



COVID-19 Financial Support for SHEV and TPV holders

This Fact Sheet explains what COVID-19 government support is available for SHEV (Safe Haven Enterprise Visa) and TPV (Temporary Protection Visa) holders.

Financial Support

- SHEV and TPV visa holders can get Special Benefits as well as some other government support if they have financial hardship because of COVID-19. People seeking asylum usually don't get government Centrelink support but may be eligible for Status Resolution Support or other support from community organisations.
- People on government income support payments, including Special Benefit, get a temporary fortnightly \$550 coronavirus payment. Some will get one or two \$750 household support payments.
- Child care will be free for some time.
- Seasonal agriculture workers in Queensland can still move and work but only if they have guaranteed accommodation and a job, and follow their employer's health management plan during COVID-19 times. Large fines apply if the health plans aren't followed.
- There is government support for commercial landlords to help reduce rent for tenants if their businesses have been affected by COVID-19. Commercial landlords can't end your lease for non-payment of rent if your business has been reduced by more than 30% due to COVID-19.
- Banks and lenders can also change the terms of any loan you have with them if you are in hardship.
- The 'JobKeeper Payment' to help some businesses keep paying employees is not available for TPV, SHEV and asylum seekers.

For more detail check online at <https://moneysmart.gov.au/covid-19/financial-assistance>

Superannuation

- By law, employers must pay 9.5% of your salary into a 'superannuation fund' which is invested and grows over time to help your retirement.
- If you lost your job or had working hours reduced by 20% or more because of COVID-19 you can apply to access your superannuation early – up to \$10,000 in 2019-2020 and a further \$10,000 in 2020-2021. Applications must be lodged through MyGov by 30 June.
- Withdrawing superannuation early under COVID-19 will NOT affect your 'SHEV pathway' to apply for a permanent visa. The money won't be taxed and won't affect Centrelink payments.
- **Superannuation is usually for your longer term savings so think carefully about if you can survive enough on Special Benefit or other government support before withdrawing any of your super.**

Will getting Centrelink benefits affect the 'SHEV Pathway'

- Normally you can only apply for further temporary protection when your TPV or SHEV is close to ending. However there is a 'SHEV pathway' where SHEV holders can apply for some permanent visas if, for 3.5 years (42 months), they or their family member work in a regional area without getting Centrelink Special Benefit, or study in a regional area for that time.
- **There is a 'COVID-19 Concession Period' for SHEV holders which allows times during a concession period to be counted toward the 42 month requirement even though an applicant is unemployed or receiving Special Benefit payments or if they are employed in a specified essential service.** This started on 1 February 2020 and goes till a date the Minister decides. This means if you are in a regional area and were unemployed or receiving Special benefits after COVID then those times can still be counted towards making up the 42 month SHEV Pathway period.
- **The Special Benefit rule doesn't apply to study.** If you study in a regional area and get Special Benefit then that time can be counted into the 3.5 years. Usually you don't get more than 12 months Special Benefits while studying.
- You can also make up the 3.5 years over different SHEVs. For example, you may only do 2 years of work or study on your first SHEV and 1.5 years on a second SHEV to make up the 3.5 years.
- Withdrawing superannuation early under COVID-19 will not affect your 'SHEV pathway' to apply for a permanent visa.

Applying for a 'pathway visa'

- Only one family unit member who can be included in a pathway visa application has to pass the work or study pathway rules. You can make the application for one of the pathway visas as soon as the 3.5 years has been completed.
- The 'SHEV Pathway' is only a pathway to applying for some permanent visas. It does not mean you will get the visa you apply for. **The rules to get permanent visas are very hard.**
- You should **check with a migration agent** about what type of work/study might be best for you to do now which might give better chances for a permanent visa in the future if you or a family member reaches the 3.5 years pathway. But remember that migration law changes often and no firm advice can be given about what visa requirements will be in the future.

Beware of Scams

- During COVID-19, and always, **beware when someone tries to get your personal and financial information.** Scammers have claimed to be from government or organisations saying they can help get early access to your super or give you other benefits, Don't click on links in suspect online messages. If you think the message might be genuine, do your own website search to check it out. Otherwise, press delete or hang up the phone.
- Get help at www.scamwatch.gov.au

This is legal information only, not legal advice. Get advice from a qualified migration lawyer /agent