

# Support for Aged Care Workers in COVID-19 (SACWIC)

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Providers

### General Questions

#### What is the Support for Aged Care Workers in COVID-19 (SACWIC) grant opportunity?

The SACWIC grant opportunity is the second grant opportunity to be established as part of the COVID-19 Aged Care Support Program (the Program). The purpose of the grant opportunity is to minimise the risk of infection to aged care workers, residents, and service users.

Please refer to the Grant Opportunity Guidelines for GO4215, as listed on the GrantConnect website – [www.grants.gov.au](http://www.grants.gov.au). Specifically, *Section 2.1 About the Support for Aged Care Workers in COVID-19 (SACWIC) Grant Opportunity*.

#### What are Guiding Principles and how are they relevant to this grant opportunity?

Industry representatives, with support from government and unions have developed Guiding Principles designed to assist residential providers keep residents and workers safe by working at a single site in designated hotspots. This grant opportunity includes a specific stream of funding for providers to ensure workers will not be disadvantaged as a result of the single site arrangements. It is the Australian Governments' expectation that residential providers who apply for support through the SACWIC grant opportunity are adopting the principles.

For more information, visit the [Guiding Principle Support Hub](#) or call 1800 491 793 Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5pm.

#### What is a designated hotspot?

A 'designated hotspot', for the purpose of this grant opportunity, is:

- Determined by the Commonwealth Department of Health; and
- Listed at Appendix 1 of the GO4215 Grant Opportunity Guidelines

Appendix 1 will be updated if and when new areas are designated as COVID-19 hotspots for the purpose of this grant opportunity.

#### Do the Guiding Principles extend to the other states?

No. At this stage, the Principles are only applicable in the designated COVID-19 hotspots of Greater Melbourne and Mitchell Shire.

### **Has the Australian government mandated that workers of residential aged facilities can only work at one site?**

The Australian Government has not issued a health direction requiring residential aged care workers to work at a single site. The Australian Government is supportive of the industry-led guiding principles to minimise the risk of transmitting COVID-19 across aged care facilities. The SACWIC Grant is designed to ensure aged care workers and providers are not disadvantaged from implementing the principles.

### **Does an aged care worker get to choose which facility they work at, even one where they work fewer hours?**

It is expected that workers will work at the site where they can work the most hours for the duration of the activity period. Once a worker begins working at a single site, they should continue to work at that site for the duration of the grant activity period.

### **The Principles say that a worker must take single site leave. This arrangement is currently in place from 27 July 2020 to 30 November 2020. What if a worker wants to cancel the leave and return to work early?**

Providers should make clear to the worker, prior to the commencement of the leave, that leave can only be brought to an end early by agreement between the worker and their employer. This can be addressed through a policy and/or through written communication with the worker.

If the worker has already commenced this leave and this matter has not been already addressed with the worker, you can make contact with all your workers who are on this leave to communicate this to them.

### **What do I do if a worker wants to change their mind about which site they elect to work at?**

Under this grant opportunity, it is expected that workers will work at the site where they can work the most hours for the duration of the activity period. Once a worker begins working at a single site, they should continue to work at that site for the duration of the activity period.

There may be extenuating circumstances in which a worker cannot stay at the site they originally elected to work at. In these instances, if you are a primary provider, it is recommended that you put in place a variation to the contract of employment or another type of written agreement with individual workers that details the conditions of the employment over the period covered by the Guiding Principles. If the worker wants to change the terms of the employment during that period, changes can only be made by mutual agreement between the provider and the worker. If the worker takes action to end the election, this may be seen as the worker taking action to end the employment.

If you are a secondary provider, it is recommended that you make it clear to the worker, prior to the commencement of the leave, that leave can only be brought to an end early by agreement between them and the employer. This can be addressed through a Policy and/or through written communication with the worker. If the worker has already commenced this leave and this matter has not been already addressed with the worker, you can make contact with all your workers who are on this leave to communicate this to them.

### **What if I have a worker who works for our residential aged care facility and a hospital or similar health care service?**

The Principles only apply to the employment of workers at residential aged care facilities, not hospitals or similar health care services. Therefore, workers can continue working at a residential aged care facility and other workplaces but should comply with all relevant infection control protocols at in their workplace.

### **The Fair Work Commission awarded paid pandemic leave to aged care workers employed under the Aged Care Award 2010, the Nurses Award 2010 and Health Professionals and Support Services Award 2020. How does this affect how much grant funding I can apply for to support workforce costs?**

Under the grant opportunity, eligible providers are able to apply for SACWIC grant funding to pay pandemic leave to residential aged care workers under Stream 2 if workers are eligible for paid pandemic leave (e.g. are covered by one of the three Awards above, and have exhausted their leave entitlements under that award.)

### **Can grant funding under Stream 2 of the SACWIC Grant be used to provide pandemic leave to aged care workers who are employed under enterprise agreements and not the Awards as specified in the Fair Work Commission's determination?**

Yes, funding can be used to provide pandemic leave to workers who are employed under enterprise agreements if they do not have access to or sufficient personal (sick leave) to cover the entire period of evidence. Workers with access to personal (sick) leave entitlements are not eligible to be supported under Stream 2 until the personal (sick) leave balance has been exhausted.

### **How does this grant interact with the Australian Government's \$1,500 Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment for people living in Victoria who can't earn an income because they must self-isolate or quarantine?**

This SACWIC grant opportunity should be applied for in the first instance. If your workers are paid leave through this grant funding, they will not be eligible for the \$1,500 Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment.

### What impact does the Victorian Government's \$450 COVID-19 Test Isolation Payment have on how much grant funding I can apply for?

This SACWIC grant opportunity should be applied for in the first instance. If your workers are paid leave through this grant funding, they will not be eligible for the \$450 payment from the Victorian Government.

### How does JobKeeper impact how much funding I can apply for?

If you are paying JobKeeper already to your workers, this should continue as long as you remain eligible and the scheme remains in place. Under the JobKeeper provisions, employers are required to pass the full amount on to all eligible employees. It does not matter if a worker has nominated another provider as their Primary Provider.

The JobKeeper payments are to be taken into account when determining out of pocket expenses when completing the Application Form for SACWIC grant funding.

### What can Australian Government grant funding be used for?

Please refer to the Grant Opportunity Guidelines for GO4215, as listed on GrantConnect. Specifically, *Section 5.1 Eligible Grant Activities*. You must incur eligible expenditure while you are in a designated hotspot as identified in Appendix 1 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

### What can't I use this grant funding for?

Funding cannot be used for activities that are not listed at *Section 5.1 Eligible grant activities* of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines for GO4215. Please refer to the Grant Opportunity Guidelines for GO4215, as listed on GrantConnect. Specifically, *Section 5.4 What the grant money cannot be used for*.

### What level of funding is available?

Providers are able to apply for the amount of funding necessary within the scope of the eligibility criteria. The Department of Health will consider thresholds listed at *Section 3.1 Grants Available* of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines GO4215 when considering your application, to determine if additional information is required from you to support your application.

The 'SACWIC Application Spreadsheet' is available with the Grant Opportunity Guidelines for GO4215, listed on GrantConnect. The SACWIC Application Spreadsheet will help you detail the costs you can apply for under this grant. The Department of Health may contact you if additional information is required to support your application. Please refer to *Section 3.1 Grants Available* of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines GO4215 for more information.

## What checks and balances are in place to ensure the grant funding is passed on from providers to workers, who miss out on earnings from other facilities?

The Australian Government may conduct audits to ensure the grant funding is paid to workers correctly. A financial acquittal must be submitted at the conclusion of the grant to account for the use of funds.

## How long do I have to apply for the grant?

Providers have until 30 June 2021 to apply for the grant. Providers will only be able to apply for assistance for the time they are eligible under a designated hotspot. Providers may apply for the duration outlined in Appendix 1 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines GO4215.

## Payment Questions

### How will the grant funds be paid?

The Letter of Agreement will state the amount of funding to be provided in relation to the application.

Unless you opt out of the Letter of Agreement, the payment will be made into the relevant account after the two business days cooling off period following the date of the Letter of Agreement. If required, the Australian Government may agree to funding or other variations to the Letter of Agreement and any such funding variation will be paid following departmental processing.

### How are workers paid and how long will this take?

Workers should continue to receive their wages from their primary employer for the duration of the period as set out in the Guiding Principles. Workers do not need to apply for SACWIC funding.

### What if I don't spend all the grant funding amount that is allocated?

If there are unspent and uncommitted funds at the end of the activity period, you must promptly repay all of those funds to the Department of Health unless they equal 10% or less of the total grant amount. If they are 10% or less of the total grant amount, you are permitted to retain and use that amount for expenditure on COVID-19 related expenses at your services/facilities approved by the Department of Health. You may be required to describe these activities in one or more financial acquittal reports.

## Eligibility Questions

### Who is eligible to apply?

We can only accept applications from a body corporate that is:

- an approved Residential Aged Care provider

- an approved Home Care provider
- providers delivering aged care services under the Commonwealth National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program (an approved NATSIFACP provider).

We cannot consider your application if it does not satisfy the eligibility criteria under Section 4.1 and Section 4.1.2 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines GO4215. Please refer to the Grant Opportunity Guidelines for more information.

### **Are providers eligible to apply for funding for a facility located outside the designated hotspots?**

Approved Residential Aged Care Providers or approved NATSIFACP providers who provide services in a facility located outside a hotspot are eligible to apply for the grant if they incur additional costs as a result of eligible workers who work inside a hotspot:

- who normally work at multiple residential aged care facilities, one of which is in a hotspot; and
- will be working solely within the facility outside being applied for.

### **If my workers have personal (sick) leave entitlements, does this affect how much grant funding I can apply for to support workforce costs?**

Workers with paid personal (sick) leave entitlements are not eligible to be supported by this category of funding unless they have insufficient leave balances or where personal (sick) leave cannot be taken under the Award or conditions of employment. When applying for the grant, the paid leave component is based on actual staffing numbers and you will be asked to identify the number of staff you have with less than 10 days personal (sick) leave.

### **Are workforce costs for agency workers eligible under this grant opportunity?**

SACWIC Grant money cannot be used for contractors or agency staff to work at a single site (other than as replacement workers). Please refer to the Grant Opportunity Guidelines for GO4215, on GrantConnect, specifically section 5.4 What the grant money cannot be used for, for further information.

However, the Guiding Principles for residential aged care – keeping Victoria residents and workers safe are designed to minimise the potential risk of workers unintentionally transmitting COVID-19 by working across multiple sites. While the Principles do not directly apply to agency employees, under the Principles, providers are still expected to promote sustainable and safe rostering, employment and workplace practices.

Agency workers may be able to apply for the pandemic leave disaster payment of \$1,500 for Victorian people who need to isolate for 14 days and have no access to, or insufficient, sick leave entitlement. It is possible to access this payment multiple times if you are in a position where you will have to self-isolate again. Further information is available here:

<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/pandemic-leave-disaster-payment>

To apply for the payment, please contact Services Australia on **180 22 66**. The line is open from 8am to 8pm Monday – Friday, and 9am – 5pm Saturday and Sunday.

### If I have increased costs as a result of hiring replacement workers to fill shifts, can I claim for these costs?

If you need to engage replacement workers (for example, agency workers), you are able to apply for grant funding for out of pocket expenses above regular wage costs caused by the implementation of the Guiding Principles. See Case Studies for more information.

## Implementing the SACWIC Grant – pay for workers

### When I'm working out the number of additional hours to offer the worker so that they won't be disadvantaged, should I also be looking at what the worker's take home pay would normally be?

The Guiding Principles and the GO4215 Grant Opportunity Guidelines make clear that workers should not be disadvantaged as a result of the single site principle. Knowing your worker's entitlements, including average weekly take home pay, across all residential aged care employers is essential to ensure the worker is offered enough hours so as to not be disadvantaged.

*For example:*

Working out how many additional hours of work to provide to the worker

| Normal Employment with Secondary Provider/s            | Additional Hours of Work with Primary Provider  |
|--|---|
| Average weekly take home pay from secondary provider/s | = X number of ordinary hours  |
| Average weekly take home pay from secondary provider/s | = Y number of ordinary hours on a Saturday  |
| Average weekly take home pay from secondary provider/s | = Z number of ordinary hours on a Sunday  |
| Average weekly take home pay from secondary provider/s | = P number of overtime hours at time and a half + Q number of overtime hours at double time |
| Average weekly take home pay from secondary provider/s | = R number of overtime hours a double time  |
| Average weekly take home pay from secondary provider/s | = F number of ordinary hours on an afternoon shift  |
| Average weekly take home pay from secondary provider/s | = G number of ordinary hours on a night shift   |

### Do we need to pay superannuation for the additional hours?

Superannuation will be payable as usual on all ordinary time earnings (OTE) by a worker.

### **If I roster the worker for additional shifts beyond full time hours, will those shifts be overtime?**

The terms of the applicable industrial instrument (i.e. a modern award or enterprise agreement) will apply as normal. As a result, the usual triggers for overtime, shift penalties and other penalties will continue to apply to this worker who is working additional shifts.

Providers should ensure additional shifts are provided in such a way as to maintain the Principle that workers should not be disadvantaged as a result of working at a single site.

### **What if a worker has been rostered to work, but they refuse to work the rostered shift for non-COVID-19 related reasons? Do we still need to pay them for the shifts?**

To answer this question it is necessary to know if this is a full time, part time or casual worker and if there is a contract of employment or a less formally written agreement that the worker would work that roster.

If the worker is full time or part time and there is a contract of employment or written agreement in place to work that shift, the worker will need to apply for leave to be absent from work for that shift as they normally would. Depending on the type of leave being used will depend on whether they are paid or not. Casual employees can refuse shifts and do not have access to paid leave.

However, if the worker is refusing to work a shift by their primary provider that would provide them with additional hours of work normally worked for their secondary provider/s, alternative shifts should also be offered to them to give them further opportunities to work the hours.

It is expected that workers will accept and work the additional hours for the primary employer. The worker would need a valid reason as to why they were not able to work the additional hours and would need to take into account section 62(3) of the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth).

If the worker does provide a valid reason for not working all the offered additional hours, the primary employer will pay the worker the remainder of their total average take home pay normally received from secondary employers for that pay cycle for this unworked time. The provider will be able to claim the cost under SACWIC. Claims of this nature may be scrutinised by the Department.

### **If I am the primary provider and our organisation does not have a salary packaging arrangement, but the secondary provider does, do I need to compensate the worker for the tax benefit?**

No. It is possible that the worker may be able to make up for this period of no deductions by increasing their salary deduction when they return to the secondary provider for the balance of the fringe benefits tax (FBT) year. The worker should be encouraged to seek further information from the secondary provider on their salary packaging options.

## As a primary provider, what kind of evidence can I request from workers to determine their usual income and hours of work?

You can ask for the following evidence:

- The last three payslips;
- Up to date employment contracts; and
- Contact details of the secondary provider/s and permission from the worker to contact them.

## Implementing the SACWIC Grant – hours for workers

### What if I am the provider and I do not have sufficient rostered hours available to cover the hours that staff would normally work at another RACF?

It is expected that workers will work at the RACF where they can work the most hours for the period covered by the Guiding Principles (currently until 30 November 2020). Once a worker begins working at a single site (RACF), they should continue to work at that site for as long as the Guiding Principles are in place.

If you do not have sufficient rostered hours to employ your worker for additional hours, you should offer them supernumerary hours, while also ensuring compliance with occupational health and safety obligations and the relevant industrial instrument.

There may be a limited number of circumstances where workers may not be able to work for all the additional hours. Examples include:

- Providers are not required to offer additional hours that would put at risk the health and safety of the worker;
- Providers have a health and safety responsibility to limit staffing numbers at the facility. This limitation can be set by a Government body or by the provider completing risk assessments in accordance with their OHS legislation obligations; or
- Providers have to abide by the applicable industrial instruments which provide breaks to the worker from being on duty.
- A worker has caring responsibilities for a child or other relative or friend.

In these circumstances, and other reasonable circumstances as determined by the provider, the provider as the primary employer will pay the worker the remainder of their total average take home pay normally received from secondary employers for that pay cycle for this unworked time. The provider will be able to claim the cost under SACWIC. Claims of this nature may be scrutinised by the Department.

## What are supernumerary hours?

Supernumerary hours are hours that exceed a provider's usual number of rostered hours. This may mean that workers are rostered on in excess of a provider's workforce needs. Providers can claim funding under SACWIC for these costs.

## Is there a maximum number of hours that a worker can be paid for? For example, can I ask employees to work 100 hours a fortnight?

When determining the maximum number of hours you can safely employ a worker to work, you must consider:

- The health and safety of the worker in accordance with your obligation to manage fatigue in the workplace. (see [https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/fatigue\\_for\\_more\\_information](https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/fatigue_for_more_information)), and
- The provisions of the applicable industrial instruments which provide breaks to the worker from being on duty and comply with these provisions.

You are not required to offer additional hours that would put the health and safety of your worker at risk.

## I do not want to release a worker to work at the primary provider. Can I make them stay with me only?

When a worker proposes, requests, or elects to take a period of unpaid authorised leave from your organisation for the purpose of working at a single site during this period, it has been suggested that they are to be recognised to be exercising or proposing to exercise their workplace rights under the Guiding Principles in accordance with their duties under section 25 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (VIC). Therefore, if a worker elects to work at another facility for another provider as their single site, you cannot legally make them stay with you only.

If a worker has not yet elected a provider as their primary provider, it is recommended that you have a discussion with them about electing you as their primary provider.

## How can I calculate a casual employee's hours of work?

The average hours of work and averaged weekly rate of pay for a casual worker can be calculated on the weekly pay received by the worker in the previous 6 weeks, or where the worker has been employed for less than 6 weeks, for the duration of their employment with the secondary provider/s.

## Noncompliance with the Guiding Principles

### What do I do if a worker does not comply with the Principles?

It depends on how the worker is not complying with the Principles as to what options are available for providers to deal with the situation.

If the worker claims that they have elected a particular provider as their primary provider, but continue to work for other residential aged care providers, they are not complying with their obligations under the Principles. As a result, they are not entitled to be offered additional hours that would be, or are being worked, for other providers and are not entitled to payment to maintain any claimed level of take home pay from multiple providers.

If a provider has a written agreement with a worker or policy in place which requires compliance with the Principles as a condition of employment, the worker may be misconducting themselves by not complying with the Principles and disciplinary action may be taken against them.

As a provider you can contact the Support Hub for advice on your particular situation on 1800 491 793 between 8:30am and 5pm AEST Monday to Friday or [through the website form](#).

## Returning to work after the activity period

### How do we return to the usual arrangement? Do we agree to a set sector-wide notice to return to substantive arrangements?

These Guiding Principles were originally in place until 25 September 2020. The Principles have been extended until 30 November 2020 as a result of the pandemic and advice from the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments. Further extensions may be required. Once these Guiding Principles are no longer in place, workers can return to their usual working patterns with providers.

To ensure workers have sufficient direction on how and when usual arrangements can be returned to, it is recommended providers outline this via:

- a written agreement between the primary or secondary provider and the worker; and/or
- putting in place a policy and communicating this to their workers.

## Funding for Training

### Will I be reimbursed for costs associated with training additional employees where employees are unable to work due to self-isolation/quarantine requirements or because workers have selected to work at an alternative facility?

If you are an approved Residential Aged Care Provider or an approved NATSIFACP provider and have workers who are not to attend work due to self-isolation/quarantine requirements, you can apply for grant funding to train additional workers in the event a skills gap arises, if you are located:

- in a hotspot, or
- outside a hotspot but have workers elect to work at another facility within a hotspot.

Similarly, if you are an approved Home Care provider that has workers who provide services to clients residing inside a hotspot, and are not to attend work due to self-isolation/quarantine requirements, you can apply for grant funding to train additional workers in the event a skills gap arises.

Please note that in all these circumstances the training **must be**:

- provided by a registered training organisation or, where more appropriate, delivered in-house by your organisation; and
- because usual staff are not to attend work because of quarantine and self-isolation or because workers have selected to work at an alternative facility

If these two criteria are not met, the costs of the training cannot be claimed under grant funding.

There are only limited circumstances where providing site-specific training in-house may be more appropriate. If additional costs arise as a result of the diversion of resources for site-specific training, you may be able to apply for assistance under the SACWIC grant.

## Application Questions

### On 14 October 2020, the Australian Government announced that funding of the SACWIC Grant will be extended to support providers from 15 July to 30 November 2020. How does this affect what I can apply for under the Grant?

Providers are now able to apply for eligible workforce costs for the period they are implementing single site workforce arrangements between 15 July and 30 November 2020. Please refer to *Appendix 1: SACWIC COVID-19 Hotspots* (Addendum no. 4 on GrantConnect) for further information. To apply, refer to the *SACWIC Application Spreadsheet – updated 4.9.20* on GrantConnect.

### How do I submit an application for this grant opportunity?

You can only apply online via GrantConnect:

- you will need to be registered with GrantConnect to access the portal;
- complete the online grant opportunity application form;
- provide all the information requested in the application form;
- address all eligibility criteria; and
- include all necessary attachments.

### Will I get all the funding requested?

The Department of Health determines your grant amount based on its assessment of your needs through your completed application form. The Decision Maker decides which grants to approve based on what is eligible expenditure.

### Can I request additional funding once a grant is awarded if COVID-19 continues to impact my workforce costs and the service I provide?

The Department of Health recognises that the duration of COVID-19 pandemic is uncertain, and COVID-19 may impact your workforce costs for a longer period than initially anticipated. In these circumstances, you can request a variation to your grant agreement by contacting your Funding Arrangement Management. You will be asked to resubmit the SACWIC Application Spreadsheet attached to your original application which will enable you to justify your request for additional funding and provide the Australian Government with a chance to review your case.

### Can I apply in respect of more than one facility?

Yes, as a provider you can apply for multiple aged care facilities/services in the one application form. The SACWIC Application Spreadsheet has capacity for multiple services to be listed. If additional facilities/services are subsequently impacted by eligible workforce costs related to COVID-19, you may submit the SACWIC Application Spreadsheet, without completed the Application form again.

### Who do I contact if I am having technical issues submitting the application?

For requests for technical help or support in using and/or submitting the Application Form please contact email the Department of Health at: [grant.atm@health.gov.au](mailto:grant.atm@health.gov.au). The Department of Health will aim to respond to questions within two (2) working days.

### Who do I contact if I have questions relating to the grant opportunity?

As a provider you have access to the Guiding Principle Support Hub that can answer your general queries and provide guidance, tools and advice to assist you in implementing these guidelines. You can find further information at:

- Website and online form: [supporthub.agedservicesworkforce.com.au](https://supporthub.agedservicesworkforce.com.au)
- Hotline: **1800 491 793** Monday to Friday 8:30 am to 5:00 pm.

For specific questions on the grant application process, you can also contact the Department of Health at: [grant.atm@health.gov.au](mailto:grant.atm@health.gov.au) . The Department of Health will aim to respond to questions within two (2) working days.

### How will organisations be advised of the final outcome?

Successful applicants will be advised of the outcome of their application through a Letter of Agreement and unsuccessful applicants will be notified in writing.

### In what order will applications be assessed and funded?

Applications will generally be assessed in order of need, as determined by the Department of Health.

### Does SACWIC pay for additional workers?

SACWIC does not provide funding for additional or replacement workers, unless:

- there are additional costs to the provider caused by the implementation of residential aged care workers working across a single site; and
- a provider has undertaken reasonable efforts to ensure its new total wage bill fits in with its old one.

If you are hiring additional workers as a result of a COVID-19 test or COVID-19 infection, you should consider applying for funding under the Aged Care Support Program (GO3844).

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Workers

### Do I need to apply for the grant?

No, workers cannot apply for SACWIC funding themselves. If you work for an eligible approved residential aged care, home care or NATSIFACP provider inside a hotspot, your employer can apply for SACWIC grant funding to provide you with financial support.

### Will I have to wait for a grant to be processed before I get paid?

No. Your employer can pay you now and then apply for grant funding. If there is an issue with payment from your provider, in the first instance discuss this with your manager. If this is not resolved, you can contact the Industry Support Hub at:

- Website and online form: [supporthub.agedservicesworkforce.com.au](http://supporthub.agedservicesworkforce.com.au)
- Hotline: 1800 491 793

### I'm employed by an agency not a provider, can my employer receive grant funding?

No. Agencies are not eligible for funding support under SACWIC. To be eligible a provider must be an approved:

- Residential Aged Care provider;
- Home Care provider; or
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program (NATSIFACP) provider.

If you are unsure if your employer is eligible, please speak with them in the first instance.

### How long are the single site principles (Guiding Principles) going to be in place?

The single site principles were originally in place until 25 September 2020. The Principles were originally extended until 26 October 2020 and have recently been extended again until 30 November 2020 as a result of the pandemic and advice from the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments. Further extensions may be required.

### I've worked for one residential aged care facility for 10 years, where I work 10 hours per week. I've also recently started working at another facility, where I work 12 hours per week. Can I continue working for the provider I've been with the longest?

You should work at the site where you will be provided with the most hours for the period that the single site principles are in place (currently until 30 November 2020). Once you begin working at a single site, you should continue this for as long as the single site principles are in place.

### I only earn \$960 a fortnight, I would be better off getting the Victorian or Australian Government's \$1,500 payment, so should I apply for that instead?

Where your employer seeks financial support for you through this Grant, you will not be eligible for the Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment.

If your employer is ineligible for the SACWIC Grant you may be eligible for a [Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment](#). To confirm your eligibility, please contact Services Australia on 180 22 66.

### If I'm told I have to self-isolate, do I have to use my sick leave?

If you are unwell and/or showing symptoms of COVID-19 and have been directed to self-isolate, you are eligible to take personal (sick) leave and you must use this entitlement. If you run out of personal (sick) leave, your employer can apply for funding under SACWIC to maintain your pay.

If you are well and are not showing symptoms but have been directed to self-isolate, it is up to your employer whether any leave provisions are available to you. If you do not have any personal (sick) leave entitlements, your employer can apply for funding under SACWIC to fund this paid leave for you in the first instance.

If your employer is ineligible for the SACWIC Grant you may be eligible for a [Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment](#).

**I'm a permanent personal care worker at a residential aged care facility and I have three weeks annual leave. Do I have to use all my personal (sick) leave and my annual leave if I am not to work due to testing, isolation or quarantine requirements, or experiencing COVID-19 symptoms/positive diagnosis, before I am eligible for paid leave under the grant?**

No. You will need to use any sick leave that can be used, but not your annual leave. If you run out of personal (sick) leave, your employer can apply for funding under SACWIC to maintain your pay.

**Both my wife and I work in residential aged care facilities but at different sites. Can we do that and still live together?**

Yes, but if either of you have symptoms or test positive to COVID-19 you will both need to self-isolate and you must not go to work if you are unwell. When you get tested you should advise the person taking your test that you are an aged care worker to ensure the results are given priority.

You may be eligible for emergency accommodation if you are unable to quarantine or self-isolate in your home. You should contact your Human Resources department to find out if you qualify in the first instance.

**How long does the 'activity period' last for?**

The 'activity period' is the period that your employer receives grant funding under SACWIC for. The maximum activity period is limited to the areas and dates at Appendix 1 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines for GO4215, as listed on the GrantConnect website – [www.grants.gov.au](http://www.grants.gov.au). These will be updated as necessary.

**Where can I go for counselling and support services?**

Support is now available for aged care workers whose regular working arrangements have changed as a result of the Guiding Principles. These workers can get free counselling services from [Converge International](https://www.convergeinternational.com.au).

Converge International will deliver up to five free counselling sessions per person, per issue. Services include employee and manager support, career guidance, financial counselling and family support. These services are available for a three month period to 10 November 2020.

Phone 1800 687 327 (free call) or visit [www.convergeinternational.com.au](http://www.convergeinternational.com.au) to book an appointment. Make sure you state that you are from the "VIC Residential Aged Care Workforce" when booking.

# Support for Aged Care Workers in COVID-19 – SACWIC Grant Case Studies

## Some of our staff work at more than one site. How do we cover the costs of providing extra shifts at just one site?

Helen runs Morning Gardens Residential Aged Care, which is located in a designated COVID-19 hotspot for the purposes of the SACWIC Grant. She has four staff members who each ordinarily work 8 additional hours at the nearby Evening Gardens RACF. These workers have elected Morning Gardens to be their primary employer. Helen agrees to offer each of her four staff 8 additional hours per week, so they no longer work at Evening Gardens RACF. Helen can apply for her out of pocket wage expenses to be covered by the SACWIC Grant if she experiences overall out of pocket costs as a result of providing these employees with additional hours of work.

## A staff member has phoned in and they are unwell but they don't have enough sick leave to take a day off.

Bill manages Sunshine Park Aged Care located in Brunswick. His employee, Rhonda, has called to inform him that she has a sore throat and a mild temperature. Bill has advised Rhonda that she needs to self-isolate and get tested for COVID-19. Rhonda is a permanent employee of Sunshine Park Aged Care but she has used all her accrued personal (sick) leave entitlements so would normally be required to take unpaid leave. Bill can pay her sick leave and apply for his out of pocket wage expenses to be covered by the SACWIC Grant. If Bill does not pay for her leave through the SACWIC Grant, then Rhonda may apply for the Victorian Government's \$450 COVID-19 Test Isolation Payment.

## A relative I saw on the weekend has just tested positive for COVID-19. What should I do now?

Lisa is a casual personal care worker at Hope Ridge Residential Aged Care which is located in a designated hotspot and she has no leave entitlements. She informs Hope Ridge manager, Roger, that her cousin, who she had dinner with on Saturday night, has now been diagnosed with COVID-19. Roger tells Lisa that she must self-isolate and get tested for COVID-19. To ensure she complies with these instructions, Roger can pay Lisa for the hours she was already rostered for.

Roger can receive support under SACWIC to continue to pay Lisa her average wages if she was likely to have worked during the period she was required to self-isolate, even if she was not yet rostered on.

If Lisa is not supported under SACWIC then Lisa may apply for:

- The \$450 Coronavirus (COVID-19) Test Isolation Payment, if she was likely to have worked during the self-isolation period; and
- The Australian Government's \$1,500 Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment, if she was told to self-isolate or quarantine by the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services.

Once Lisa has isolated for 14 days and been advised by her Public Health Unit that she is clear to return to end isolation and return to normal activities, she will be able to return to work.

### **Residents have formed attachments with particular staff. Why should residents be disrupted by having new caring staff?**

Frank is confused as to why his favourite carers Barbara and Bob are no longer looking after him. Barbara and Bob are close-contacts to another staff member who has tested positive. They are now in isolation at home and waiting for the results of their COVID tests, to ensure they are not spreading COVID-19 and to ensure their own health.

Once Barbara and Bob have been isolated for 14 days and have been advised by their Public Health Unit they are clear to end isolation and return to normal activities, they will be able to return to work and be reunited with Frank. To ensure that a potential infection of COVID-19 can be contained and the health of residents and workers can be protected, strict actions need to be taken. As soon as staff are cleared to return to work, they will do so and residents will be reunited with the staff they know. This will support residents to continue to experience safe quality care.

If Barbara and Bill are not entitled to personal leave because they do not have an illness or injury, they may be entitled to Paid Pandemic Leave provisions under if they are employed under the Aged Care Award. If Barbara and Bill are not supported under SACWIC or paid leave by their employer, they may apply for:

- The \$450 Coronavirus (COVID-19) Test Isolation Payment, if she was likely to have worked during the self-isolation period; and
- The Australian Government's \$1,500 Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment, if she was told to self-isolate or quarantine by the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services.

### **Some of my staff live in a designated 'hotspot', but our service is not in a hotspot. How does this grant apply to us?**

Green Mountains Residential Home Care is not in a designated COVID-19 hotspot but some of their staff, John and Judy, live in a hotspot area. Where an employee lives is not relevant to eligibility for SACWIC – as long as John and Judy don't display any symptoms and return negative tests during staff testing for COVID-19, they can continue to work at Green Mountains (their primary place of work), while following all infection control protocols.

### **Some of my staff work in a hotspot, but our service is not in a hotspot. How does this grant apply to us?**

Green Mountains Residential Home Care also have staff, Fred and George, who work a few hours a week at a second facility, Gold Creek Aged Care which is located inside a designated hotspot. To minimise the risk of infection they have elected to temporarily stop working at Gold Creek Aged Care. So that Fred and George aren't impacted financially, the management of Green Mountains will offer them additional hours. If Green Mountains now has additional labour costs outside their normal expenses, the SACWIC grant is designed so Green Mountains management can apply for funding from the Australian Government to cover these increased costs.

Gold Creek can also apply for the grant if they have incurred out-of-pocket expenses by changes they need to make to their staffing.

### **What if my services are affected for longer than the duration that a hotspot location was designated in Appendix 1 of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines?**

Ocean Shores Aged Care facility has been in a designated COVID-19 hotspot and they have received funding from the SACWIC Grant to cover additional employee expenses. If the suburb of Ocean Shores Aged Care remains a designated hotspot (and Appendix 1 has been updated to reflect this extension) and they use all the grant funding they have received for additional staff expenses, they can apply for more funding from the grant. Providers should remain informed of any changes to the SACWIC grant, such as extension of the time period.

### **What happens if the funding I receive does not meet my staffing needs for the life of the grant?**

Open Plains Aged Care Facility has been using funds from the SACWIC Grant to cover employee expenses. The Grant that has been provided has now been fully allocated to staff, however, there are still additional expenses that need covering.

Open Plains should contact the funding manager within their organisation and resubmit the calculation spreadsheet that was sent with their original application to apply for further funding.

### **Can I claim this grant in retrospect, after the period a location was designated a hotspot so I know how much this will cost?**

Dove Care Residential Home in Mitchell Shire did not apply for the SACWIC Grant when it was released as they believed they could cover any additional expenses that would be incurred by their employees. Dove Care has since realised that it requires funding for costs incurred during the period that Mitchell Shire was a designated hotspot. Dove Care can apply for the SACWIC grant retrospectively, until 30 June 2021, which is the end date of the grant opportunity.

### **My facility has not had an infection of COVID-19 can I receive financial support?**

Hardys Point Aged Care home is in a designated hotspot but has not had any cases of COVID-19 amongst residents or staff. However, four of their casual staff have stopped working at Hardys Point, because they usually work at multiple residential aged care facilities.

Hardys Point Manager Larry has been able to fill these shifts with other staff members. If Hardys Point:

- already has an available budget for these hours and does not need to provide training for these workers, then Hardys Point is not eligible for grant funding.
- does not have an available budget for these hours because there are additional wage costs, or needs to provide training for these workers, then Hardys Point is eligible for grant funding.

### **Can I receive funding for replacement workers?**

Shakespeare is a residential aged care provider in Greater Melbourne. Two of its regular employees, Levin and Sarah are working at another residential aged care facility for the period that Melbourne is designated as a hotspot under SACWIC.

Shakespeare's regular workers are unable to cover the shifts usually worked by Levin and Sarah.

Shakespeare hires two replacement workers, Kate and Pip, to cover Levin and Sarah's regular shifts.

Shakespeare's overall labour costs remain the same as prior to the implementation of the principles, as Kate and Pip can cover Levin and Sarah's regular shifts for exactly the same cost.

As a result, Shakespeare is ineligible to claim grant funding for these particular costs under SACWIC.

### **Can I claim for all additional workers?**

Morningtide residential aged care provider usually has a wage bill of \$10,000 per month. Even though it is not required, Morningtide wants to know whether it can hire additional staff at a total cost of \$5,000 a month on top of its regular \$10,000 wage bill after the single site principles were implemented, and receive SACWIC funding for this.

As hiring these additional workers was not required by the implementation of the Guiding Principles (single site employment), it cannot receive SACWIC funding for these workers.

### **I have increased wage costs due to the implementation of the principles, excluding supernumerary hours?**

Pleasant Rise, a residential aged care provider in Mitchell Shire, employs 10 permanent staff for a total cost of \$10,000 per week.

Three of their staff – Jane, John and Doe – have chosen to work at other facilities for the duration of the single site policy. Resulting in \$3,000 of unspent labour costs per week.

Pleasant Rise's remaining seven staff are unable to cover the hours usually worked by Jane, John and Doe. Pleasant Rise has to hire five additional workers to cover Jane, John and Doe's regular hours.

Despite undertaking every reasonable effort to ensure its new total wage bill fits in with its old one, Pleasant Rise's new wage costs equates to \$11,000, \$1,000 more than previously.

SACWIC will not provide funding for the \$10,000, because this is to be absorbed through Pleasant Rise's normal wage costs. But Pleasant Rise can receive SACWIC grant support for the additional \$1,000 labour costs, because:

- The additional wage costs were caused by the implementation of the principles; and
- Pleasant Rise had undertaken reasonable efforts to ensure that its new wage bill was within its previous wage bill.

Where Pleasant Rise has no choice other than to use agency staff to meet its staffing levels, it will be able to apply for SACWIC grant funding as they are replacement workers required as a result of the Guiding Principles.

Pleasant Rise applies for this funding through SACWIC Stream 1: Supporting aged care workers to work at a single site.

### **I have increased wage costs due to hiring additional staff due to a COVID-19 test or COVID-19 infection**

Sunny Valley residential aged care provider experiences a COVID-19 infection two weeks after the implementation of the principles.

All of its regular workers are instructed to enter quarantine and Sunny Valley has to hire additional workers to replace them.

Sunny Valley applies for funding under:

- SACWIC to cover leave expenses for its employees who have insufficient personal (sick) leave balances or where personal (sick) leave cannot be taken under the Award or conditions of employment; and
- The Aged Care Support Program (GO3844) for the cost of additional workers, as there was a COVID-19 infection on the site.

### **My facility has had an infection of COVID-19, can I receive financial support?**

After receiving SACWIC grant funding, Hardys Point subsequently experiences an infection of COVID-19, and experiences additional costs as a result. SACWIC does not provide grant funding to cover the costs of the COVID-19 infection. As a result, Hardys Point can apply for funding under the Aged Care Support Program (GO3844).

### **I am a home care provider. My staff are working in a hotspot, but the central office is outside the hotspot. Can I apply for funding?**

Green Mountains Home Care is a home care provider that has staff working for clients living in a designated hotspot but the central office is outside of the hotspot area. Green Mountains Home Care incurs labour costs due to workers working in a COVID-19 hotspot needing to isolate and take sick leave. The staff don't have access to accrued sick leave, so Green Mountains can apply for the SACWIC Grant for those additional labour costs, including the cost of providing staff with paid leave.

If Green Mountains Home Care needs to undertake skills training in the event a skills gap arises from where existing workers are not to work due to experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, or are subject to self-isolation or quarantine requirements, then they can also apply for the Grant to cover the cost of training.

### **My facility previously had an infection of COVID-19, can I receive financial support under this grant as well as the Aged Care Support Program?**

The Mountain Breeze Residential Aged Care Facility previously had an infection of COVID-19 and received Australian government funding under the Aged Care Support Program to secure additional Protective Personal Equipment (PPE). The facility is now in a designated hotspot, and although they currently don't have any cases, their workforce has been disrupted. Mountain Breeze management have incurred additional expenses as a result of providing additional hours to workers who worked hours at another facility prior to Mountain Breeze being their single site. As the SACWIC Grant is to complement and not replace other grants, they are able to apply for this funding also.