

## Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

### ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

#### Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

**Department/Agency:** Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

**Topic:** Stranded Australians – early access to superannuation

**Senator:** Keneally

**Question reference number:** 0243

**Type of question:** Hansard, page 21, 9 March 2021

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 23 March 2021

**Number of pages:** 2

#### **Question:**

**Senator KENEALLY:** Sure. My next question starts with an observation. It's my recollection that, early in the pandemic, Australians who were overseas received some advice from the Australian government that, if they had a job and were able to stay in place, they should do so. Many people did do that. But, of course, as economic and health conditions have deteriorated, people have lost jobs, their circumstances have changed, they have sought to come home or they've been trying to come home and have been unable to do so—some of them since March last year. My question goes to early access to superannuation for overseas Australians. This is a question I received from a constituent who is herself stranded overseas. She made the point that she stayed because the advice at the time was she should do so if she had a job. She is now unable to work and she missed the deadline for early access to super. (1) were Australians overseas able to access their super early? (2) is there any provision for them to be able to do so now, even though the deadline has passed? Is the Commonwealth considering that?

Before you answer that, I do want to say for the record, while I and Labor don't support the early access super scheme, nonetheless we supported it through the parliament as part of the COVID package, so it is supported. I'm asking about the ability for Australians stranded overseas to access their super early.

**Ms Frame:** I will take that on notice, Senator, if that's okay. I just want to make sure I get you exactly the right information.

#### **Answer:**

Under the COVID-19 early release of superannuation program, eligible Australians living and working overseas in financial distress as a result of COVID-19 were able to access up to \$10,000 of their superannuation in 2019-20 and a further \$10,000 in the first six months of 2020-21. Applications for the COVID-19 early release of superannuation program closed on 31 December 2020. Any extension of the program is a decision for Government.

Separate from the COVID-19 early release of superannuation program, and in limited circumstances, Australian and New Zealand citizens and permanent residents may be able to withdraw some of their superannuation on compassionate grounds.