

Health Services - Winter Retention and Surge Payment program

Guidance – Winter Retention & Surge Payment Process

OFFICIAL
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1.	Purpose	2
2.	The Worker Winter Retention and Surge Payment	2
3.	Scope	2
4.	Eligibility.....	2
5.	How is the Worker Winter Retention and Surge Payment calculated?	3
6.	Payment Process	4
7.	Further information	5
Appendix A: Frequently Asked Questions.....		6

1. Purpose

This guidance is to support Health Services implement and administer the Worker Winter Retention and Surge Payment (the payment) including scope of the payment, eligibility criteria and FAQs.

2. The Worker Winter Retention and Surge Payment

Investing in staff retention demonstrates a recognition and understanding of the challenging circumstances all health service workers are enduring and as the state heads into what is expected to be the busiest winter yet, enhanced resourcing will be critical. The retention and surge payment will therefore be available to all eligible Victorian public health service employees for a period of 3 months from 1 July 2022 until 30 September 2022 (**Eligibility Period**).

All workers directly employed by a public health service and who meet the eligibility criteria will be eligible for a payment capped at \$3,000 calculated in accordance with this guidance note. The payment, capped at \$3,000, will be split across two payment periods between 15 August and 30 September. The payment is subject to tax.

3. Scope

Workforce shortages and pressure exist throughout the entire healthcare workforce and is not limited to clinical workers such as doctors, nurses and midwives. Non-clinical support roles and administrative staff are all experiencing challenging work environments and staff shortages.

In recognition of this, the payment will be available to all eligible Victorian clinical and non-clinical public health service workers including Ambulance Victoria and Forensicare. Full-time, part-time and casual staff will be eligible for the payment if they remain employed on the two key payment dates during the Eligibility Period and meet other eligibility criteria.

4. Eligibility

Who is eligible to receive the Worker Winter Retention and Surge Payment?

1. All full-time, part-time and casual Victorian public health workers who are directly employed by a Victorian public health service are eligible for the payment where they remain employed as at 15 August 2022 (for the first payment) and 30 September 2022 for the second payment and meet all eligibility criteria.
2. To be eligible for the full prorated payment over the Eligibility Period, workers must remain employed within the Victorian public health system from 1 July 2022 until 30 September 2022.
3. To be eligible, casual employees must have worked at least 1 rostered shift between 1 July 2022 and 30 September 2022.
4. Employees on paid and unpaid leave (exclusions apply) will be eligible for the payment.
5. Employees who change employers but remain within the public health service throughout the Eligibility Period are eligible to the payment. Evidence of employment from previous employer will be required to facilitate accurate payment by the current employer.
6. New full-time, part-time or casual employees who start between 1 July 2022 and 30 September 2022 will be eligible for a pro-rata payment based on their time employed, or hours worked. I.e, if a new employee commences on 1 August, they are only eligible to receive (approx.) 33% of the first payment. This will then be further prorated against their contracted FTE.

7. An Employee who is on leave without pay (other than unpaid parental leave) for part of the Eligibility Period will still be eligible but only for a pro-rata payment based on the hours not on leave without pay (i.e. based on hours worked and/or any paid leave hours taken during the Eligibility Period).

See FAQs for further eligibility criteria

Who is not eligible to receive the Worker Winter Retention and Surge Payment?

1. Employees on leave without pay (other than unpaid parental leave) throughout the entire Eligibility Period.
2. Employees who are on a secondment agreement to another state government agency, such as the Department of Health.
3. Employees employed through third-party arrangements e.g. agency / locum staff.
4. Ex-employees who are not employed as full-time, part-time or casual employees as at 15 August 2022 (for the first payment) or as at 30 September 2022 (for the second payment).
5. Hospital Board Directors and those working in an honorary or volunteer capacity.
6. Employees who are not direct employees of public health services, Ambulance Victoria or Forensicare.
7. Employees of third parties who are contracted to work within the health service (such as catering, laundry, cleaners etc).

5. How is the Worker Winter Retention and Surge Payment calculated?

Split payments

A total payment, capped at \$3,000 per employee, will be available to eligible employees in public health services. This includes clinical and non-clinical employees.

The payment will be split into two payments over the Eligibility Period. Each of the two payments will be capped at \$1,500 and prorated against the worker's FTE or hours worked.

The first payment, capped at \$1,500, will be made as soon as practicable following the end of the pay cycle that includes 15 August 2022 (**First Due Date**).

The second and final payment, capped at \$1,500, will be made as soon as practicable following the end of the pay cycle that includes 30 September 2022 (**Second Due Date**).

For casual employees, those who change their contracted FTE during the Eligibility Period, or where a period of leave without pay reduces the payable amount in accordance with the following section, the two payments may be different amounts.

Impact of period of leave

Paid leave

Full-time and part-time Employees on paid leave for part or the entire Eligibility Period are entitled to a payment based on their contracted FTE. This includes Employees who are on Long Service Leave.

Unpaid parental leave

Employees who:

- a) commenced parental leave on or after 15 August 2021; and

b) who are on unpaid parental leave under their applicable enterprise agreement for either part or the entire Eligibility Period,

will be entitled to a payment based on their contracted FTE for the period of the unpaid parental leave. ***Other forms of unpaid leave***

Employees on unpaid leave for part of the Eligibility Period are not entitled to payment for that part of the Eligibility Period. A pro-rated payment based on their contracted FTE will apply to any hours worked or paid leave hours taken during the Eligibility Period only.

Full-time employees

Subject to the rules regarding the impact of leave above, a full-time employee will be entitled to the total payment amounts.

The maximum hours that may contribute to the payment amount is 38 hours per week.

Part-time employees

For part-time employees, the total amounts payable will be based on their contracted FTE or actual hours worked during the Eligibility Period, whichever is greater.

Each payment is to be calculated on a pro-rata basis, based on actual hours, up to a maximum of 38 hours per week.

Casual employees:

Casual employees who were employed during the Eligibility Period will be eligible for a payment on a pro rata basis based on their hours worked during the Eligibility Period.

The maximum hours that may contribute to either payment amount is 38 hours per week.

6. Payment Process

Information for workers:

The payment will be paid to healthcare workers by their health service in accordance with existing health service payroll processes, e.g., monthly or fortnightly.

Information for health services:

The Department of Health (the Department) has created an expense code in the Common Chart of Accounts (CCOA) for health services to use to capture this cost. Health services must use the CCOA expense code 11005 "*Special Employee payments*" to report this expense to the department as part of the monthly trial balance data collection via the *Health Agencies Reporting Tool (HeART)*.

Health services are required to identify these payments within their systems to enable accurate reporting to the Department for the purpose of reimbursement. Accurate reporting will include total FTE/hours worked, the number of payments being paid and the total cost of all payments.

The Winter Retention and Surge Payment must be clearly identified as a standalone payment on staff payslips, to ensure staff are able to identify and understand the payment they have received. Health services may consider an off-cycle payment to achieve this outcome.

Roles and Responsibilities

Health Services (including Forensicare) and Ambulance Victoria will:

- be responsible for payment of the payment to eligible workers
- be required to adhere to reporting expenditure, including appropriate record keeping and timely reporting in line with Department reporting requirements
- provide a report on the number of payments provided for each type
- feed into normal quarterly COVID cost data collection
- notify and discuss with DH any issues that may impact implementation.

7. Further information

Employees are encouraged to discuss questions or issues with their employer.

For further information regarding the Worker Winter Retention and Surge Payment, please contact the Health Workforce Protections and Clinical Surge Team at the Department of Health on clinicalsurgeworkforce@health.vic.gov.au.

Appendix A: Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the Worker Winter Retention and Surge Payment?

The Worker Winter Retention and Surge Payment (the payment) is a payment capped at \$3,000 per employee and will be available to all eligible workers in public health services, including clinical and non-clinical staff.

2. Who is eligible for the payment?

All employees who are directly employed by a public health service, Ambulance Victoria and Forensicare (including casual, clinical and non-clinical workers) as at 15 August 2022 will receive the first payment and those remaining employed as at 30 September 2022 will receive the second payment. Ambulance Victoria and Forensicare employees are eligible for the payment. Hospital Board Directors and those working in an honorary or volunteer capacity will not be eligible for the payment.

3. What is a public health service/hospital?

A public health service or hospital is defined in the Health Services Act 1988 in Schedule 1 (Public hospitals), Schedule 1A (Multi purpose services), Schedule 2 (Denominational hospitals) & Schedule 5 (Public health services). If you are a direct employee of one of these entities, you are eligible for the payment.

4. What is the eligible 3-month period?

1 July 2022 – 30 September 2022.

5. I have changed employers with the public health system during the eligibility period. Am I eligible for the payment?

Yes, as long as you remain employed as at 15 August 2022 for the first payment and as at 30 September 2022 for the second payment. Proof of employment will be required. This may be by way of certificate of employment from your previous employer including your hours worked or contracted FTE. Where you were employed on those two key dates will determine which employer pays the support payment. If evidence from your previous employer is not provided, you may not be eligible for payment for that part of the eligibility period.

6. My FTE has changed during the eligibility period. How is the payment calculated?

The payment is calculated based on hours worked. So, for any period you worked as either a part-time employee or casual, only the hours worked will contribute to your pro-rata payment. Similarly, if you are full-time but take a period of leave without pay, your payment will be pro-rated based on actual hours worked. The split payments will be calculated based on the hours worked in each of the two payment periods.

7. I have changed employers within the public health system during the eligibility period but had a period between jobs where I was not actively employed. Am I eligible for the payment? Yes.

So long as you are employed on one or both of the payment dates then the payment will be calculated pro rata on your length of employment, FTE and hours actually worked. You will be paid for hours worked from the health service that you are working for on each payment date.

8. I started working in a public health service after 15 August 2022 but remained employed as at 30 September 2022. Am I eligible for both payments?

No. You will only be eligible for the second payment based pro rata on your FTE/actual hours worked, and length of time employed.

9. I was employed as at 15 August 2022 but left the public health service before 30 September 2022. Am I eligible for both payments?

No. You are eligible for the first payment, but you must be employed as at 30 September 2022 in the public health service to be eligible to receive the second payment.

10. I have resigned from the public health service but remain employed over the key payment dates; am I eligible for the payment?

Yes, if you are employed on 15 August 2022 you are eligible for the first payment, and if you are still employed on 30 September 2022 you are eligible for the second payment.

11. I am a casual public health employee, am I eligible for the payment?

Yes. You must have been employed as a casual and have worked at least one rostered shift between 1 July 2022 and 15 August 2022 to be eligible for the first payment and at least one shift between 16 August 2022 and 30 September 2022 to be eligible for the second payment. Eligible casuals will have their payment calculated on their hours worked during the Eligibility Period measured as a percentage compared with an FTE. The payment is capped at \$3,000 for all eligible workers.

12. I moved from being a full-time or part-time employee in the public health system to a casual employee during the Eligibility Period, am I eligible for the payment?

Yes. Employees who remain employed within the public health system as at 15 August 2022 (first payment) and 30 September (second payment) are eligible. Your payment will be calculated pro rata based on hours worked as part-time/full-time worker and as a casual. Further, to be eligible for the second payment, if you are a casual during the relevant period, you must have worked at least one shift between 16 August 2022 and 30 September 2022.

13. When will the payment be made?

Payments will be made as soon as practicable after the end of the pay cycle that includes the worked shift on 15 August 2022 (for the first payment) and 30 September 2022 for the second payment.

14. I am on paid leave. Will I be eligible for the payment?

Full-time and part-time employees on paid leave for part of or the full Eligibility Period are entitled to a payment based on their contracted FTE.

15. I am on unpaid leave; will I be eligible for the payment?

Except for unpaid parental leave that commenced after 15 August 2021, if you are on unpaid leave from the health service for the entire Eligibility Period you will not be eligible for the payment. If you returned from unpaid leave for part of the Eligibility Period and resumed paid employment then you will be eligible to receive a prorated payment based on the time spent in paid employment or on paid leave.

Employees who commenced unpaid parental leave after 15 August 2021 are eligible.

16. I am on WorkCover leave and have not been working; will I be eligible for the payment?

For the purpose of this payment, WorkCover is treated as a form of paid leave. If you are a current full-time or part-time employee and meet other eligibility criteria, then you are entitled to the payment prorated based on your contracted FTE. Casual staff in receipt of workers compensation payments on WorkCover leave will have their payment calculated based on their hours worked during the Eligibility Period.

17. I am a new public health employee but commenced work after 1 July 2022. Am I eligible for the payment?

Yes, new employees that are either full-time, part-time or casual will be eligible for the payment if they commenced after 1 July 2022 and remain employed as at 15 August 2022 (for the first payment) and 30 September 2022 for the second payment. The payment will be calculated pro rata based on the period of time that the employee has been employed for and based on their FTE or actual hours worked (as applicable).

18. I was employed within the public health system during the Eligibility Period but ceased employment prior to 15 August 2022. Am I eligible for all or part of the payment?

No, you must remain employed within the public health system as at 15 August 2022 to be eligible to receive the first payment and as at 30 September 2022 to be eligible for the second payment.

19. I worked overtime during the eligibility period; am I entitled to a larger payment?

In all cases, the maximum amount payable is capped based on a 38 hour week. For full-time employees this means no overtime can count towards the payment.

For part-time employees, actual hours worked in excess of their contracted FTE may be counted but only to a maximum of 38 hours per week. This will generally include hours paid at ordinary rates but may include overtime depending on the terms of an applicable enterprise agreement.

20. I was rostered to work an extra shift and/or was on-call, but I did not end up working that shift. Will those additional rostered/on-call hours contribute to the payment received despite not working them?

No. The payments for all employees (full-time, part-time and casual) are calculated based on actual hours worked or due to leave in accordance with the guidance note.

21. I work at multiple public health services; will I be eligible for the payment from each health service?

Yes, the payment will be prorated against your actual hours worked at each health service provided you meet all other eligibility criteria and the maximum amount payable is capped based on a 38 hour week.

22. I usually work in another state in a cross-border community and have been seconded to work in a health service on the Victorian side of the border. Am I eligible for the payment?

You are eligible for the payment if you meet the eligibility criteria and an enterprise agreement covering the Victorian public health service applies to the work performed in Victoria.