



## AUSTRALIA POST WILL CONTINUE TO DELIVER PERISHABLE GOODS

In some great news, Australia Post has committed that it will continue to deliver perishable goods.

The importance of this service being continued was highlighted by The Nationals during public hearings in the Senate earlier this year.

Australia Post announced that due to complex State and Territory regulatory requirements, it intended to discontinue the carriage of perishable goods from 30 June 2021.

The announcement to cut the service, which delivers consumable goods such as cheese and meat, was provided with little notice and sparked serious concerns from farmers and small businesses.

The decision by Australia Post to continue delivering perishable goods is a win for regional and rural Australia.

To drop the service would have been absolutely devastating. Many of our regional food producers were quite alarmed and we also saw businesses from various sectors in Victoria, Tasmania, Queensland and South Australia were going to be impacted.

We will continue to fight to keep Australia Post services like this for regional Australians.

This is a great outcome for our local businesses.

## COVID-19 DISASTER PAYMENTS

For work lost due to lockdowns

20+ hours lost \$750pw

8-20 hours lost \$450pw

8+ hours lost \$200pw  
(and receiving other income support)

 [my.gov.au](https://my.gov.au)

 180 22 66

## COVID-19 DISASTER PAYMENT

The Australian Government continues to support people impacted by lockdowns through the COVID-19 Disaster Payment, which has granted more than \$4.1 billion in support to date nationally.

More than 1.6 million Australians have accessed this support, which has been extended in response to the ongoing state-wide lockdown.

Under the payment, eligible people will receive \$750 per week if they have lost 20 or more hours of work, and \$450 per week if they have lost between 8 and less than 20 hours of work, or a full day of work.

People who currently receive an income support payment can also receive an extra payment of \$200 if they have lost at least 8 hours of work and meet the other eligibility requirements for the COVID-19 Disaster Payment.

Claiming the individual payment online via myGov is the quickest and easiest option, and the payment is now recurring and automatically paid for any future weeks of a lockdown.




More information about financial support available to Victorians, and how to claim is available on the Services Australia website at: [www.servicesaustralia.gov.au](https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au)



For more information go to: [www.bridgetmckenzie.com.au](https://www.bridgetmckenzie.com.au)

## Senator BRIDGET McKENZIE

NATIONALS SENATOR FOR VICTORIA • LEADER OF THE NATIONALS IN THE SENATE

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**THE NATIONALS**  
for Regional Australia

## Senator the Hon. BRIDGET McKENZIE

NATIONALS SENATOR FOR VICTORIA

LEADER OF THE NATIONALS IN THE SENATE

MINISTER FOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND NATIONAL RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE

MINISTER FOR REGIONALISATION, REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS AND REGIONAL EDUCATION

## OUR PLAN TO SECURE THE FUTURE OF REGIONAL COMMUNITIES

### A MESSAGE FROM Bridget

Well, it's been another tough month for us all.

We've seen ongoing lockdowns in Victoria, New South Wales and the ACT, as well as distressing scenes out of Afghanistan.

I know it's been hard for our local businesses, families and veterans during this time.

Please rest assured I am getting on with the job. We will get through this together.

Our government is supporting the community. We've rolled out COVID-19 Disaster Payments for people who have been impacted by restrictions and we're working hard to get safe and effective vaccines distributed to Australians as quickly as possible. Our nation has now passed 21 million COVID-19 vaccinations, and if we keep it up, lockdowns and isolation will end up becoming a thing of the past.

I strongly encourage those eligible to come forward and receive their jab, so our lives can return to normal.

If you are hesitant, talk to your doctor about which vaccine is suitable for you. I've just received my second dose of AstraZeneca after a consultation with my doctor.

The best vaccine is the one you can get access to today, so go and get your jab sorted as soon as you can.

After spending a couple of busy weeks in Canberra (which was in lockdown), I am looking forward to returning home to regional Victoria for the Parliament sitting break.

I look forward to catching up with you soon.

Until then, enjoy the beautiful spring weather and the wattle!

**Senator Bridget McKenzie**  
Nationals Senator For Victoria  
Leader of The Nationals in the Senate



## AG VISA FOR RURAL AND REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

The Nationals in government have delivered a vital agriculture visa to help secure the future of rural and regional Australia.

The Agricultural Worker Visa will provide a long-term, reliable workforce for our critical industries while solving one of the great challenges facing regional Australia in recent history.

This Ag Visa will be in place by the end of September 2021, with the full implementation of this demand-driven visa complete within 3 years.

The visa will be open to applicants from a range of countries and will be available to skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers.

It will include meat processing, fisheries and forestry sectors and provide a basis for the ongoing growth of our primary industries.

This will greatly assist our local industries here in Victoria as they manage and plan out their future workforce needs.

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## 24/7 Mental Health Services

Defence  
all-hours  
Support Line  
1800 628 036

**OPEN  
ARMS**  
Veterans & Families  
Counselling  
1800 011 046

**SAFE ZONE  
SUPPORT**  
FREE ANONYMOUS  
COUNSELLING LINE  
CALL 1800 142 072

### REACH OUT TO A VETERAN

The images coming out of Afghanistan have been extremely confronting and distressing for people across the world.

Nearly 39,000 selfless and brave Australian Defence Force men and women made Australia a safer place and saved lives through their service in Afghanistan.

Tragically, 41 of our brave soldiers did not make it home. They paid the ultimate sacrifice in service of our nation. They did not die in vain and we will never forget them.

Australia owes a great debt of gratitude to all of our veterans and their families.

With the current situation in Afghanistan, I encourage Victorians to pick up the phone and check in on a veteran you know.

A friendly voice can make all the difference and we need to make sure our veterans know we're here for them.

24/7 support services are also available for veterans and their families to call any time:

- **Open Arms:** Veterans & Families Counselling service. Dial 1800 011 046.
- **Safe Zone Support:** A free and anonymous counselling line for current serving ADF personnel, veterans and their families. Dial 1800 142 072.
- **Defence Family Helpline:** Available for ADF members and their families. Dial 1800 624 608.



### STANDING UP FOR FIREARM OWNERS

The Nationals are continuing to stand up for the Australian firearms industry. Back in July, U.S. owned courier group, FedEx Express-TNT announced it would no longer freight legal firearms in Australia. In response, I organised a roundtable for direct discussion between Australia Post and firearms industry representatives.

After bringing Australia Post to the table, firearms industry representatives are now undertaking ongoing discussions to reach a solution over the withdrawal of freight services for legal firearms and ammunition. The latest meeting between firearms industry representatives and Australia Post was constructive.

Australia Post has undertaken to work with industry on a solution to continue firearms freight. The decision by FedEx Express-TNT is terrible. It completely disregards the importance of firearms for regional Australians and will impact local businesses right across the country.

Australia Post is currently examining possible solutions with the firearms industry over the transportation of firearms over 1130mm, bulk shipments of firearms and accessories, as well as the transport of ammunition.

Further meetings will be held in the coming weeks.



### SUPPORTING OUR REGIONAL AND RURAL STUDENTS

I'm pleased to say a nationally consistent approach to managing border restrictions for 23,000 boarding students will now be referred to the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee.

I have provided State and Territory Education Ministers with a draft Code which sets out principles for States and Territories to consider when establishing their border crossing directions. The Code has been developed following distressing accounts from families who have been separated due to COVID-related travel restrictions.

With the ever-changing situation during the pandemic, particularly with the increased threat of the Delta strain, we need to consider our arrangements to support young people, such as boarding students, while ensuring our communities remain safe.

I have received hundreds of harrowing accounts from boarding families who have been separated for extensive periods. I have heard of students who have left, or are considering leaving school, even in years 10 or 12, because they feel they can no longer cope with the isolation and anxiety caused by being separated from their loved ones.

Particular consideration will be given to the complexities for remote Aboriginal boarding students and the needs of their communities. The draft principles take a clear, compassionate and practical approach to supporting boarding school students. While acknowledging the States and Territories are responsible for managing their own borders, this agreement is a win for common sense.

I'd also like to thank my Nationals colleague, Senator Perin Davey for her tireless work on this issue.



### TAKING THE BIG SMOKE TO THE BUSH

As Minister for Regionalisation, Regional Communications and Regional Education I want to see a strong and prosperous regional Australia.

I recently spoke to The Australian about taking the big smoke to the bush.

We want a population that's more evenly distributed across the country in order to provide opportunities for people to live and settle in regional towns and cities, while enjoying the way of life we love. After all, isn't that the Australian dream?

That's why I am in the process of developing a population policy to encourage businesses and families to move to the regions.

My vision is for Australia to be the home of great inland regional cities underpinned by vibrant industries.

COVID-19 is driving a once-in-a-century structural change in the way people are living. We've seen around 45,000 people migrate to the regions in the year to March alone. These people are not grey nomads, they are not surfers, they are actually families seeking a lifestyle change and career opportunities.

Urban Australians are joining us and they are joining us in their thousands. I'm wanting to capitalise on that. Over the coming decades I want to see great inland regional cities.

You can read more about it here on my website:

[www.bridgetmckenzie.com.au/media-coverage/](http://www.bridgetmckenzie.com.au/media-coverage/)

### 2021 AUSTRALIAN BRAVERY AWARDS



The Governor-General, His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley has announced the August 2021 Australian Bravery Decorations Honours.

The decorations recognise acts of bravery where people selflessly put themselves in jeopardy to protect the lives or property of others. I would like to extend my congratulations to the following Victorians for receiving honours:

- Sergeant Martin Stagg (Bravery Medal)
- Miss Trinity Rose Bennett (Commendation for Brave Conduct)
- Mr Angus Andrew Laing (Commendation for Brave Conduct)
- Mr Brandon James Penrose (Commendation for Brave Conduct)
- Mr Christopher Sykes (Commendation for Brave Conduct)



### BUSHFIRE RECOVERY FUNDING

Our government is extending the closing date for the \$280 million Black Summer Bushfire Recovery Grants program to 6 October 2021. Extending the application period by an extra month will enable locals who were impacted by the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfires to recover and rebuild. We have listened to extensive feedback from the community and are providing them with this extension to put forward their best ideas and projects that will meet local needs.

We have committed \$2.8 billion of Commonwealth support towards the recovery from the devastating Black Summer bushfires, with \$2.4 billion already spent to get people back on their feet. I encourage those who are eligible and have a great project initiative to submit an application by 6 October.

For more information on the assistance that is available, including workshops, visit: [www.recovery.gov.au/black-summer-grants](http://www.recovery.gov.au/black-summer-grants)