

JobKeeper payments should support temporary visa holders

FECCA has welcomed the Federal Government's JobKeeper Payment announcement, and has congratulated the Government in particular for supporting New Zealand residents on special category visa 444 through the package.

FECCA, however, has called on the Federal Government to ensure other temporary visa holders are also supported.

Unfortunately, the Government's \$130 billion JobKeeper payment package does not apply to people on temporary visas, such as bridging visas and skilled working visas. FECCA estimates there are about 500,000 people on temporary visas who are not supported by the JobKeeper package and who face either losing their income, or have already lost their income, as a result of measures put in place to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

The JobKeeper Payment package also does not support employers with large numbers of staff who are on temporary visas, such as in the agricultural, hospitality and retail sectors. Because the payments only apply to current or recently stood down employees, and do not apply to new hires, these businesses will receive no support for retaining their staff who happen to be on temporary visas, and will find it much harder to bounce back after the crisis.

FECCA CEO Mohammad Al-Khafaji welcomed the JobKeeper package, but said it should be extended to others regardless of visa status.

"We absolutely applaud the Federal Government for announcing this package and for listening to our concerns and extending it to New Zealanders working in Australia," he said.

"However, this package should also provide some certainty to other temporary visa holders working in this country, regardless of their visa status. This is a relatively small cohort of people working in Australia who have contributed so much to our communities and to the economy.

"They include disability and aged care workers supporting those in need, highly skilled engineers adding expertise to local companies, chefs and service staff contributing to successful hospitality businesses, and those on temporary visas who are seeking asylum.

"These people are in the same situation as their co-workers in Australian workplaces and this package should provide support to them too. I think most Australians would agree that for these people who have worked here for many years to be left destitute without any other safety net is patently unfair.

FECCA is the national peak multicultural body representing people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in Australia.

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