

Important changes for seasonal, contract and casual (intermittent) workers



From 20 September 2006, the following changes come into effect:

- the earnings of contract and casual (intermittent) workers will be taken into account for a possible seasonal work preclusion period, **and**
- the seasonal work preclusion period will be extended to people claiming:
 - Youth Allowance (students and new apprentices)
 - Disability Support Pension (except customers who are permanently blind)
 - Carer Payment
 - Austudy
 - Sickness Allowance, **and**
 - Parenting Payment (Single).

What is the seasonal work preclusion period?

From 20 September 2006, if you or your partner finish doing any seasonal, contract or intermittent work in the six months before you make a claim, you may have to wait to be paid because of the money you received while working. This is called a seasonal work preclusion period.

A seasonal work preclusion period may apply if you claim:

- Newstart Allowance
- Youth Allowance
- Austudy
- Sickness Allowance
- Carer Payment
- Special Benefit (nominated visa holders only)
- Disability Support Pension (except customers who are permanently blind)
- Parenting Payment, **or**
- Widow Allowance.

What is seasonal, contract or casual (intermittent) work?

Seasonal work is any work that is only available for a part (or parts) of the year, each year. Many fishing, agricultural and tourism jobs are seasonal.

Contract work is any work that is performed under a contract for a specific function and/or period including sub-contract work.

Casual work (or intermittent work) is work that is available from time to time, can reasonably be predicted to end or not be available for a period, is less than a year in duration and does not accrue leave entitlements.

This type of work can include:

- fruit picking
- work performed under a contract for a specific function and/or period, including sub-contracts
- harvest work
- shearing
- fishing
- work in an industry affected by shutdowns
- consultancy work
- work on building sites
- work that is affected by regular shutdowns—such as work in factories that temporarily shut down for the Christmas period, or for regular maintenance
- work in the arts and entertainment industries
- work that stops and starts with regularity—such as work in the mining or oil industry
- work that is less than one year in duration and does not accrue leave entitlements
- work that was known to be not permanent

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- relief teaching or work in the health industry, and
- non on-going work, or work where a period of unemployment is predictable.

Permanent employment that is expected to last more than 12 months or any employment, other than seasonal work, where leave entitlements have been paid is exempt from the seasonal work preclusion period.

How long is the preclusion period?

This depends on how much you earned from the work, and how long you were working.

If your earnings were above the Average Weekly Ordinary Time Earnings* figure then you may have to wait before you are eligible for a payment.

The duration of a seasonal work preclusion period is based on how long it would take an average wage earner to earn the same amount as a person engaged in contract, seasonal or intermittent work.

Seasonal, contract and intermittent workers often receive higher wages to compensate for the shorter periods of work without leave entitlements.

* The relevant Average Weekly Ordinary Time Earnings (AWOTE) figure for claims lodged in 2006 is \$1022.60 per week for a single person and \$2045.20 per week for a couple. This figure is updated annually.

If you are not sure if you will be affected by these changes or would like more information, contact Centrelink. If you experience financial hardship while serving your preclusion period, or need assistance in budgeting, talk to Centrelink.

If you are an employer of workers who might be affected, you may be asked to provide Centrelink with information about their work. Please contact **Centrelink's Business Hotline on 13 1158** if you have any questions.

How to find out more

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| Employment Services | 13 2850 |
| Youth and Student Services | 13 2490 |
| Family Assistance Office | 13 6150 |
| Disabilities, Sickness and Carers | 13 2717 |
| Indigenous Call Centre (available only in NT, North QLD and WA) | 13 6380 |
| To speak to Centrelink in languages other than English | 13 1202 |
| Customer Relations | Freecall™ 1800 050 004 (for complaints, compliments and suggestions) |
| Australian Government Services Fraud Tip-off Line | 13 1524 |
| TTY* payment enquiries | Freecall™ 1800 810 586 |
| To make an appointment | 13 1021 |

*TTY is only for people who are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment. A TTY phone is required to use this service.

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Check the 'We speak your language' link on Centrelink's website for information in languages other than English.

Important: Calls to '13' numbers from a standard telephone service can be made from anywhere within Australia for not more than the cost of a local call (call charges may vary depending upon the telephone service provider). Calls to '1800' numbers are free of charge. Calls from public and mobile telephones may be charged at a higher rate.

Disclaimer

The information contained in this publication is intended only as a guide.

What are your responsibilities?

The information is accurate as at September 2006, but may of course change. If you use this publication after that date, please check with Centrelink that the details are up to date.

What is the position if you deal with a third party?

You may deal with a third party who is not a member of Centrelink's staff. If you do so, please remember that Centrelink has not authorised any third parties to provide information or advice to you.