



BIRST RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

BIRST was established to provide support to workers when they are redundant or out of work. With the onset of the COVID-19 we recognise that many of our members may be stood down or terminated as work slows, sites close or community restrictions are tightened. Here is some information that might help.

JOBKEEPER PAYMENT

The Federal Government has announced a JobKeeper Payment which may alleviate the need for workers to be stood down without pay. You can find more information here <https://treasury.gov.au/coronavirus/jobkeeper>

IF YOU ARE STOOD DOWN WITHOUT PAY

To help counter possible financial hardship caused by COVID-19, BIRST has changed its Trust Deed to allow for workers to access hardship payments from their BIRST account if they are stood down without pay and have exhausted all their leave entitlements (annual leave, long service leave or special leave). If you are eligible:

- Submit the relevant claim form and BIRST will provide you with a payment of \$2,000.
- If you remain out of work five weeks later, you can submit a second claim form and receive another payment of \$2,000.
- If your balance is below \$2,000 you will be entitled to the entire amount.
- Payments will be subject to 32% tax.

A claim form is available at www.birst.com.au/pdf/birst_claim_form_COVID19.pdf.

You may be asked to provide proof that you have been stood down without pay due to COVID-19 and are not receiving any form of payment from your employer or from other agencies in relation to long service leave, annual leave or personal leave. If you are unable to provide proof due to circumstances outside of your control, approval will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Any hardship payment will be deducted from your BIRST account as an advance on your future redundancy entitlements.

IF YOU ARE MADE REDUNDANT

Except for the limits outlined below, the process is the same as normal:

- Have your former employer complete a BIRST Claim Form - www.birst.com.au/pdf/birst_claim_form.pdf.
- Add your tax file number and payment details to the form.
- Select a full or partial payment.
- Forward the form to BIRST.
- Funds will be credited to your nominated bank account.

In anticipation of a significant increase in the number of claims and the need to responsibly manage cash flow, the BIRST Board has placed the following temporary limits on the amount you can claim:

- On receipt of your claim form, BIRST will make an initial payment of \$10,000 or the balance of your account, whichever is the lowest.
- If you remain out of work five weeks later, you can submit another claim form and receive an additional \$10,000 or the balance of your account, whichever is lower.
- This process will continue in \$10,000 instalments until you return to work or your balance is exhausted.

All payments will be taxed at normal employment termination payment (ETP) rates.

OTHER SUPPORT

Additional support may be available:

- You may have entitlements under the Portable Long Service Leave Scheme www.portableleave.org.au
- The Government has allowed early access to superannuation under some circumstances www.ato.gov.au/Individuals/Super/Withdrawing-and-using-your-super/Early-access-to-your-super/
- Centrelink have revised the ability to access unemployment benefits www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/news/more-financial-support-people-affected-coronavirus

The Mates in Construction Helpline is available 24/7 if you or someone you know needs help 1300 642 111.

