

Long COVID costs Australia millions of working days

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Australia is facing serious labour market constraints after its borders were closed to international arrivals for nearly two years during the pandemic.

Long COVID has already cost the Australian economy three million working days this year, according to a government analysis seen by AFP

Friday, significantly worsening the country's acute labor shortages.

The treasury report found that lingering effects of the coronavirus have been keeping some 31,000 Australians away from work every day.

Treasurer Jim Chalmers said Friday that Australia's "[labor market](#) has been absolutely smashed by COVID, and Long COVID increasingly".

"The thousands of workdays the economy is losing to Long COVID is just one part of a complex picture, and gives a sense of what we are all up against," he said.

The treasury analysis defined Long COVID as someone experiencing symptoms four weeks or more after becoming infected.

This mirrors how Long COVID is characterized by the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC), which lists a wide variety of respiratory, heart, digestive and even [neurological symptoms](#).

These include fatigue, heart palpitations, lightheadedness, [stomach pain](#) and difficulty concentrating—known as "brain fog".

A comprehensive study published in *The Lancet* this month found that one in eight people who get COVID develop at least one Long COVID symptom.

The findings of the Australian treasury analysis were in line with this study—with 12 percent of COVID-related absenteeism attributed to Long COVID.

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The nation is experiencing the second-worst labor market shortage of any developed country, trailing only Canada, according to the OECD.

This and other issues—including years of stagnant wage growth—will be the subject of a "jobs summit" the new Labor government plans to hold next week.

Chalmers said challenges with skills shortages, wages and flatlining productivity would all be "front and center at the summit".

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