Media release from the Minister - New COVID-19 financial support for NDIS disability workers

25 May 2023

Disability workers who deliver close personal support to NDIS participants, contract COVID-19, and do not have leave entitlements, will be eligible for financial assistance through their employer through a new Australian Government initiative.

The new disability workforce payment is being made available to employers through a new $14.1 million grant program announced in the Budget.

Available funding will be at a flat rate of $450 per worker where the worker has lost at least 8 hours but less than 20 hours of work, and $750 per worker where the worker has lost more than 20 hours of work.

Minister for the NDIS Bill Shorten said the disability worker leave grant replaces the High Risk Settings Pandemic Payment and matches funding available to aged care workers.

“Our disability workers also deserve to be supported if they contract COVID-19, provide close personal care to people with disability, and have no available leave,” Minister Shorten said.

“This grant recognises the inherent risks to NDIS participants who receive close personal supports including in disability accommodation settings, and reduces the incentive for workers to continue to provide those supports if they contract COVID-19.”

Up to 31 March 2023, disability workers could be paid the High Risk Settings Pandemic Payment through Services Australia if they contracted COVID-19 and had no leave entitlements.

The payment will provide support towards the costs associated with leave from 1 April 2023 to 31 December 2023, meaning the payments will be backdated.

Workers will be able to seek payment from their employer who will obtain reimbursement through the new grant program.

Grants will be made to individuals where they operate as a sole trader or partnership.

This reimbursement will be available to registered and unregistered NDIS providers, including sole traders in 3 month blocks from early in the second half of 2023.

“This funding will help disability workers who have no available sick leave to cover the time where they are off work due to being COVID-19 positive,” Minister Shorten said.

This measure builds on Australian Government efforts to protect people with disability and workers from COVID-19, including:

- Promoting the importance of vaccination and COVID-safe behaviours through targeted communication, including text messages to over 1.1 million people with disability and carers;

- Access to low-cost assistive technology for eligible participants including for portable air purifiers;
- Improved data analysis to inform targeted activity to drive up vaccination rates in at-risk cohorts;
- Additional financial support for Supported Independent Living facilities to assist with costs incurred due to COVID positive cases;
- Supporting NDIS providers to assist participants and workers with accessing COVID-19 booster vaccines;
- Access to free COVID-19 information and support over the phone or online through Disability Gateway.

It is important that workers, if they are sick, get tested for COVID-19, register the positive case with their State or Territory and retain evidence of their illness.

No one should go to work if they feel sick, and particularly not those who come in to contact with people who are at risk of serious impacts of COVID-19.

For more information, go to the Covid Leave Grant page at the Department of Social Services website.

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