

31 March 2020

The Hon Josh Frydenberg MP
Treasurer
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Treasurer

Financial Support for Overseas Workers - COVID-19

I write to request that you extend support and benefits introduced as part of the Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic to all visa holders who have lost work and income as a result of the COVID-19 emergency.

The COVID-19 pandemic is causing far reaching disruption across the community and economy. I welcome the broad range of stimulus and support packages from all levels of government to keep businesses afloat and staff employed during this crisis, however I am concerned that a number of people are falling through the cracks and are at risk of hardship and homelessness.

Many industries affected by social distancing and shutdowns rely on employees from overseas including the creative, and food and beverage industries, and Sydney's inner city is especially affected. While they are not Australian citizens or permanent residents and may not have lived here long, many have made significant contributions to their industries, helping businesses that would otherwise not be able to find appropriately skilled staff to operate.

Wage subsidies, income support and Centrelink welfare payments introduced as part of the government's COVID 19 response all exclude student and temporary visa holders outside of New Zealand. Overseas workers who have lost their jobs or income as a result of the health emergency may not be able to get back to their home countries due to border closures, flight cancellations or inadequate funds, leaving them vulnerable, with flow-on effects that will increase the spread and impact of COVID-19.

Without any income, many affected overseas workers could end up homeless. A spike in homelessness rates at a time when we must urgently house existing homeless populations to reduce the spread of COVID-19 would be disastrous. Furthermore, many businesses will be in a better position to begin operations when the pandemic is under control if they can rehire existing skilled and experienced staff, including overseas workers.

Could you please urgently extend government income and support benefits to all overseas workers who have lost their job and income from COVID 19 and inform me what action you will take?

Yours sincerely



Alex Greenwich
Member for Sydney

