requirement.

The Department will send an SMS directly to all impacted job seekers and participants advising them of this temporary suspension.

Special Circumstances Exemptions also continue to be available through Services Australia for job seekers who require them.

Servicing

I expect that you will continue to ensure job seekers and participants are supported to access the full range of assistance available - including mental health services, if required. Your job seekers and participants should also be encouraged to continue to check their mutual obligation requirements including when they are due/or scheduled, after the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends. This includes Job Search requirements.

Please ensure that services are delivered by your organisation safely, and in line with all local health advice for that area. Job seekers and participants whose mutual obligations have been suspended can continue to voluntarily participate in non-face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice. I encourage your organisation to revisit your existing COVID-19 safe plan to ensure participants' and your staff members' safety.

Your organisation should consider the stay at home orders and movement restrictions in place when deciding Acceptable and Valid Reasons for all job seekers and participants.

Providers must only operate face-to-face servicing where it is permissible by relevant state or territory governments. As restrictions differ across Australia, providers should be aware what restrictions apply to their service sites and act accordingly.

That is, where face to face delivery is restricted by the requirements of a relevant State or Territory government, your organisation must provide face-to-face servicing up to the limit of the relevant restriction until the restriction is revoked, and provide services remotely by phone, video or online where face-to-face services cannot otherwise be delivered.

As previously advised, the Department will take a "no disadvantage approach" in relation to assessing provider performance in the relevant reporting period. This means that wherever mutual obligation requirements for job seekers are suspended, the Department will take this into consideration when assessing performance.

The Department also continues to monitor developments across the rest of Australia, considering advice from State and Territory Governments and the evolving nature of the situation.

I urge you and your staff to continue to follow the guidance of health officials and stay safe during this challenging time.

If you have any questions, please contact your Account Manager.

Yours sincerely



Nathan Smyth
29 June 2021



Dear Chief Executive Officer

COVID-19 - Mutual Obligation Arrangements – New South Wales – Extension

The Australian Government has extended the suspension of mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants in identified regions of New South Wales until Tuesday 31 August 2021 (inclusive).

These arrangements apply to job seekers and participants with mutual obligation requirements across employment services programs - jobactive, Online Employment Services, Disability Employment Services and ParentsNext in Greater Sydney, Blue Mountains, Central Coast, Wollongong, and Shellharbour.

These arrangements mean all mutual obligation requirements for affected job seekers and participants have been suspended — no compliance action will be taken and no one's payment will be suspended. Job seekers and participants will not be penalised for not meeting their mutual obligation requirements, such as signing their Job Plan, attending, or reporting their attendance at appointments or activities.

Job seekers whose Job Search Periods end during the suspension of mutual obligation requirements will not be required to complete their Job Search requirement. However, actively looking for work remains a fundamental requirement for job seekers.

Job seekers whose Job Search requirements are due after the end of the temporary suspension are required to complete their agreed Job Search requirement before it is due. Their requirements, however, should be tailored to the personal circumstances of the job seeker and the local labour market. Reasonable excuse provisions continue to apply in these circumstances.

The Department will send an SMS directly to all impacted job seekers and participants advising them of the extension of this temporary suspension.

Special Circumstances Exemptions continue to be available through Services Australia for job seekers who require them.

Providers should take into consideration whether job seekers or participants who are unable to return home or to their place of residence, or who are in mandatory isolation following the end of the temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements, should have their requirements amended or set to no longer required.

Servicing

As I previously advised, the Department expects that you will continue to ensure job seekers and participants are supported to access the full range of assistance available - including mental health services, if required. Your job seekers and participants should also be encouraged to continue to check their mutual obligation requirements including when they are due/or scheduled, after the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends.

Please ensure that services are delivered by your organisation safely, and in line with all local health advice in that area. Job seekers and participants whose mutual obligations have been suspended can continue to voluntarily participate in non-face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice. I encourage your organisation to revisit your existing COVID-Safe plan to ensure participants' and your staff members' safety.

Your organisation should consider the stay at home orders and movement restrictions in place when deciding Acceptable and Valid Reasons for all job seekers and participants.

Providers must only operate face-to-face servicing where it is permissible by relevant State or Territory Governments. As restrictions differ across Australia, providers should be aware of what restrictions apply to their service sites and act accordingly.

That is, where face-to-face delivery is restricted by the requirements of a relevant State or Territory Government, your organisation must provide face-to-face servicing up to the limit of the relevant restriction until the restriction is revoked, and provide services remotely by phone, video or online where face-to-face services cannot otherwise be delivered.

As previously advised, the Department will take a "no disadvantage approach" in relation to assessing provider performance in the relevant reporting period. This means that wherever mutual obligation requirements for job seekers are suspended, the Department will take this into consideration when assessing performance.

The Department also continues to monitor developments across the rest of Australia, considering advice from State and Territory Governments and the evolving nature of the situation.

I urge you and your staff to continue to follow the guidance of health officials and stay safe during this challenging time.

If you have any questions, please contact your Account Manager.

Yours sincerely



Nathan Smyth
30 July 2021



Dear Chief Executive Officer

COVID-19 - Mutual Obligation Arrangements – South-East Queensland

The Australian Government has temporarily suspended mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants in the **Brisbane, Moreton Bay, Gold Coast, Ipswich, Lockyer Valley, Logan City, Noosa, Redlands, Scenic Rim, Somerset, and Sunshine Coast** Local Government Areas of Queensland from 31 July until Thursday 12 August 2021 inclusive.

These arrangements apply to job seekers and participants with mutual obligation requirements across employment services programs - jobactive, Online Employment Services, Disability Employment Services and ParentsNext.

This means all mutual obligation requirements for affected job seekers and participants have been suspended — no compliance action will be taken and no one's payment will be suspended. Job seekers and participants will not be penalised for not meeting their mutual obligation requirements, such as signing their Job Plan, attending, or reporting their attendance at appointments or activities.

Job seekers whose Job Search Periods end during the suspension of mutual obligation requirements will not be required to complete their Job Search requirement. However, actively looking for work remains a fundamental requirement for job seekers.

Job seekers whose Job Search requirements are due after the end of the temporary suspension are required to complete their agreed Job Search requirement before it is due. Their requirements, however, should be tailored to the personal circumstances of the job seeker and the local labour market. Reasonable excuse provisions continue to apply in these circumstances.

The Department will send an SMS directly to all impacted job seekers and participants advising them of the extension of this temporary suspension.

Special Circumstances Exemptions continue to be available through Services Australia for job seekers who require them.

Providers should take into consideration whether job seekers or participants who are unable to return home or to their place of residence, or who are in mandatory isolation following the end of the temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements, should have their requirements amended or set to no longer required.

Servicing

As I previously advised, the Department expects that you will continue to ensure job seekers and participants are supported to access the full range of assistance available - including mental health services, if required. Your job seekers and participants should also be encouraged to continue to check their mutual obligation requirements including when they are due/or scheduled, after the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends.

Please ensure that services are delivered by your organisation safely, and in line with all local health advice in that area. Job seekers and participants whose mutual obligations have been suspended can continue to voluntarily participate in non-face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice. I encourage your organisation to revisit your existing COVID-Safe plan to ensure participants' and your staff members' safety.

Your organisation should consider the stay at home orders and movement restrictions in place when deciding Acceptable and Valid Reasons for all job seekers and participants.

Providers must only operate face-to-face servicing where it is permissible by relevant State or Territory Governments. As restrictions differ across Australia, providers should be aware of what restrictions apply to their service sites and act accordingly.

That is, where face-to-face delivery is restricted by the requirements of a relevant State or Territory Government, your organisation must provide face-to-face servicing up to the limit of the relevant restriction until the restriction is revoked, and provide services remotely by phone, video or online where face-to-face services cannot otherwise be delivered.

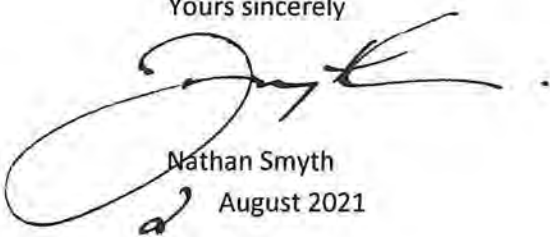
As previously advised, the Department will take a "no disadvantage approach" in relation to assessing provider performance in the relevant reporting period. This means that wherever mutual obligation requirements for job seekers are suspended, the Department will take this into consideration when assessing performance.

The Department also continues to monitor developments across the rest of Australia, considering advice from State and Territory Governments and the evolving nature of the situation.

I urge you and your staff to continue to follow the guidance of health officials and stay safe during this challenging time.

If you have any questions, please contact your Account Manager.

Yours sincerely



Nathan Smyth

August 2021



Dear Chief Executive Officer

COVID-19 - Mutual Obligation Arrangements – Victoria and Hunter and Upper Hunter Regions New South Wales

The Australian Government has temporarily suspended mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants in **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 from 5 August and will be in place until Tuesday 17 August 2021 (inclusive).

These arrangements apply to job seekers and participants with mutual obligation requirements across employment services programs - jobactive, Online Employment Services, Disability Employment Services and ParentsNext.

This means all mutual obligation requirements for affected job seekers and participants have been suspended — no compliance action will be taken and no one's payment will be suspended. Job seekers and participants will not be penalised for not meeting their mutual obligation requirements, such as signing their Job Plan, attending, or reporting their attendance at appointments or activities.

Job seekers whose Job Search Periods end during the suspension of mutual obligation requirements will not be required to complete their Job Search requirement. However, actively looking for work remains a fundamental requirement for job seekers.

Job seekers whose Job Search requirements are due after the end of the temporary suspension are required to complete their agreed Job Search requirement before it is due. Their requirements, however, should be tailored to the personal circumstances of the job seeker and the local labour market. Reasonable excuse provisions continue to apply in these circumstances.

The Department will send an SMS directly to all impacted job seekers and participants advising them of the extension of this temporary suspension.

Special Circumstances Exemptions continue to be available through Services Australia for job seekers who require them.

Providers should take into consideration whether job seekers or participants who are unable to return home or to their place of residence, or who are in mandatory isolation following the end of the temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements, should have their requirements amended or set to no longer required.

Servicing

As I previously advised, the Department expects that you will continue to ensure job seekers and participants are supported to access the full range of assistance available - including mental health services, if required. Your job seekers and participants should also be encouraged to continue to check their mutual obligation requirements including when they are due/or scheduled, after the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends.

Please ensure that services are delivered by your organisation safely, and in line with all local health advice in that area. Job seekers and participants whose mutual obligations have been suspended can continue to voluntarily participate in non-face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice. I encourage your organisation to revisit your existing COVID-Safe plan to ensure participants' and your staff members' safety.

Your organisation should consider the stay at home orders and movement restrictions in place when deciding Acceptable and Valid Reasons for all job seekers and participants.

Providers must only operate face-to-face servicing where it is permissible by relevant State or Territory Governments. As restrictions differ across Australia, providers should be aware of what restrictions apply to their service sites and act accordingly.

That is, where face-to-face delivery is restricted by the requirements of a relevant State or Territory Government, your organisation must provide face-to-face servicing up to the limit of the relevant restriction until the restriction is revoked, and provide services remotely by phone, video or online where face-to-face services cannot otherwise be delivered.

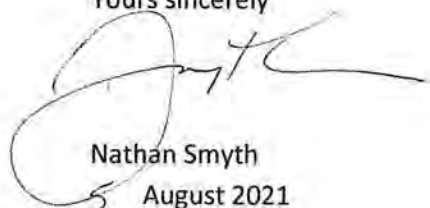
As previously advised, the Department will take a "no disadvantage approach" in relation to assessing provider performance in the relevant reporting period. This means that wherever mutual obligation requirements for job seekers are suspended, the Department will take this into consideration when assessing performance.

The Department also continues to monitor developments across the rest of Australia, considering advice from State and Territory Governments and the evolving nature of the situation.

I urge you and your staff to continue to follow the guidance of health officials and stay safe during this challenging time.

If you have any questions, please contact your Account Manager.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nathan Smyth', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Nathan Smyth

5 August 2021



Dear Chief Executive Officer

COVID-19 - Mutual Obligation Arrangements – New South Wales and Queensland

The Australian Government has temporarily suspended mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants in regions affected by COVID-19 lockdowns. The below outlines the mutual obligation requirement arrangements the Australian Government has put in place over the weekend to support job seekers and participants in those affected states. 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 to job seekers and participants with mutual obligation requirements across employment services programs - jobactive, Online Employment Services, Disability Employment Services and ParentsNext.

This means all mutual obligation requirements for affected job seekers and participants have been suspended — no compliance action will be taken and no one's payment will be suspended. Job seekers and participants will not be penalised for not meeting their mutual obligation requirements, such as signing their Job Plan, attending, or reporting their attendance at appointments or activities.

Job seekers whose Job Search Periods end during the suspension of mutual obligation requirements will not be required to complete their Job Search requirement. However, actively looking for work remains a fundamental requirement for job seekers.

Job seekers whose Job Search requirements are due after the end of the temporary suspension are required to complete their agreed Job Search requirement before it is due. Their requirements, however, should be tailored to the personal circumstances of the job seeker and the local labour market. Reasonable excuse provisions continue to apply in these circumstances.

The Department will send an SMS directly to all impacted job seekers and participants advising them of this temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements.

Special Circumstances Exemptions continue to be available through Services Australia for job seekers who require them.

Providers should take into consideration whether job seekers or participants who are unable to return home or to their place of residence, or who are in mandatory isolation following the end of the temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements, should have their requirements amended or set to no longer required.

Servicing

As I previously advised, the Department expects that you will continue to ensure job seekers and participants are supported to access the full range of assistance available - including mental health services, if required. Your job seekers and participants should also be encouraged to continue to check their mutual obligation requirements including when they are due/or scheduled, after the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends.

Please ensure that services are delivered by your organisation safely, and in line with all local health advice in that area. Job seekers and participants whose mutual obligations have been suspended can continue to voluntarily participate in non-face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice. I encourage your organisation to revisit your existing COVID-Safe plan to ensure participants' and your staff members' safety.

Your organisation should consider the stay at home orders and movement restrictions in place when deciding Acceptable and Valid Reasons for all job seekers and participants.

Providers must only operate face-to-face servicing where it is permissible by relevant State or Territory Governments. As restrictions differ across Australia, providers should be aware of what restrictions apply to their service sites and act accordingly.

That is, where face-to-face delivery is restricted by the requirements of a relevant State or Territory Government, your organisation must provide face-to-face servicing up to the limit of the relevant restriction until the restriction is revoked, and provide services remotely by phone, video or online where face-to-face services cannot otherwise be delivered.

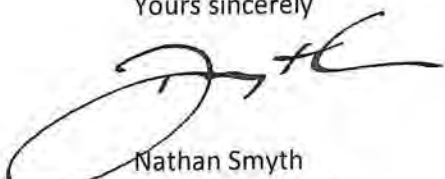
As previously advised, the Department will take a "no disadvantage approach" in relation to assessing provider performance in the relevant reporting period. This means that wherever mutual obligation requirements for job seekers are suspended, the Department will take this into consideration when assessing performance.

The Department also continues to monitor developments across the rest of Australia, considering advice from State and Territory Governments and the evolving nature of the situation.

I urge you and your staff to continue to follow the guidance of health officials and stay safe during this challenging time.

If you have any questions, please contact your Account Manager.

Yours sincerely



Nathan Smyth
9 August 2021



Dear Chief Executive Officer

COVID-19 - Mutual Obligation Arrangements – Tamworth and Northern Rivers Districts of NSW

The Australian Government has suspended mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants in the Tamworth and Northern Rivers Districts of New South Wales due to COVID-19 lockdowns.

The temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements in the **Tamworth Regional Council Local Government Area** applies to job seekers and participants from **Monday 9 August**, and will remain in place until **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 to job seekers and participants with mutual obligation requirements across employment services programs - jobactive, Online Employment Services, Disability Employment Services and ParentsNext.

This means all mutual obligation requirements for affected job seekers and participants have been suspended — no compliance action will be taken and no one's payment will be suspended. Job seekers and participants will not be penalised for not meeting their mutual obligation requirements, such as signing their Job Plan, attending, or reporting their attendance at appointments or activities.

Job seekers whose Job Search Periods end during the suspension of mutual obligation requirements will not be required to complete their requirement. However, actively looking for work remains a fundamental requirement for job seekers.

Job seekers whose Job Search requirements are due after the end of the temporary suspension are required to complete their agreed Job Search requirement before it is due. Their requirements, however, should be tailored to the personal circumstances of the job seeker and the local labour market. Reasonable excuse provisions continue to apply in these circumstances.

The Department will send an SMS directly to all impacted job seekers and participants advising them of this temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements.

Special Circumstances Exemptions continue to be available through Services Australia for job seekers who require them.

Providers should take into consideration whether job seekers or participants who are unable to return home or to their place of residence, or who are in mandatory isolation following the end of the temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements, should have their requirements amended or set to no longer required.

Servicing

As I previously advised, the Department expects that you will continue to ensure job seekers and participants are supported to access the full range of assistance available - including mental health services, if required. Your job seekers and participants should also be encouraged to continue to check their mutual obligation requirements including when they are due/or scheduled, after the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends.

Please ensure that services are delivered by your organisation safely, and in line with all local health advice in that area. Job seekers and participants whose mutual obligations have been suspended can continue to voluntarily participate in non-face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice. I encourage your organisation to revisit your existing COVID-Safe plan to ensure participants' and your staff members' safety.

Your organisation should consider the stay at home orders and movement restrictions in place when deciding Acceptable and Valid Reasons for all job seekers and participants.

Providers must only operate face-to-face servicing where it is permissible by relevant state or territory governments. As restrictions differ across Australia, providers should be aware of what restrictions apply to their service sites and act accordingly.

That is, where face-to-face delivery is restricted by the requirements of a relevant state or territory government, your organisation must provide face-to-face servicing up to the limit of the relevant restriction until the restriction is revoked, and provide services remotely by phone, video or online where face-to-face services cannot otherwise be delivered.

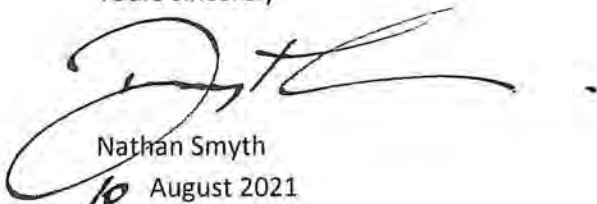
As previously advised, the Department will take a "no disadvantage approach" in relation to assessing provider performance in the relevant reporting period. This means that wherever mutual obligation requirements for job seekers are suspended, the Department will take this into consideration when assessing performance.

The Department also continues to monitor developments across the rest of Australia, considering advice from state and territory governments and the evolving nature of the situation.

I urge you and your staff to continue to follow the guidance of health officials and stay safe during this challenging time.

If you have any questions, please contact your Account Manager.

Yours sincerely



Nathan Smyth
10 August 2021



Dear Chief Executive Officer

COVID-19 - Mutual Obligation Arrangements – Australian Capital Territory, Far North New South Wales, Metropolitan Melbourne and Dubbo

The Australian Government has suspended mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants in the Australian Capital Territory, Far North New South Wales, Metropolitan Melbourne and the Dubbo Local Government Area, New South Wales after announced COVID-19 lockdowns.

- in the **Australian Capital Territory, excluding Jervis Bay**, for job seekers and participants, is in place, applying from **Thursday 12 August** until **Tuesday 24 August 2021** inclusive.
- in **Far North New South Wales** for job seekers and participants in the Local Government Areas of Bogan, Bourke, Brewarrina, Coonamble, Gilgandra, Narromine, Walgett and Warren, is in place, applying from **Thursday 12 August** until **Tuesday 24 August 2021** inclusive.
- in **Victoria** for job seekers and participants in **Metropolitan Melbourne** is in place, applying **Wednesday 11 August 2021**, and will remain in place until **Tuesday 24 August 2021** inclusive. For other areas of Victoria, the existing temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements will remain in place until 17 August 2021 inclusive.
- in **New South Wales** for job seekers and participants in the Local Government Area of Dubbo is in place, applying from **Wednesday 11 August 2021**, and will remain in place until **Tuesday 24 August 2021** inclusive.

These arrangements apply to job seekers and participants with mutual obligation requirements across employment services programs - jobactive, Online Employment Services, Disability Employment Services and ParentsNext.

This means all mutual obligation requirements for affected job seekers and participants have been suspended — no compliance action will be taken and no one's payment will be suspended. Job seekers and participants will not be penalised for not meeting their mutual obligation requirements, such as signing their Job Plan, attending, or reporting their attendance at appointments or activities.

Job seekers whose Job Search Periods end during the suspension of mutual obligation requirements will not be required to complete their Job Search requirement. However, actively looking for work remains a fundamental requirement for job seekers.

Job seekers whose Job Search requirements are due after the end of the temporary suspension are required to complete their agreed Job Search requirement before it is due. Their requirements, however, should be tailored to the personal circumstances of the job seeker and the local labour market. Reasonable excuse provisions continue to apply in these circumstances.

The Department will send an SMS directly to all impacted job seekers and participants advising them of this temporary suspension.

Special Circumstances Exemptions continue to be available through Services Australia for job seekers who require them.

Providers should take into consideration whether job seekers or participants who are unable to return home or to their place of residence, or who are in mandatory isolation following the end of the temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements, should have their requirements amended or set to no longer required.

Servicing

As I previously advised, the Department expects that you will continue to ensure job seekers and participants are supported to access the full range of assistance available - including mental health services, if required. Your job seekers and participants should also be encouraged to continue to check their mutual obligation requirements including when they are due/or scheduled, after the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends.

Please ensure that services are delivered by your organisation safely, and in line with all local health advice in that area. Job seekers and participants whose mutual obligations have been suspended can continue to voluntarily participate in non-face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice. I encourage your organisation to revisit your existing COVID-Safe plan to ensure participants' and your staff members' safety.

Your organisation should consider the stay at home orders and movement restrictions in place when deciding Acceptable and Valid Reasons for all job seekers and participants.

Providers must only deliver face-to-face services where permissible by relevant State or Territory Governments. As restrictions differ across Australia, providers should be aware of what restrictions apply to their service sites and act accordingly.

That is, where face-to-face delivery is restricted by the requirements of a relevant State or Territory Government, your organisation must provide face-to-face servicing up to the limit of the relevant restriction until the restriction is revoked, and provide services remotely by phone, video or online where face-to-face services cannot otherwise be delivered.

As previously advised, the Department will take a "no disadvantage approach" in relation to assessing provider performance in the relevant reporting period. This means that wherever mutual obligation requirements for job seekers are suspended, the Department will take this into consideration when assessing performance.

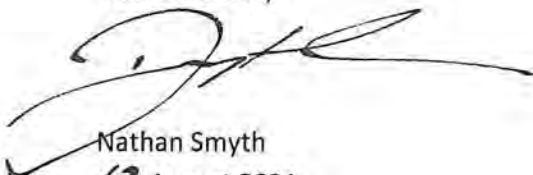
Communication about suspensions of Mutual Obligation Requirements – COVID-19

Please note that due to the current frequency of COVID-19 lockdowns, moving forward, I will be sending out a weekly letter summarising the temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirement arrangements. Please ensure that you and your staff are subscribed to the Provider Portal Newsletter to receive timely notification of when temporary suspensions of mutual obligations are implemented.

I urge you and your staff to continue to follow the guidance of health officials and stay safe during this challenging time.

If you have any questions, please contact your Account Manager.

Yours sincerely



Nathan Smyth

12 August 2021



Dear Chief Executive Officer

COVID-19 - Mutual Obligation Arrangements – Update

Since my last update on 17 August 2021, the suspension of mutual obligation requirements has ceased in three locations, Cairns and Yarrabah in Queensland and regional Victoria on Thursday 17 August 2021.

However, the temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements for **regional Victoria** were **re-instated on Sunday 22 August 2021** after a Victorian Government COVID-19 lockdown announcement for this area. This now means that mutual obligation requirements are suspended for all job seekers and participants that live or are serviced in **Victoria until 7 September 2021**.

On Friday 20 August 2021, the New South Wales Government announced the extension of COVID-19 lockdown arrangements for Greater Sydney until the end of September 2021. In response, the Australian Government has suspended mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants in **Greater Sydney until Tuesday, 5 October 2021** inclusive.

As COVID-19 restrictions are announced the department is sending SMS messages to all impacted job seekers and participants advising them of the temporary suspensions.

The table below lists the areas and end dates for the current suspensions of mutual obligation requirements that the Australian Government has implemented for job seekers and participants:

State/Territory	Location	End Date
Northern Territory	Greater Darwin and Katherine Region	24/08/2021
New South Wales	New South Wales (excluding Greater Sydney)	31/08/2021
Victoria	Victoria	07/09/2021
Australian Capital Territory	Australian Capital Territory	07/09/2021
New South Wales	Greater Sydney	05/10/2021

The suspension of mutual obligation requirements applies to job seekers and participants in jobactive, Disability Employment Services, ParentsNext and the New Employment Services Trial.

As mentioned in my previous letter, individual Provider Portal notices per event will no longer be published, instead pertinent information is now available on the COVID-19 information page relevant to each program. This page can be accessed from the left hand navigation menu on the jobactive, NEST, ParentsNext and DES Program Portal sites by selecting the COVID-19 link under "Operational Material".

Providers should take into consideration whether job seekers or participants who are unable to return home or to their place of residence, or who are in mandatory isolation following the end of the temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements, should have their requirements amended or set to no longer required.

Special Circumstances Exemptions continue to be available through Services Australia for job seekers who require them.

The Department will continue to closely monitor the COVID-19 situation across Australia and the jurisdictions affected by COVID-19 restrictions.

Servicing

As I have previously advised, the Department expects that you will continue to ensure job seekers and participants are supported to access the full range of assistance available - including mental health services, if required. Your job seekers and participants should also be encouraged to continue to apply for jobs and check their mutual obligation requirements including when they are due/or scheduled, after the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends.

Please ensure that services are delivered by your organisation safely, and in line with all local health advice in that area. Job seekers and participants whose mutual obligations have been suspended can continue to voluntarily participate in non-face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice. I encourage your organisation to revisit your existing COVID-Safe plan to ensure participants' and your staff members' safety.

Your organisation should consider the stay at home orders and movement restrictions in place when deciding Acceptable and Valid Reasons for all job seekers and participants.

Providers must only deliver face-to-face services where permissible by relevant State or Territory Governments. As restrictions differ across Australia, providers should be aware of what restrictions apply to their service sites and act accordingly.

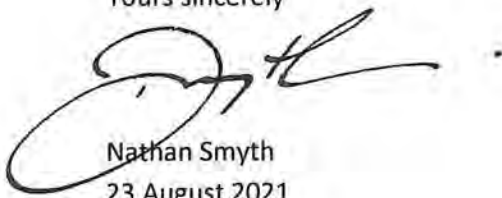
That is, where face-to-face delivery is restricted by the requirements of a relevant State or Territory Government, your organisation must provide face-to-face servicing up to the limit of the relevant restriction until the restriction is revoked, and provide services remotely by phone, video or online where face-to-face services cannot otherwise be delivered.

As previously advised, the Department will take a "no disadvantage approach" in relation to assessing provider performance in the relevant reporting period. This means that wherever mutual obligation requirements for job seekers are suspended, the Department will take this into consideration when assessing performance.

I urge you and your staff to continue to follow the guidance of health officials and stay safe during this challenging time.

If you have any questions, please contact your Account Manager.

Yours sincerely



Nathan Smyth
23 August 2021



Dear Chief Executive Officer

COVID-19 - Mutual Obligation Arrangements – Update

Since my last update on 23 August 2021, the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ceased in Greater Darwin and Katherine Region of the Northern Territory on Tuesday 24 August 2021.

The temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements for **regional New South Wales** was **extended** after a New South Wales Government COVID-19 lockdown extension announcement for this area. This now means that mutual obligation requirements are suspended for all job seekers and participants that live or are serviced in **regional New South Wales until 14 September 2021**.

As COVID-19 restrictions are announced the department is sending SMS messages to all impacted job seekers and participants advising them of the temporary suspensions.

The table below lists the areas and end dates for the current suspensions of mutual obligation requirements that the Australian Government has implemented for job seekers and participants:

State/Territory	Location	End Date
Victoria	Victoria	07/09/2021
Australian Capital Territory	Australian Capital Territory	07/09/2021
New South Wales	Regional New South Wales	14/09/2021
New South Wales	Greater Sydney	05/10/2021

The suspension of mutual obligation requirements applies to job seekers and participants in jobactive, Disability Employment Services, ParentsNext and the New Employment Services Trial.

As mentioned in my previous letter, individual Provider Portal notices per event will no longer be published, instead pertinent information is now available on the COVID-19 information page relevant to each program. This page can be accessed from the left hand navigation menu on the jobactive, NEST, ParentsNext and DES Program Portal sites by selecting the COVID-19 link under "Operational Material".

Providers should take into consideration whether job seekers or participants who are unable to return home or to their place of residence, or who are in mandatory isolation following the end of the temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements, should have their requirements amended or set to no longer required.

Special Circumstances Exemptions continue to be available through Services Australia for job seekers who require them.

The Department will continue to closely monitor the COVID-19 situation across Australia and the jurisdictions affected by COVID-19 restrictions.

Servicing

As I have previously advised, the Department expects that you will continue to ensure job seekers and participants are supported to access the full range of assistance available - including mental health services, if required. Your job seekers and participants should also be encouraged to continue to apply for jobs and check their mutual obligation requirements including when they are due/or scheduled, after the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends.

Please ensure that services are delivered by your organisation safely, and in line with all local health advice in that area. Job seekers and participants whose mutual obligations have been suspended can continue to voluntarily participate in non-face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice. I encourage your organisation to revisit your existing COVID-Safe plan to ensure participants' and your staff members' safety.

Your organisation should consider the stay at home orders and movement restrictions in place when deciding Acceptable and Valid Reasons for all job seekers and participants.

Providers must only deliver face-to-face services where permissible by relevant State or Territory Governments. As restrictions differ across Australia, providers should be aware of what restrictions apply to their service sites and act accordingly.

That is, where face-to-face delivery is restricted by the requirements of a relevant State or Territory Government, your organisation must provide face-to-face servicing up to the limit of the relevant restriction until the restriction is revoked, and provide services remotely by phone, video or online where face-to-face services cannot otherwise be delivered.

As previously advised, the Department will take a "no disadvantage approach" in relation to assessing provider performance in the relevant reporting period. This means that wherever mutual obligation requirements for job seekers are suspended, the Department will take this into consideration when assessing performance.

I urge you and your staff to continue to follow the guidance of health officials and stay safe during this challenging time.

If you have any questions, please contact your Account Manager.

Yours sincerely



Nathan Smyth

3/ August 2021



Dear Chief Executive Officer

COVID-19 - Mutual Obligation Arrangements – Update

Since my last update on 31 August 2021, the suspension of mutual obligation requirements across the entire state of **Victoria** was **extended until 5 October 2021** (inclusive). This is in line with the Greater Sydney extension and consistent with the department's approach to recent suspensions.

The temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements for **Australian Capital Territory** was also **extended** after an Australian Capital Territory Government COVID-19 lockdown extension announcement. This now means that mutual obligation requirements are suspended for all job seekers and participants that live or are serviced in **the Australian Capital Territory (excluding Jervis Bay) until 21 September 2021** (inclusive).

As COVID-19 restrictions are announced, the department is sending SMS messages to all impacted job seekers and participants advising them of the temporary suspensions.

The table below lists the areas and end dates for the current suspensions of mutual obligation requirements that the Australian Government has implemented for job seekers and participants:

State/Territory	Location	End Date
New South Wales	Regional New South Wales	14/09/2021
Australian Capital Territory	Australian Capital Territory	21/09/2021
New South Wales	Greater Sydney	05/10/2021
Victoria	Victoria	05/10/2021

The suspension of mutual obligation requirements applies to job seekers and participants in jobactive, Disability Employment Services, ParentsNext and the New Employment Services Trial.

As mentioned in my previous letter, pertinent COVID-19 information is available on the COVID-19 information page relevant to each program on the Provider Portal site.

Providers should take into consideration whether job seekers or participants who are unable to return home or to their place of residence, or who are in mandatory isolation following the end of the temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements, should have their requirements amended or set to no longer required.

Special Circumstances Exemptions continue to be available through Services Australia for job seekers who require them.

The Department will continue to closely monitor the COVID-19 situation across Australia and the jurisdictions affected by COVID-19 restrictions.

Servicing

As I have previously advised, the Department expects that you will continue to ensure job seekers and participants are supported to access the full range of assistance available - including mental health services, if required. Your job seekers and participants should also be encouraged to continue to apply for jobs and check their mutual obligation requirements including when they are due/or scheduled, after the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends.

Please ensure that services are delivered by your organisation safely, and in line with all local health advice in that area. Job seekers and participants whose mutual obligations have been suspended can continue to voluntarily participate in non-face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice. I encourage your organisation to revisit your existing COVID-Safe plan to ensure participants' and your staff members' safety.

Your organisation should consider the stay at home orders and movement restrictions in place when deciding Acceptable and Valid Reasons for all job seekers and participants.

Providers must only deliver face-to-face services where permissible by relevant State or Territory Governments. As restrictions differ across Australia, providers should be aware of what restrictions apply to their service sites and act accordingly.

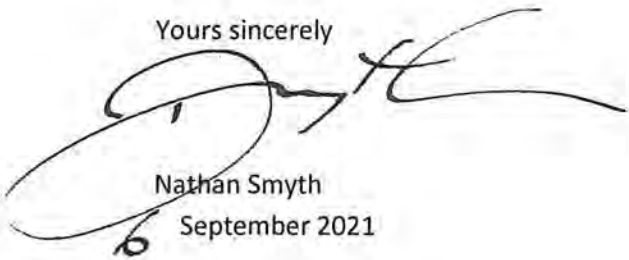
That is, where face-to-face delivery is restricted by the requirements of a relevant State or Territory Government, your organisation must provide face-to-face servicing up to the limit of the relevant restriction until the restriction is revoked, and provide services remotely by phone, video or online where face-to-face services cannot otherwise be delivered.

As previously advised, the Department will take a "no disadvantage approach" in relation to assessing provider performance in the relevant reporting period. This means that wherever mutual obligation requirements for job seekers are suspended, the Department will take this into consideration when assessing performance.

I urge you and your staff to continue to follow the guidance of health officials and stay safe during this challenging time.

If you have any questions, please contact your Account Manager.

Yours sincerely



Nathan Smyth

6 September 2021



Dear Chief Executive Officer

COVID-19 - Mutual Obligation Arrangements – Tamworth New South Wales

The Australian Government has temporarily suspended mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants in the Tamworth Regional Council Local Government Area of New South Wales until Tuesday 17 August 2021 inclusive.

These arrangements apply to job seekers and participants with mutual obligation requirements across employment services programs - jobactive, Online Employment Services, Disability Employment Services and ParentsNext.

This means all mutual obligation requirements for affected job seekers and participants have been suspended — no compliance action will be taken and no one's payment will be suspended. Job seekers and participants will not be penalised for not meeting their mutual obligation requirements, such as signing their Job Plan, attending, or reporting their attendance at appointments or activities.

Job seekers whose Job Search Periods end during the suspension of mutual obligation requirements will not be required to complete their Job Search requirement. However, actively looking for work remains a fundamental requirement for job seekers.

Job seekers whose Job Search requirements are due after the end of the temporary suspension are required to complete their agreed Job Search requirement before it is due. Their requirements, however, should be tailored to the personal circumstances of the job seeker and the local labour market. Reasonable excuse provisions continue to apply in these circumstances.

The Department will send an SMS directly to all impacted job seekers and participants advising them of this temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements.

Special Circumstances Exemptions continue to be available through Services Australia for job seekers who require them.

Providers should take into consideration whether job seekers or participants who are unable to return home or to their place of residence, or who are in mandatory isolation following the end of the temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements, should have their requirements amended or set to no longer required.

Servicing

As I previously advised, the Department expects that you will continue to ensure job seekers and participants are supported to access the full range of assistance available - including mental health services, if required. Your job seekers and participants should also be encouraged to continue to check their mutual obligation requirements including when they are due/or scheduled, after the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends.

Please ensure that services are delivered by your organisation safely, and in line with all local health advice in that area. Job seekers and participants whose mutual obligations have been suspended can continue to voluntarily participate in non-face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice. I encourage your organisation to revisit your existing COVID-Safe plan to ensure participants' and your staff members' safety.

Your organisation should consider the stay at home orders and movement restrictions in place when deciding Acceptable and Valid Reasons for all job seekers and participants.

Providers must only operate face-to-face servicing where it is permissible by relevant State or Territory Governments. As restrictions differ across Australia, providers should be aware of what restrictions apply to their service sites and act accordingly.

That is, where face-to-face delivery is restricted by the requirements of a relevant State or Territory Government, your organisation must provide face-to-face servicing up to the limit of the relevant restriction until the restriction is revoked, and provide services remotely by phone, video or online where face-to-face services cannot otherwise be delivered.

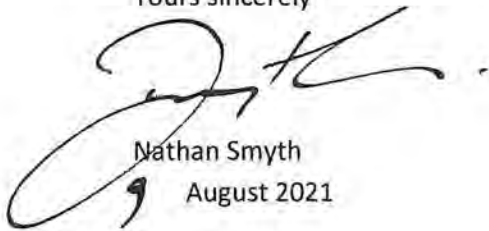
As previously advised, the Department will take a "no disadvantage approach" in relation to assessing provider performance in the relevant reporting period. This means that wherever mutual obligation requirements for job seekers are suspended, the Department will take this into consideration when assessing performance.

The Department also continues to monitor developments across the rest of Australia, considering advice from State and Territory Governments and the evolving nature of the situation.

I urge you and your staff to continue to follow the guidance of health officials and stay safe during this challenging time.

If you have any questions, please contact your Account Manager.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nathan Smyth', with a large, stylized flourish extending from the bottom left.

Nathan Smyth

9 August 2021



Dear Chief Executive Officer

COVID-19 - Mutual Obligation Arrangements – Update

I am writing to you in my new role as Deputy Secretary, Employment Programs Group in the Department of Education, Skills and Employment (the department), following changes to the department's structure introduced on 13 September 2021.

I will be responsible for the operation of our existing employment services, policy and programs. The Employment and National Workforce Group, led by Nathan Smyth, is focussed on implementing the New Employment Services Model and operationalising priorities under the Workforce portfolio.

From my experience leading the department's Schools and Youth Group I have seen what a difference targeted policy interventions and programs make in supporting Australians to reach their full potential. From October, I will host the monthly CEO livestream and I look forward to this opportunity to engage with you and your organisation as we continue to help job seekers prepare for and take up sustainable work as the economy recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since our last update on 6 September 2021, the **New South Wales Government** announced several changes to the states lockdown arrangements. As such, the Australian Government has temporarily suspended mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants in 38 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in regional New South Wales until **21 September 2021** inclusive, and in the Yass Valley Council area until **30 September 2021** inclusive.

Additionally, the **Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Government** has announced an extension of the current lockdown arrangements. As such, the Australian Government has temporarily suspended mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants in the ACT until **19 October 2021** inclusive. Lastly, the Victorian Government has today announced a seven-day lockdown in the **City of Ballarat**, this is covered by the existing suspension of mutual obligation requirements in place across Victoria that cease on **5 October 2021**.

As COVID-19 restrictions are announced, the department is sending SMS messages to all impacted job seekers and participants advising them of the temporary suspensions.

The table below lists the areas and end dates for the current suspensions of mutual obligation requirements that the Australian Government has implemented for job seekers and participants:

State/Territory	Location	End Date
New South Wales	38 regional LGAs remain in lockdown	21/09/2021
New South Wales	Yass Valley Council area	30/09/2021
New South Wales	Greater Sydney	05/10/2021
Victoria	Victoria	05/10/2021
Australian Capital Territory	Australian Capital Territory	19/10/2021

The suspension of mutual obligation requirements applies to job seekers and participants in jobactive, Disability Employment Services, ParentsNext and the New Employment Services Trial.

As a reminder, individual Provider Portal notices per event are no longer published, instead pertinent information is available on the COVID-19 information page relevant to each program. This page can be accessed from the left hand navigation menu on the jobactive, NEST, ParentsNext and DES Program Portal sites by selecting the COVID-19 link under "Operational Material".

Providers should take into consideration whether job seekers or participants who are unable to return home or to their place of residence, or who are in mandatory isolation following the end of the temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements, should have their requirements amended or set to no longer required.

Special Circumstances Exemptions continue to be available through Services Australia for job seekers who require them.

The Department will continue to closely monitor the COVID-19 situation across Australia and the jurisdictions affected by COVID-19 restrictions.

Servicing

As I have previously advised, the Department expects that you will continue to ensure job seekers and participants are supported to access the full range of assistance available - including mental health services, if required. Your job seekers and participants should also be encouraged to continue to apply for jobs and check their mutual obligation requirements including when they are due/or scheduled, after the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends.

Please ensure that services are delivered by your organisation safely, and in line with all local health advice in that area. Job seekers and participants whose mutual obligations have been suspended can continue to voluntarily participate in non-face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice. I encourage your organisation to revisit your existing COVID-Safe plan to ensure participants' and your staff members' safety.

Your organisation should consider the stay at home orders and movement restrictions in place when deciding Acceptable and Valid Reasons for all job seekers and participants.

Providers must only deliver face-to-face services where permissible by relevant State or Territory Governments. As restrictions differ across Australia, providers should be aware of what restrictions apply to their service sites and act accordingly.

That is, where face-to-face delivery is restricted by the requirements of a relevant State or Territory Government, your organisation must provide face-to-face servicing up to the limit of the relevant restriction until the restriction is revoked, and provide services remotely by phone, video or online where face-to-face services cannot otherwise be delivered.

As previously advised, the Department will take a "no disadvantage approach" in relation to assessing provider performance in the relevant reporting period. This means that wherever mutual obligation requirements for job seekers are suspended, the Department will take this into consideration when assessing performance.

I urge you and your staff to continue to follow the guidance of health officials and stay safe during this challenging time.

If you have any questions, please contact your Account Manager.

Yours sincerely,



Alex Gordon

15 September 2021



Dear Chief Executive Officer

COVID-19 - Mutual Obligation Arrangements – Update

As advised in my last Chief Executive Officer (CEO) COVID-19 update letter dated 12 August 2021, I am now providing a CEO letter summarising the current temporary suspensions of mutual obligation requirement arrangements in place across Australia.

The table below lists the areas and end dates for the current suspensions of mutual obligation requirements that the Australian Government has implemented for job seekers and participants:

State	Location	End Date
Victoria	Regional Victoria	17/08/2021
Queensland	Cairns and Yarrabah	17/08/2021
Northern Territory	Greater Darwin and Katherine Region	24/08/2021
New South Wales	Entire state of New South Wales, including Jervis Bay	31/08/2021
Victoria	Metropolitan Melbourne	07/09/2021
Australian Capital Territory	ACT, except Jervis Bay	07/09/2021

An SMS has been sent to all impacted job seekers and participants advising them of the temporary suspension.

Special Circumstances Exemptions continue to be available through Services Australia for job seekers who require them.

Providers should take into consideration whether job seekers or participants who are unable to return home or to their place of residence, or who are in mandatory isolation following the end of the temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements, should have their requirements amended or set to no longer required.

In lieu of individual provider portal notices for each event, all information on the suspension of mutual obligation requirements is now centralised on the Department's provider portal [COVID-19 Information page](#).

The Department will continue to closely monitor the COVID-19 situation across Australia and the jurisdictions affected by COVID-19 restrictions.

Servicing

As I previously advised, the Department expects that you will continue to ensure job seekers and participants are supported to access the full range of assistance available - including mental health services, if required. Your job seekers and participants should also be encouraged to continue to check their mutual obligation requirements including when they are due/or scheduled, after the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends.

Please ensure that services are delivered by your organisation safely, and in line with all local health advice in that area. Job seekers and participants whose mutual obligations have been suspended can continue to voluntarily participate in non-face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice. I encourage your organisation to revisit your existing COVID-Safe plan to ensure participants' and your staff members' safety.

Your organisation should consider the stay at home orders and movement restrictions in place when deciding Acceptable and Valid Reasons for all job seekers and participants.

Providers must only deliver face-to-face services where permissible by relevant State or Territory Governments. As restrictions differ across Australia, providers should be aware of what restrictions apply to their service sites and act accordingly.

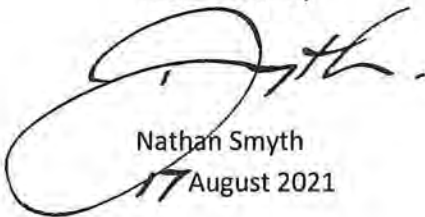
That is, where face-to-face delivery is restricted by the requirements of a relevant State or Territory Government, your organisation must provide face-to-face servicing up to the limit of the relevant restriction until the restriction is revoked, and provide services remotely by phone, video or online where face-to-face services cannot otherwise be delivered.

As previously advised, the Department will take a "no disadvantage approach" in relation to assessing provider performance in the relevant reporting period. This means that wherever mutual obligation requirements for job seekers are suspended, the Department will take this into consideration when assessing performance.

Please also ensure that you and your staff are subscribed to the Provider Portal Newsletter to receive timely notification of when temporary suspensions of mutual obligations are implemented. I urge you and your staff to continue to follow the guidance of health officials and stay safe during this challenging time.

If you have any questions, please contact your Account Manager.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nathan Smyth', is written over the printed name and date.

Nathan Smyth

17 August 2021



Dear Chief Executive Officer

COVID-19 - Mutual Obligation Arrangements – Update

Since my last update on 15 September 2021, the **New South Wales Government** has announced further changes to the State's lockdown arrangements. As such, the Australian Government has temporarily suspended mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants in **Albury, Lismore, Glen Innes Severn and Hilltops** Local Government Areas (LGAs) in **New South Wales** until **28 September 2021 inclusive**.

The **Cowra** LGA also in **New South Wales** was placed under lockdown today with the temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements in place until **5 October 2021 inclusive**.

As COVID-19 restrictions are announced, the department is sending SMS messages to all impacted job seekers and participants advising them of the temporary suspensions.

The table below lists the areas and end dates for the current suspensions of mutual obligation requirements that the Australian Government has implemented for job seekers and participants:

State/Territory	Location	End Date
New South Wales	38 Regional LGAs (and Jervis Bay)	21/09/2021
New South Wales	Albury & Lismore	28/09/2021
New South Wales	Glen Innes Severn & Hilltops LGAs	28/09/2021
New South Wales	Yass Valley Council	30/09/2021
New South Wales	Greater Sydney	05/10/2021
Victoria	Victoria	05/10/2021
New South Wales	Cowra	05/10/2021
Australian Capital Territory	Australian Capital Territory	19/10/2021

The suspension of mutual obligation requirements applies to job seekers and participants in jobactive, Disability Employment Services, ParentsNext and the New Employment Services Trial.

Providers should take into consideration whether job seekers or participants who are unable to return home or to their place of residence, or who are in mandatory isolation following the end of the temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements, should have their requirements amended or set to no longer required.

Special Circumstances Exemptions continue to be available through Services Australia for job seekers who require them.

The Department will continue to closely monitor the COVID-19 situation across Australia and the jurisdictions affected by COVID-19 restrictions.

Servicing

As I have previously advised, the Department expects that you will continue to ensure job seekers and participants are supported to access the full range of assistance available - including mental health services, if required. Your job seekers and participants should also be encouraged to continue to apply for jobs and check their mutual obligation requirements including when they are due/or scheduled, after the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends.

Please ensure that services are delivered by your organisation safely, and in line with all local health advice in that area. Job seekers and participants whose mutual obligations have been suspended can continue to voluntarily participate in non-face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice. I encourage your organisation to revisit your existing COVID-Safe plan to ensure participants' and your staff members' safety.

Your organisation should consider the stay at home orders and movement restrictions in place when deciding Acceptable and Valid Reasons for all job seekers and participants.

Providers must only deliver face-to-face services where permissible by relevant State or Territory Governments. As restrictions differ across Australia, providers should be aware of what restrictions apply to their service sites and act accordingly.

That is, where face-to-face delivery is restricted by the requirements of a relevant State or Territory Government, your organisation must provide face-to-face servicing up to the limit of the relevant restriction until the restriction is revoked, and provide services remotely by phone, video or online where face-to-face services cannot otherwise be delivered.

As previously advised, the Department will take a "no disadvantage approach" in relation to assessing provider performance in the relevant reporting period. This means that wherever mutual obligation requirements for job seekers are suspended, the Department will take this into consideration when assessing performance.

I urge you and your staff to continue to follow the guidance of health officials and stay safe during this challenging time.

If you have any questions, please contact your Account Manager.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Gordon', with a stylized, cursive script.

Alex Gordon

20 September 2021



Dear Chief Executive Officer

COVID-19 - Mutual Obligation Arrangements – Update

Since my last update on 20 September 2021, the **New South Wales Government** has announced further changes to the State's lockdown arrangements. As such, the Australian Government has extended suspension of mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants in the **Hilltops**, Local Government Area in **New South Wales** until **5 October 2021 inclusive**.

The Cowra, Byron Shire, Kempsey, and Tweed Local Government Areas were also placed into lockdown, with suspension of mutual obligation requirements in place until **5 October 2021 inclusive**. Also, **25 affected LGA's in regional New South Wales** had current suspension of mutual obligation requirements extended, until **5 October 2021 inclusive**.

A list of all current affected Local Government Areas can be found on the [departments jobactive](#) website.

As COVID-19 restrictions are announced, the Department is sending SMS messages to all impacted job seekers and participants advising them of the temporary suspensions.

The table below lists the areas and end dates for the current suspensions of mutual obligation requirements that the Australian Government has implemented for job seekers and participants:

State/Territory	Location	End Date
New South Wales	Albury & Lismore	28/09/2021
New South Wales	Glen Innes Severn	28/09/2021
New South Wales	Yass Valley Council	30/09/2021
New South Wales	Greater Sydney	05/10/2021
New South Wales	Hilltops LGA	05/10/2021
New South Wales	Cowra	05/10/2021
New South Wales	Regional NSW LGA's (full list on website)	05/10/2021
Victoria	Victoria	05/10/2021
Australian Capital Territory	Australian Capital Territory	19/10/2021

The suspension of mutual obligation requirements applies to job seekers and participants in jobactive, Disability Employment Services, ParentsNext and the New Employment Services Trial.

Providers should take into consideration whether job seekers or participants who are unable to return home or to their place of residence, or who are in mandatory isolation following the end of the temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements, should have their requirements amended or set to no longer required.

Special Circumstances Exemptions continue to be available through Services Australia for job seekers who require them.

The Department will continue to closely monitor the COVID-19 situation across Australia and the jurisdictions affected by COVID-19 restrictions.

Servicing

As I have previously advised, the Department expects that you will continue to ensure job seekers and participants are supported to access the full range of assistance available - including mental health services, if required. Your job seekers and participants should also be encouraged to continue to apply for jobs and check their mutual obligation requirements including when they are due/or scheduled, after the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends.

Please ensure that services are delivered by your organisation safely, and in line with all local health advice in that area. Job seekers and participants whose mutual obligations have been suspended can continue to voluntarily participate in non-face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice. I encourage your organisation to revisit your existing COVID-Safe plan to ensure participants' and your staff members' safety.

Your organisation should consider the stay at home orders and movement restrictions in place when deciding Acceptable and Valid Reasons for all job seekers and participants.

Providers must only deliver face-to-face services where permissible by relevant State or Territory Governments. As restrictions differ across Australia, providers should be aware of what restrictions apply to their service sites and act accordingly.

That is, where face-to-face delivery is restricted by the requirements of a relevant State or Territory Government, your organisation must provide face-to-face servicing up to the limit of the relevant restriction until the restriction is revoked, and provide services remotely by phone, video or online where face-to-face services cannot otherwise be delivered.

As previously advised, the Department will take a "no disadvantage approach" in relation to assessing provider performance in the relevant reporting period. This means that wherever mutual obligation requirements for job seekers are suspended, the Department will take this into consideration when assessing performance.

I urge you and your staff to continue to follow the guidance of health officials and stay safe during this challenging time.

If you have any questions, please contact your Account Manager.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Gordon', with a stylized, cursive script.

Alex Gordon

27 September 2021



Dear Chief Executive Officer

COVID-19 - Mutual Obligation Arrangements – Update

Since my last update on 27 September 2021, the Australian Government has suspended, and extended current suspension of mutual obligation requirements for job seekers and participants in the states of New South Wales and Victoria after announced COVID-19 lockdowns.

New South Wales

- **Yass Valley Council** Local Government Area until **Wednesday 6 October 2021** inclusive.
- **Port Macquarie** and **Muswellbrook** Local Government Areas until **Friday 8 October 2021** inclusive.
- **Oberon** and **Snowy Monaro** Local Government Areas until **Monday 11 October 2021** inclusive.
- **Greater Sydney** and **21 regional Local Government Areas** including **Jervis Bay**, until **Wednesday 13 October 2021** inclusive.
- suburb of **Casino** until **Wednesday 13 October 2021** inclusive.
- **postcodes of 2430** (including Taree) and **2428** (including Forster and Tuncurry), until **Wednesday 13 October 2021** inclusive.
- **Gunnedah** Local Government Area until **Wednesday 13 October 2021** inclusive.
- Extended **Muswellbrook** Local Government Area until **Wednesday 13 October 2021** inclusive.

Victoria

- **Latrobe City** Local Government Area until **Friday 8 October 2021** inclusive.
- **Moorabool** and **Greater Shepparton** Local Government Areas until **Tuesday 12 October 2021** inclusive.
- **Metropolitan Melbourne** and **Mitchell Shire** Local Government Areas until **Thursday 28 October 2021** inclusive.

A list of all current affected Local Government Areas can be found on the [Department's jobactive website](#).

These arrangements apply to job seekers and participants with mutual obligation requirements across employment services programs - jobactive, Online Employment Services, Disability Employment Services and ParentsNext. As COVID-19 restrictions are announced, the Department sends an SMS messages to all impacted job seekers and participants advising them of the temporary suspensions.

To encourage job seekers and participants to engage with your organisations early at the return of mutual obligation compliance, from tomorrow (Wednesday 6 October 2021), the Department will commence sending an SMS notification advising job seekers and participants of the return of compulsory mutual obligation requirements. These notifications will be sent to job seekers and participants in areas that have been under a suspension of mutual obligation requirements for at least four weeks. Notifications will be sent one day prior to mutual obligation requirements returning.

Providers should take into consideration whether job seekers or participants who are unable to return home or to their place of residence, or who are in mandatory isolation following the end of the temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements, should have their requirements amended or set to no longer required.

Special Circumstances Exemptions continue to be available through Services Australia for job seekers who require them.

The Department will continue to closely monitor the COVID-19 situation across Australia and the jurisdictions affected by COVID-19 restrictions.

Servicing

As I have previously advised, the Department expects that you will continue to ensure job seekers and participants are supported to access the full range of assistance available - including mental health services, if required. Your job seekers and participants should also be encouraged to continue to apply for jobs and check their mutual obligation requirements including when they are due/or scheduled, after the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends.

Please ensure that services are delivered by your organisation safely, and in line with all local health advice in that area. Job seekers and participants whose mutual obligations have been suspended can continue to voluntarily participate in non-face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice. I encourage your organisation to revisit your existing COVID-Safe plan to ensure participants' and your staff members' safety.

Your organisation should consider the stay at home orders and movement restrictions in place when deciding Acceptable and Valid Reasons for all job seekers and participants.

Providers must only deliver face-to-face services where permissible by relevant State or Territory Governments. As restrictions differ across Australia, providers should be aware of what restrictions apply to their service sites and act accordingly.


That is, where face-to-face delivery is restricted by the requirements of a relevant State or Territory Government, your organisation must provide face-to-face servicing up to the limit of the relevant restriction until the restriction is revoked, and provide services remotely by phone, video or online where face-to-face services cannot otherwise be delivered.

As previously advised, the Department will take a "no disadvantage approach" in relation to assessing provider performance in the relevant reporting period. This means that wherever mutual obligation requirements for job seekers are suspended, the Department will take this into consideration when assessing performance.

I urge you and your staff to continue to follow the guidance of health officials and stay safe during this challenging time.

If you have any questions, please contact your Account Manager.

Yours sincerely,



Alex Gordon

5 October 2021



Alex Gordon
Deputy Secretary

Dear Chief Executive Officer

Return to Face-to-Face Service Delivery During Partial Restrictions

I am writing to provide you with advice and clarifications on the resumption of face-to-face servicing arrangements in light of the approach of States and Territories as they reach COVID 19 vaccination milestones, leading to the lifting of certain restrictions for fully vaccinated individuals or those who have a medical exemption.

Under the department's Direction of 23 February 2021 (the Direction), where face-to-face delivery is partially restricted by the requirements of a relevant State or Territory government, your organisation was directed to deliver face-to-face servicing up to the limit of the relevant restriction until the restriction is revoked, and provide services remotely by phone, video or online where face-to-face services cannot otherwise be delivered.

Accordingly, where a State or Territory government requires that face-to-face services (including employment services) are to be delivered only to fully vaccinated persons or those who have a medical exemption:

- providers must advise job seekers of this requirement, before booking their face-to-face appointments or services. That is, job seekers will only receive face-to-face servicing if they are fully vaccinated or have a medical exemption. Where a job seeker has a face-to-face appointment or services already scheduled, the provider must contact the job seeker to confirm their vaccination status. If the provider is unable to obtain confirmation from the job seeker regarding their vaccination status, the provider must either reschedule that face-to-face appointment or services or, where appropriate, conduct the appointment by phone, video, or online format
- providers must offer non face-to-face servicing arrangements to job seekers who decline to confirm their vaccination status or medical exemption
- during this time, providers must also offer non face-to-face servicing arrangements to job seekers with valid reason for not attending face-to-face services, such as a health condition or COVID-19 related issue or concern that affects their safety or that of an immediate family member
- where a jurisdiction requires proof of vaccination or have a medical exemption in order to receive face-to-face services, providers must request that a job seeker provides evidence of their vaccination status (or a valid exemption) when they attend their face-to-face appointment. Please visit your State or Territory government's website on acceptable proof of COVID-19 vaccination and medical exemption
- in instances where a job seeker attends the provider site for a scheduled appointment or services and does not provide proof of fully vaccination or medical exemption, the provider must reschedule that appointment or service to a non-face-to-face format and notify the job seeker.

To maintain the health and safety of provider personnel and job seekers, providers must continue having a COVID-Safe plan that meets local health requirements in place at each site. Providers are reminded to review and update their plans to reflect any changed requirements and ensure all services are delivered in line with their COVID-Safe plan.

Further to my comments at last Friday's CEO livestream, I can also advise that the department will suspend further remedial action in relation to providers' performance on face-to-face servicing until further notice. This recognises the positive response to the department's targeted performance measure on this to date and will facilitate the return to, and normalisation of, post-lockdown business operations.

In recognition of the challenges related to emerging from extended lockdowns, providers should support job seekers and also their own staff to access services, including mental health assistance where needed. I strongly encourage provider staff to complete the department's mental health awareness training module, available on the Learning Centre. It provides guidance and best practices in offering appropriate support, including effective referral to community health services.

The department will publish further advice about Mutual Obligation Requirements in areas where restrictions are being lifted shortly. In the interim, please contact your Account or Contract Manager if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Gordon', with a stylized, cursive script.

Alex Gordon
8 October 2021



Alex Gordon
Deputy Secretary

Dear Chief Executive Officer

Mutual Obligation Requirements and Transition Arrangements - Partial Restrictions

In line with the Australian Government's phased response to COVID-19, mutual obligation requirements will start to resume as extended lockdowns in areas of New South Wales, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory end and vaccination thresholds are met.

As 70 per cent vaccination rates are achieved and current lock down restrictions are eased, the current suspensions of mutual obligation requirements will be lifted. Mutual obligations in relation to job search requirements will be reinstated in full from a job seeker's next reporting period, to align with states and territories reaching 80 per cent vaccination rates and the move to 'COVID-normal' arrangements.

For the remainder of the job seeker's current reporting period (which could be anywhere from one to twenty-eight days after the suspension of mutual obligation arrangements end):

- provider appointments (face-to-face and non face-to-face servicing arrangements) can be made compulsory;
- the requirement to agree to a new job plan, or any adjustments to a job plan within two days will be compulsory;
- job search requirements will be coded as 'no longer required'.

While job search requirements are not compulsory during this period, I expect providers to be working with job seekers and encouraging them to actively seek employment opportunities as the economy re-opens.

Compulsory activities will become compulsory for all job seekers as soon as possible following a state or territory achieving 80 per cent vaccination rates. In the interim, providers should be working on re/establishing safe and suitable activities to be available for job seekers once this requirement is reinstated.

Providers **must not** set compulsory Activities, Third Party Appointments or Job Interviews until the department advises that 80 per cent vaccination rate has been reached.

Providers will also be required to work with job seekers over this interim period to update Job Plans in anticipation of the return to full mutual obligation requirements when the 80 per cent vaccination rate is achieved, including tailoring of Job Plans to individual circumstances and local health advice.

A list of all current affected Local Government Areas with temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements, including a new section on the reintroduction of mutual obligation requirements for those areas that have been under extended suspension arrangements, can be found on the [Department's jobactive](#) website. A list of current mutual obligation suspension areas is attached.

As always, mutual obligation requirements should be set and delivered in line with job seekers' and participants' personal circumstances, local health advice, noting the different requirements as advised by State/Territory governments, about the way they are easing restrictions.

Please ensure your staff review this advice and tailor requirements and service delivery appropriately. As COVID-19 restrictions ease it is important we work together to reinstate job seekers' and participants' mutual obligation requirements while at the same time adhering to local health advice.

I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the important role that you have in assisting in the recovery of Australia's economy, in particular the areas coming out of extended lockdown. Now more than ever your organisation must support job seekers and participants to re-engage quickly and to take advantage of employment opportunities as lockdowns end and the economy recovers.

Providers should be identifying emerging employment opportunities in the labour market and assisting participants to take advantage of these emerging opportunities, for example through relevant training and other activities.

If you have any questions, please contact your Account Manager.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Gordon', with a stylized, cursive script.

Alex Gordon
13 October 2021

Current locations with suspension of mutual obligation requirements

State	Location	Suspension From	Suspension To (Inclusive)
Australian Capital Territory	ACT, except Jervis Bay	12/08/2021	19/10/2021
New South Wales	Greater Sydney	27/06/2021	13/10/2021
	Regional New South Wales, including Jervis Bay	06/10/2021	13/10/2021
	<u>Affected LGA's</u> Bathurst Regional, Bourke, Broken Hill, Central Coast, City of Cessnock, Dubbo, Eurobodalla, Goulburn Mulwaree, Kiama, City of Lake Macquarie, City of Lithgow, City of Maitland, City of Newcastle, Port Stephens, Queanbeyan-Palerang regional, City of Shellharbour, City of Shoalhaven, Wingecarribee, Narromine		
	Muswellbrook Local Government Area	29/09/2021	13/10/2021
	Oberon Local Government Area	30/09/2021	13/10/2021
	Snowy Monaro Local Government Area	30/09/2021	13/10/2021
	Kyogle Local Government Area	01/10/2021	13/10/2021

Suburb of Casino	02/10/2021	13/10/2021
------------------	------------	------------

Lismore Local Government Area	04/10/2021	13/10/2021
-------------------------------	------------	------------

Postcode 2430 (including Taree)	05/10/2021	13/10/2021
---------------------------------	------------	------------

This applies to:

Black Head, Bohnock, Bootawa, Brimbin, Cabbage Tree Island, Chatham, Croki, Cundletown, Diamond Beach, Dumaresq Island, Failford, Ghinni Ghinni, Glenthorne, Hallidays Point, Hillville, Jones Island, Kiwarra, Koorainghat, Kundle Kundle and Lansdowne.

Postcode 2428 (including Forster and Tuncurry)

This applies to:

Blueys Beach, Boomerang Beach, Booti Booti, Charlotte Bay, Coomba Bay, Coomba Park, Darawank, Elizabeth Beach, Forster, Forster Shopping Village, Green Point, Pacific Palms, Sandbar, Shallow Bay, Smiths Lake, Tarbuck Bay, Tiona, Tuncurry, Wallingat and Wallis Lake.

Gunnedah Local Government Area	05/10/2021	13/10/2021
--------------------------------	------------	------------

Victoria	Moorabool Local Government Area	02/10/2021	12/10/2021
	City of Greater Shepparton	02/10/2021	12/10/2021
	Mildura Rural City Council Local Government Area	09/10/2021	19/10/2021
	Metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire Local Government Area	06/10/2021	28/10/2021

Metropolitan Melbourne LGA's:

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 Ranges, Yarra



Dear Chief Executive Officer

COVID-19 - Mutual Obligation Arrangements – Update

I am writing to provide an update on arrangements for areas where the suspension of mutual obligation requirements have either recently ended, been extended, or applied.

Since my last update on 13 October 2021, mutual obligation requirements have resumed in areas across New South Wales (NSW), except those areas under temporary transition arrangements as announced by the Australian Government. The Government has also extended the suspension of mutual obligation requirements for Mildura Victoria and applied a temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements to Southern Tasmania. The dates for these events are below in Table 2.

NSW

Table 1 lists areas where contingency arrangements have ended, 70 per cent vaccination rate has been reached and transition arrangements are in place. Until 20 October 2021, only Provider Appointments and agreeing a Job Plan are compulsory.

Table 1		
State/Territory	Location	End Date
NSW	Greater Sydney	20/10/2021
NSW	Affected Regional Local Government Areas Bathurst Regional, Broken Hill, Central Coast, City of Cessnock, City of Lake Macquarie, City of Lithgow, City of Maitland, City of Newcastle, City of Shellharbour, City of Shoalhaven, Dubbo, Eurobodalla, Goulburn Mulwaree, Jervis Bay, Kiama, Port Stephens, Queanbeyan-Palerang regional and Wingecarribee.	20/10/2021

As I previously advised, if an area has been in an extended lockdown, mutual obligation requirements will recommence in full, once the State or Territory reaches 80 per cent vaccination rate.

I am pleased to say that over the course of the weekend, NSW has reached a vaccination rate of 80 per cent. As such from 21 October 2021, job seekers and participants in Greater Sydney and the above regional Local Government Areas will have full mutual obligation requirements. Mutual obligation requirements must remain tailored to individual circumstances and local health advice.

The department will notify impacted job seekers and participants via SMS ahead of their requirements returning in full.

Australian Capital Territory (ACT)

Mutual Obligation requirements in the ACT (excluding Jervis Bay) are suspended until 19 October 2021 (inclusive). The Australian Government Department of Health has announced that vaccination rates have reached 80 per cent double dose in the ACT. This means when mutual obligation contingency arrangements finish on 19 October 2021, full mutual obligation requirements will resume from 20 October 2021.

Mutual obligation requirements must remain tailored to individual circumstances and local health advice. The department will also notify impacted job seekers and participants via SMS ahead of their requirements returning in full.

Australia Capital Territory (ACT), Victoria and Tasmania

Table 2 lists the areas and end dates for the current suspensions of mutual obligation requirements the Australian Government has implemented for job seekers and participants.

Table 2		
State/Territory	Location	End Date
ACT	ACT (excluding Jervis Bay)	19/10/2021
Tasmania	Southern Tasmania	20/10/2021
Victoria	Mildura Rural Council Local Government Area	26/10/2021
Victoria	Metropolitan Melbourne	28/10/2021

These arrangements apply to job seekers and participants with mutual obligation requirements across employment services programs - jobactive, Online Employment Services, Disability Employment Services and ParentsNext.

Providers should take into consideration whether job seekers or participants who are unable to return home or to their place of residence, or who are in mandatory isolation following the end of the temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements, should have their requirements amended or set to no longer required.

Special Circumstances Exemptions continue to be available through Services Australia for job seekers who require them.

A list of all current affected Local Government Areas and information on the reintroduction of mutual obligation requirements following extended suspension is on the [department's jobactive website](#).

The department will continue to closely monitor and adjust arrangements in line with COVID-19 restrictions and changes in requirements across jurisdictions.

Servicing

As I have previously advised, where you are delivering services in areas where mutual obligation requirements are suspended, the department expects that you will continue to ensure job seekers and participants are supported to access the full range of assistance available - including mental health services, if required. Your job seekers and participants should also be encouraged to continue to apply for jobs and check their mutual obligation requirements including when they are due/or scheduled, after the suspension of mutual obligation requirements ends.

Your organisation must ensure that services are delivered by your organisation safely, and in line with all local health advice in that area and consult guidance and information published by Safe Work Australia and the relevant work health and safety regulator. Your organisation must also ensure that each relevant Activity Host Organisation or Host Organisation has a COVID Safe plan (or similar), in accordance with the requirements specified by the relevant State and Territory government, in place for each Activity which involves face-to-face participation prior to the Provider placing a Participant into that Activity.

Job seekers and participants whose mutual obligations have been suspended can continue to voluntarily participate in non-face-to-face provider appointments delivered in line with local health advice. I encourage your organisation to revisit your existing COVID-Safe plan to ensure participants' and your staff members' safety. Your organisation should consider the stay at home orders and movement restrictions in place when deciding Acceptable and Valid Reasons for all job seekers and participants.

Providers must only deliver face-to-face services where permissible by relevant State or Territory governments. As restrictions differ across Australia, providers should be aware of which restrictions apply to their service sites and adjust servicing accordingly.

That is, where face-to-face delivery is restricted by the requirements of a relevant State or Territory government, your organisation must provide face-to-face servicing up to the limit of the relevant restriction until the restriction is revoked, and provide services remotely by phone, video or online where face-to-face services cannot otherwise be delivered.

As previously advised, the department will take a "no disadvantage approach" in relation to assessing provider performance in the relevant reporting period. This means that wherever mutual obligation requirements for job seekers are suspended, the department will take this into consideration when assessing performance.

I urge you and your staff to continue to follow all relevant guidance to resume services safely, in line with the Australian Government's and your jurisdiction's health advice and other requirements.

If you have any questions, please contact your Account Manager.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Gordon', with a stylized, cursive script.

Alex Gordon

18 October 2021



Dear Chief Executive Officer

COVID-19 - Mutual Obligation Arrangements – Update

Since my last update on 18 October 2021, the state of Victoria has reached over 70 per cent double vaccination rate. In line with the tiered reintroduction of mutual obligation requirements, from 29 October 2021 job seekers and participants in Metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire in Victoria will be required to:

- attend compulsory provider appointments (under face-to-face and non-face-to-face servicing arrangements)
- agree to a new job plan, or any adjustments to a job plan.

Job seekers' current job search reporting periods will be set to No Longer Required and Activities, Third Party Appointments and Job Interviews will be voluntary.

These arrangements apply to job seekers and participants with mutual obligation requirements across employment services programs - jobactive, Online Employment Services, Disability Employment Services and ParentsNext in Metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire. For job seekers and participants in these programs in the Mildura Council Local Government Area full mutual obligation requirements will resume from 27 October 2021.

Full requirements will become compulsory for job seekers and participants in Metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire as soon as possible following the state of Victoria achieving 80 per cent vaccination rate. In the interim, providers should be working with job seekers to remain connected to the labour market and on re/establishing safe and suitable activities to be available for all job seekers and participants once this requirement is reinstated.

Mutual obligation requirements must remain tailored to individual circumstances and local health advice. The department will also notify impacted job seekers and participants via SMS ahead of their requirements returning in full.

Special Circumstances Exemptions continue to be available through Services Australia for job seekers who require them.

A list of all current affected local government areas and information on the reintroduction of mutual obligation requirements following extended suspension is on the [department's jobactive](#) website.

The department will continue to closely monitor and adjust arrangements in line with COVID-19 restrictions and changes in requirements across jurisdictions.

I urge you and your staff to continue to follow all relevant guidance to resume services safely, in line with the Australian Government's and your jurisdiction's health advice and other requirements.

If you have any questions, please contact your Account Manager.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Agordon', written in a cursive style.

Alex Gordon
26 October 2021



Australian Government
**Department of Education,
Skills and Employment**

**Deputy Secretary
Alex Gordon**

Dear Chief Executive Officer

COVID-19 - Mutual Obligation Arrangements – Update

Since my last update on 26 October 2021, the state of Victoria has reached over 80 per cent COVID-19 double vaccination rate and there are no new mutual obligation requirement suspensions in place.

In line with the tiered reintroduction of mutual obligation requirements, where an area has been under extended lockdown, and the relevant state reaches 80 per cent double dose vaccination rate, job seekers and participants in that area will return to full mutual obligation requirements.

This means, from 4 November 2021, mutual obligation requirements will no longer be suspended and will return in full for job seekers and participants in Metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire in Victoria. Job search requirements will resume at the job seeker's next reporting period.

These arrangements apply to job seekers and participants with mutual obligation requirements across employment services programs - jobactive, Online Employment Services, Disability Employment Services and ParentsNext.

Mutual obligation requirements must remain tailored to individual circumstances and local health advice. The department will also notify impacted job seekers and participants via SMS ahead of their requirements returning in full.

Special Circumstances Exemptions continue to be available through Services Australia for job seekers who require them.

The department will continue to closely monitor and adjust arrangements in line with COVID-19 restrictions and changes in requirements across jurisdictions.

I urge you and your staff to continue to follow all relevant guidance to resume services safely, in line with the Australian Government's and your jurisdiction's health advice and other requirements.

If you have any questions, please contact your Account Manager.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Agordon'.

Alex Gordon

2 November 2021



Alex Gordon
Deputy Secretary

Dear Chief Executive Officer

Direction on Face-to-Face Service Delivery, Guidance on Mutual Obligation Requirements and Update on Contingency Arrangements

As the National Plan to transition Australia's COVID-19 response approaches Phase C (Vaccination Consolidation) across the country and the economy reopens, the Department of Education, Skills and Employment (the department) considers it is appropriate to provide your organisation updated direction on face-to-face servicing arrangements appropriate at this time.

A return to face-to-face servicing (for areas coming out of lockdown) and the continuation of face-to-face servicing arrangements elsewhere is critical in assisting participants to promptly secure employment as the economy recovers and businesses re-hire workers.

Recognising the ongoing impacts of COVID-19, providers will need to consider what measures can reasonably be taken to minimise risks to health and safety of participants, as well as their staff, in deciding whether face-to-face servicing is appropriate under the relevant circumstances.

In this context, the department issues the attached *Direction on Face-to-Face Service Delivery* and associated *Face-to-Face Servicing Arrangements Provider Factsheet*. This Direction is consistent with the previous *Direction on Return to Face-to-face Service Delivery*, issued on 23 February 2021. However, it provides additional clarity on the conditions providers must meet in making their decisions on the appropriateness of face-to-face Service delivery.

The new direction maintains the health and safety of participants and provider staff at the forefront of service delivery. It also accommodates the circumstances of participants, the needs of employers and host organisations and jurisdictional health orders, including vaccination requirements.

Providers should note that the approaches included in the **new direction** may be further refined as Phase D (Post-Vaccination) of the COVID-19 National Plan is reached.

The new direction comes into effect on **15 November 2021** and in determining the appropriateness of face-to-face service delivery, provides for your organisation to consider whether face-to-face servicing is beneficial to the individual participant, reasonable in the circumstances and safe, including being permitted by, and consistent with, State and Territory public health orders. Where any of these conditions are not met, face-to-face services should not be offered and the department expects your organisation to deliver services through other alternative suitable means (for example, by phone, video and/or online).

The department anticipates there will be additional demand for Career Transition Assistance (CTA), Employment Preparation Activity (EPA) and Employability Skills Training (EST) courses. To support providers to move as quickly as possible to make hybrid and online courses available if required, the department will also waive the requirement for providers to obtain prior written departmental approval to schedule hybrid and non face-to-face courses for the limited non-COVID-19 related reasons that have previously been advised. Providers are expected to apply the conditions outlined in the direction in determining the most appropriate servicing method. This arrangement will be in place for CTA, EPA and EST providers for the duration of the new direction.

Your organisation will be required to collect and maintain records of participants' vaccination status and utilise these to tailor assistance and update participants' Job Plans/Participation Plans and mutual obligation requirements, and to screen candidates for jobs or activities where vaccination is mandated or requested by an employer.

Guidance on Mutual Obligation Requirements

Providers have an ongoing requirement to ensure mutual obligation requirements are appropriately tailored to job seekers' individual circumstances and local labour market conditions. In setting and monitoring mutual obligations requirements in the lead up to Phase D of the National Plan, providers should not take compliance action where participants leave or refuse work, or do not attend face-to-face activities or appointments where the participant:

- genuinely considers this would affect their safety, or the safety of an immediate family or household member, or
- is unvaccinated, and vaccination is a requirement, including where jurisdictional health orders apply.

Providers are required to assess, on a case-by-case basis, whether the participant's explanation is genuine and reasonable in the circumstances and – where satisfied this is the case – connect participants with alternative and suitable activities. Job Plans/Participation Plans are required to be tailored to reflect the participant's individual circumstances.

To facilitate participants' (re)engagement with their employment services provider at this critical time, the department also expects that participants are afforded sufficient notice of any appointments or activity referrals. This includes tailoring appointment and activity times to reflect participants' circumstances, such as school pick-up and drop-off times for parents with children who have now returned to school.

The direction and the associated factsheet provide further details on the temporary approach to face-to-face delivery, noting that this advice will be updated when we reach Phase D (Post-Vaccination) of the COVID-19 National Plan.

The department will monitor how the policy settings applicable to the current phase are operating and would appreciate your organisation's feedback (via your Account and Contract Managers) as to how they are working on the ground as you continue to assist participants to upskill and find work.

Update on Northern Territory COVID-19 Mutual Obligation Arrangements

Following an announcement by the Northern Territory Government, the City of Darwin and the City of Palmerston Local Government Areas are under lockout arrangements from Friday 5 November 2021 until Monday 8 November 2021. As such, job seekers and participants in these two Local Government Areas will have mutual obligation requirements suspended from Friday 5 November 2021 until Tuesday 9 November (inclusive).

Yours sincerely



Alex Gordon
8 November 2021



8 November 2021

Direction on Face-to-Face Service Delivery

The National Plan to transition Australia's COVID-19 response (National Plan) is approaching Phase C (Vaccination Consolidation) across the country. As vaccination targets are achieved across the country, restrictions are eased and interstate borders reopen, employment services will continue to play a crucial role in supporting Participants to safely connect with employment, training and other opportunities and assistance as the country's economy recovers and employers re-hire workers. Accordingly, in this Direction, the Department of Education, Skills and Employment (the Department) provides direction on updated requirements in relation to face-to-face servicing.

This Direction takes effect from **15 November 2021** and cancels and replaces the *Direction on Return to Face-to-face Service Delivery* issued on 23 February 2021. This Direction is consistent with the previous direction, however, provides additional clarity on the considerations Providers must factor into their decisions on the appropriateness of face-to-face Service delivery.

This Direction **may be revised** as Phase D (Post-Vaccination) of the National Plan is reached.

Consistent with current policy, where a Participant has mutual obligation requirements, Providers must continue to tailor these requirements to Participants' individual circumstances, including consideration of their health, family, and caring responsibilities. Where a Participant is unable to meet a mutual obligation requirement for a reason beyond their control, and the Participant advises this in advance (if reasonable), this would be a valid reason for non-participation. This includes where, due to COVID-19 related risks, they consider participation would affect their safety, or the safety of an immediate family member or member of household, or where they are unvaccinated, and vaccination is a requirement. Decisions should continue to be made on a case-by-case basis.

A return to face-to-face servicing (for areas coming out of lockdown) and the continuation of face-to-face servicing arrangements elsewhere is critical in assisting Participants to promptly secure employment as the economy recovers and businesses re-hire workers.

In determining the appropriateness of face-to-face Service delivery, the Department directs Providers to ensure that the following conditions are met:

- (1) **Face-to-face servicing is safe.** Providers **must** ensure that any face-to-face delivery is carried out in a safe manner; is appropriate for the relevant Participant, the Provider's staff and others from a work health and safety perspective, and is permitted by, and consistent with, State and Territory public health orders. In this regard, the Provider:
 - (a) **must** consult guidance and information published by Safe Work Australia and the relevant work health and safety regulator;
 - (b) **must** have a COVID-Safe plan, in accordance with the requirements specified by the relevant State and Territory government, in place for each of the Sites where face-to-face delivery will be provided;
 - (c) **must** ensure that face-to-face Services are delivered in accordance with the Provider's relevant COVID-Safe plan and the above guidance;

- (d) **must** ensure that each relevant Activity Host Organisation or Host Organisation has a COVID-Safe plan (or similar), in accordance with the requirements specified by the relevant State and Territory government, in place for each Activity which involves face-to-face participation prior to the Provider placing a Participant into that Activity;
 - (e) **must** proactively request, and record, each Participants' COVID-19 vaccination status; and
 - (f) **may** implement COVID vaccine-related restrictions relating to face-to-face servicing if the Provider considers it reasonable and necessary in their business circumstances, but **must** ensure that:
 - (i) local health advice is followed and the circumstances of individual Participants, including any exemptions, are considered; and
 - (ii) non face-to-face servicing remains available for all Participants who are unable to satisfy any vaccine-related restrictions or who decline to disclose information about their vaccination status.
- (2) **Face-to-face servicing is beneficial to the individual Participant.** In making this determination, Providers **must** consider and weigh the following:
- (a) the benefits to a Participant in receiving Services in person, including, but not limited to, whether a direct and personalised connection with the Provider will:
 - (i) improve the Participant's prospects for a successful (re)entry into the labour market;
 - (ii) help the Participant meet any mutual obligation requirements; or
 - (iii) provide the Participant with mental health benefits; and
 - (b) the level of risk to the Participant and other individuals, such as considering the Participant's vaccination status and local COVID-19 factors,
- and **must** record any determination(s) that face-to-face servicing is not beneficial to the individual Participant on an ongoing basis, and as required if circumstances change.
- (3) **It is reasonable in the circumstances to offer the Participant services in a face-to-face format.** During Phase C of the National Plan, circumstances where it is not reasonable to provide a Participant with Services face-to-face include where they:
- (a) genuinely consider that participation in face-to-face servicing would affect, or may potentially affect, their safety or that of an immediate family or household member,
 - (b) are unvaccinated, or decline to disclose their vaccination status, in a jurisdiction where health orders require vaccination for face-to-face servicing, or
 - (c) are unable to meet the minimum COVID-safe requirements set by the relevant State or Territory Government.

Where a Provider is not satisfied that all the above conditions are met, the Provider must arrange or use alternative suitable and safe means to deliver the relevant Services, including phone, video and/or online. For the avoidance of doubt, this is applicable to all Services (including Activities, other courses, or training) that were arranged on or before the date of this Direction.

This Direction incorporates the attached *Face-to-face Servicing Arrangements - Provider Factsheet* which provides further instruction on the factors Providers must take into account to determine whether face-to-face servicing is beneficial to Participants, reasonable in the circumstances and safe, and how Providers must record Participants' vaccination status. This Direction has precedence and should be referred to over other material, including the factsheet.

For more information on your local COVID-19 requirements, safe practices and workplace principles, please refer to www.australia.gov.au, www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au, and your relevant State or Territory health authority information.

Links to enforceable government health and emergency directions and COVID-Safe plans are available at: <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces>.



Alex Gordon
Deputy Secretary

Dear Chief Executive Officer

CEO letter – reminder of COVID-19 servicing arrangements

In light of the rapid increase of COVID-19 case numbers due to the Omicron variant, I want to clarify the department's current expectations in relation to servicing arrangements and job seekers' mutual obligation requirements.

Face-to-Face Services

The [Direction on Face-to-Face Service Delivery](#) issued on 8 November 2021 remains in place. This Direction has an emphasis on safety and together with the temporary site closures standard operating procedures, provides you with the flexibility to make decisions based on the circumstances of your staff and participants.

Under the Direction, providers are required to consider the ongoing appropriateness of face-to-face service delivery. This includes ensuring that face-to-face services are:

- safe, including being permitted by, and consistent with, State and Territory public health orders,
- beneficial to the individual participant, and
- reasonable in the circumstances to offer the participant services in a face-to-face format.

Where these conditions cannot be met, the Direction requires providers to arrange or use alternative arrangements to safely deliver services. This includes shifting to remote servicing using phone, video or online technologies where required.

Further, where a provider's staffing capacity at a particular site or location is impacted by State or Territory public health orders, the provider may determine that face-to-face servicing is not appropriate in the relevant location.

Where a decision is made to temporarily close a site or change to remote servicing, providers must advise job seekers and participants of the relevant details. Providers must also notify the department through their Account Manager.

I'd like to acknowledge those providers who have already notified the department of the flexible arrangements put in place under the Direction to manage servicing in an appropriate and safe manner.

The [Face-to-face Servicing Factsheet](#) is available on the Provider Portal to assist your organisation determine the appropriateness of face-to-face servicing.

Mutual Obligation Requirements

Mutual Obligation Requirements resumed on 4 January 2022, after the end of the departmental shutdown period.

Please ensure your staff continue to tailor and set mutual obligation requirements in line with individual circumstances and local health advice. This includes providing suitable and safe alternatives to face-to-face activities and appointments where appropriate and in accordance with the Direction mentioned above.

If you have any questions about these arrangements, please contact your Account Manager.

I wish you and your staff a happy new year and look forward to working with you in 2022.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Gordon', written in a cursive style.

Alex Gordon
6 January 2022



Australian Government
**Department of Employment
and Workplace Relations**

Deputy Secretary
Nathan Smyth

Dear Chief Executive Officer

UPDATE ON MUTUAL OBLIGATION ARRANGEMENTS

Return of mutual obligation requirements

Mutual obligation requirements will resume from Monday, 1 August 2022 for participants in Workforce Australia Services, Workforce Australia Online and ParentsNext.

While compliance has resumed, I expect your staff to give participants every opportunity to comply with the requirements set for them and that the Targeted Compliance Framework is only applied for genuine non-compliance. The goal is to encourage participation through positive engagement.

The department will be monitoring the application of the Targeted Compliance Framework to confirm provider staff invest time to build relationships with their participants and follow correct workflows. This includes setting and resulting provider appointments correctly, which means your staff must:

- schedule appointments inline with participants' personal circumstances,
- provide participants sufficient notice of each requirement,
- not record non-compliance before the requirement's scheduled start time or immediately after notifying a participant of a requirement to attend,
- reschedule appointments as needed, and
- consider the new Workforce Australia services approach of individualised and tailored support and the impact of transition on participants when making compliance decisions around valid reasons.

Points Based Activation System (PBAS)

To further support participants using the PBAS, their second PBAS reporting requirement during the transition period will not be subject to compliance action where they don't meet their points target. This allows participants the opportunity to continue to adjust to the new PBAS. All other mutual obligation requirements will apply.

Again, I would like to reiterate that the introduction of PBAS will help your staff to deliver the tailored support needed to drive positive engagement by empowering participants to choose activities of interest and feel achievement through the recognition of their participation. The additional month allows your staff and participants further time to establish and/or reset respectful relationships that are pivotal to effectiveness of the PBAS.

Transition to Work

From Monday, 1 August 2022, the new Temporary Income Support Suspension may be invoked where a Transition to Work (TtW) participant does not attend their initial appointment. In accordance with longstanding program arrangements, TtW participants who do not actively engage in the TtW service may also be exited to Workforce Australia Services. The department will be monitoring the use of the Temporary Income Support Suspension to ensure your staff are investing time to build relationships with participants, as well as following correct workflows.

New South Wales weather event contingency - reminder

The current temporary suspension of mutual obligation requirements for all participants in the 37 New South Wales local government areas impacted by the recent rain and flooding event remains in place until **31 August 2022**.

Face-to-face service delivery

While participants are generally required to attend their initial appointment (and capability interviews, if required) on a face-to-face basis, the department recognises there are circumstances where this may not be suitable. It is important to take into account a participant's personal factors when determining whether face-to-face servicing is appropriate.

Considerations should include the participant's availability due to paid work, caring responsibilities or travel time or costs, including the individual's usual means of transport. For Workforce Australia Employment Services Providers, you could also consider assisting participants with travel costs through the Employment Fund (once the participant has commenced).

You and the participant may also agree to meet at another suitable location, either closer to where they live or to available transport hubs, providing you continue to meet the requirements for conducting appointments. (Note: providers must not conduct appointments or other contacts at a participant's home under any circumstances). For ParentsNext appointments, the location must also be child-friendly.

It is also necessary to consider the appropriateness of face-to-face servicing in the context of COVID-19. Accordingly, providers are reminded of the requirements set out in the *Direction on Face-to-face Service Delivery* (the Direction). The Direction specifies that your teams must only deliver services in person where they have assessed it to be safe, beneficial to the individual participant, and delivery in a face-to-face format is reasonable in the circumstances. Where these conditions are not met, providers **must** arrange or use alternative suitable and safe means to deliver relevant services. More information is [available on the Provider Portal](#). For your information, please also see this [factsheet](#) which provides advice for participants on the criteria outlined in the Direction that your teams must follow in determining the appropriateness of delivering services in-person.

In addition, should a site's operating capacity be impacted by circumstances outside your organisation's control, for example due to extreme weather events or COVID-19 outbreaks, your organisation may determine that face-to-face servicing is not appropriate in the relevant location. Where a decision is made to

temporarily close a site or pivot to remote servicing, you must notify the department through your Provider Lead as soon as practicable.

I want to acknowledge your efforts and those of your teams through the early weeks of Workforce Australia services, and as we prepare for the resumption of mutual obligations. Please continue to liaise with your Provider Lead for information and advice as required.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Smyth', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

Nathan Smyth
Deputy Secretary
27 July 2022



Deputy Secretary
Nathan Smyth

Dear Chief Executive Officer

RETURN OF MUTUAL OBLIGATION ARRANGEMENTS - NSW WEATHER EVENT

Return of mutual obligation requirements

Mutual obligation requirements will resume from Thursday, 1 September 2022 for participants in the 37 NSW local government areas impacted by the rain and flooding event. The return of mutual obligations will apply to participants across employment services programs - Workforce Australia Services, Workforce Australia Online, Disability Employment Services and ParentsNext.

This means participants will now be required to attend compulsory appointments and meet other requirements. Provider staff should ensure participants are given every opportunity to comply with the requirements you are setting for them, and that the Targeted Compliance Framework is only applied for genuine non-compliance. The goal is to drive participation through positive engagement.

Nationally we have seen instances of incorrect setting and resulting of provider appointments. With the return of mutual obligation requirements in these NSW areas the department will continue to monitor the application of the Targeted Compliance Framework. If required Provider Leads will be going directly to any identified provider sites to discuss and to remind staff how to appropriately set and record provider appointments.

Points Based Activation System (PBAS)

As previously advised, to support the transition to PBAS, participants have two reporting periods from when they sign their Workforce Australia Job Plan, where they will not be subject to compliance action if they don't meet their points target. These arrangements also apply to participants in the NSW flood areas.

These arrangements allow your staff time to deliver tailored support and empower participants to plan and choose activities of interest that can support them find secure employment and contribute to their points requirement.

With some participants entering their third reporting period from September participants may start to have compliance raised for not meeting their points target. As this will be their first non-compliance for not meeting their points target participants will have 'light-touch re-engagement' where they confirm their understanding of the points requirement to re-engage. Your staff can find further information about this process in Chapter 12 of the Guideline.

It is important that your staff are tailoring requirements, including participant's points targets and minimum job search, helping participants understand the new PBAS settings and applying decisions under the Targeted Compliance Framework appropriately.

Face-to-face service delivery- reminder

While participants are generally required to attend their initial appointment (and capability interviews, if required) on a face-to-face basis, the department recognises there are circumstances where this may not be suitable. It is important to take into account a participant's personal factors when determining whether face-to-face servicing is appropriate.

It is also necessary to consider the appropriateness of face-to-face servicing in the context of COVID-19. Accordingly, providers are reminded of the requirements set out in the *Direction on Face-to-face Service Delivery* (the Direction), namely that providers must only deliver services in person where it is safe, beneficial to the individual participant, and delivery in a face-to-face format is reasonable in the circumstances. Where a Provider is not satisfied that all the above conditions are met, the Provider must arrange or use alternative suitable and safe means to deliver the relevant Services, including phone, video and/or online (Note: providers must not conduct appointments or other contacts at a participant's home under any circumstances). Further information, including factsheets which provide advice to providers and participants on face-to-face servicing, is [available on the Provider Portal](#).

In addition, should a site's operating capacity be impacted by circumstances outside your organisation's control, for example due to extreme weather events or COVID-19 outbreaks, your organisation may determine that face-to-face servicing is not appropriate in the relevant location. Where a decision is made to temporarily close a site or pivot to remote servicing, you must notify the department through your Provider Lead as soon as practicable.

Commencements

As you would be aware, the commencement date for transitioned participants (excluding those paused) in Workforce Australia was 26 August 2022.

The department recognises there have been some events, such as the NSW floods, that have impacted providers in delivering employment services and engaging with participants.

I want to acknowledge your efforts and those of your teams through the early weeks of Workforce Australia services, and as we prepare for the resumption of mutual obligations. Please continue to liaise with your Provider Lead for information and advice, including providing them with reasons where commencements are much lower than expected and your strategies taken to improve this.

Yours sincerely



Nathan Smyth
Deputy Secretary
30 August 2022



21 September 2022

Direction on Face-to-Face Service Delivery

This Direction takes effect from **21 September 2022** and cancels and replaces the *Direction on Face-to-face Service Delivery* issued on 8 November 2021.

In determining the appropriateness of face-to-face Service delivery, the Department directs Providers to ensure that the following conditions are met:

1. **Face-to-face servicing is safe.** Providers must ensure that any face-to-face delivery is carried out in a safe manner; is appropriate for the relevant Participant, the Provider's staff and others from a work health and safety perspective; and is permitted by, and consistent with, State and Territory public health orders. In this regard, the Provider:
 - (a) must consult guidance and information published by Safe Work Australia and the relevant work health and safety regulator;
 - (b) must have a COVID-Safe plan, in accordance with the requirements specified by the relevant State and Territory government, in place for each of the Sites where face-to-face delivery will be provided;
 - (c) must ensure that face-to-face Services are delivered in accordance with the Provider's relevant COVID-Safe plan and the above guidance;
 - (d) must ensure that each relevant Activity Host Organisation or Host Organisation has a COVID-Safe plan (or similar), in accordance with the requirements specified by the relevant State and Territory government, in place for each Activity which involves face-to-face participation prior to the Provider placing a Participant into that Activity; and
 - (e) may implement COVID vaccine-related restrictions relating to face-to-face servicing if the Provider considers it reasonable and necessary in their business circumstances, but must ensure that:
 - i. local health advice is followed and the circumstances of individual Participants, including any exemptions, are considered; and
 - ii. non face-to-face servicing remains available for all Participants who are unable to satisfy any vaccine-related restrictions or who decline to disclose information about their vaccination status.
2. **Face-to-face servicing is beneficial to the individual Participant.** In making this determination, Providers must consider and weigh the following:
 - (a) the benefits to a Participant in receiving Services in person, including, but not limited to, whether a direct and personalised connection with the Provider:
 - i. is a key element of the service design, as is the case for Workforce Australia Services which requires delivery of high quality, tailored and intensive case management;
 - ii. will improve the Participant's prospects for a successful (re)entry into the labour market and ability to find employment;
 - iii. will help the Participant meet any mutual obligation requirements; or
 - iv. will provide the Participant with mental health benefits; and

(b) the level of risk to the Participant and other individuals, such as considering the Participant's vaccination status and local COVID-19 factors,

and must record any determination(s) that face-to-face servicing is not beneficial to the individual Participant on an ongoing basis, and as required if circumstances change.

3. **It is reasonable in the circumstances to offer the Participant services in a face-to-face format.** Circumstances where it is not reasonable to provide a Participant with Services face-to-face include where they:
- (a) genuinely consider that participation in face-to-face servicing would affect, or may potentially affect, their safety or that of an immediate family or household member,
 - (b) are unvaccinated, or decline to disclose their vaccination status, in a jurisdiction where health orders require vaccination for face-to-face servicing, or
 - (c) are unable to meet the minimum COVID-safe requirements set by the relevant State or Territory Government.

Where a Provider is not satisfied that all the above conditions are met, the Provider must arrange or use alternative suitable and safe means to deliver the relevant Services, , including phone, video and/or online. For the avoidance of doubt, this is applicable to all Services (including Activities, other courses, or training) that were arranged on or before the date of this Direction.

Mutual Obligation Requirements

Consistent with policy and Guidelines, where a Participant has mutual obligation requirements, Providers must tailor these requirements to Participants' individual circumstances, including consideration of their health, family, and caring responsibilities.

If a Participant is unable to meet a mutual obligation requirement, Providers must assess if they have a valid reason. A valid reason may include where, due to COVID-19 related risks, they consider participation would unreasonably affect their safety, or the safety of an immediate family member or member of their household, or where they are unvaccinated, and vaccination is a requirement to participate. Decisions should continue to be made on a case-by-case basis.

Providers are also expected to determine the suitability of work for Participants, which should be done on a case-by-case basis and should consider COVID-19 factors, including declared vaccination status of a Participant. Work is considered to be unsuitable if the job would impact their health or that of an immediate family member or member of their household, or where they are unvaccinated, and vaccination is a requirement of the position.