

Carer Payment or Age Pension?



Centrelink offers payments to assist people who are caring for someone who has a severe disability or medical condition or who is frail aged. These payments are:

Carer Payment

This is an income support payment for carers who, because of the demands of their caring role, are unable to undertake substantial workforce participation. It is an income and asset tested payment. It is paid to full-time carers or parents of children or adults with a disability, severe medical condition or who are frail aged.

Carer Allowance

This is an allowance for parents or carers of children and adults with a disability, severe medical condition or who are frail aged. There are no income and asset tests for this allowance and it is not taxable. **Carer Allowance can be paid in addition to Carer Payment or other Centrelink payments such as Age Pension.**

Choosing the right payment

If you are over age pension age and you are caring for someone, you may choose to receive Carer Payment or Age Pension. There are certain rules regarding the amount of care needed and provided that must be met for Carer Payment.

Note: Information about age pension age can be found on the Centrelink website at www.centrelink.gov.au or by contacting Centrelink on 13 2300.

There can be advantages to receiving either Carer Payment or Age Pension depending on your circumstances. For example, if you are getting Carer Payment because you are caring for someone apart from your partner, and that person dies, you may be entitled to a bereavement payment. You would not be entitled to this bereavement payment if you were getting Age Pension. However, if you are intending to travel outside Australia, the guidelines for being paid Age Pension during an absence from Australia may be more beneficial than those for Carer Payment. A more in-depth explanation of these differences is outlined on the following pages.

While there are several differences between Carer Payment and Age Pension there are also several areas that are the same for both payments. Both Carer Payment and Age Pension:

- have the same rate of payment
- have the same income and assets tests for the carer (a special income test may apply to the care receiver— see page 2)
- are taxable (Carer Payment is taxable once the carer, or the person being cared for, reaches age pension age), **and**
- entitle the customer to a Pensioner Concession Card.



Circumstances	Carer receives Carer Payment	Carer receives Age Pension
Income and assets tests for the care receiver	Where the care receiver is not a Centrelink or Department of Veterans' Affairs customer a special care receiver income test applies.	Does not apply.
Reviews	Carer Payment customers are contacted every two years to confirm they are continuing to provide care and may be required to provide a medical report about the care receiver.	Age Pension customers who are caring for someone are not subject to regular carer reviews, unless they are receiving Carer Allowance.
Travelling outside or leaving Australia	<p>If you travel outside Australia without the person that you care for your payment can continue for up to 63 days by using your standard respite days to take a break from caring.</p> <p>If you travel temporarily outside Australia with the person that you care for you may be paid for up to 13 weeks if the amount of care you are giving has not changed.</p> <p>If you are travelling to a country that has an International Social Security Agreement with Australia that covers Carer Payment, your payment may continue subject to certain conditions.</p> <p>You cannot be paid Carer Payment for a permanent absence from Australia unless you are able to qualify under an International Social Security Agreement.</p>	<p>Age Pension customers can generally be paid for the total period of an absence from Australia (some exceptions may apply).</p> <p>The rate you will be paid after 26 weeks may vary.</p> <p>You can generally be paid Age Pension for a permanent absence from Australia (some exceptions may apply).</p>
Breaks from caring (Respite)	<p>You can take a break from caring for up to 63 days each calendar year without affecting your Carer Payment. If you stop providing care for more than 63 days your payments may be cancelled.</p> <p>You are also allowed an additional 63 days per calendar year if the person you are caring for is in hospital temporarily but you are still helping with their care.</p>	Your payment will not be affected.
Rent Assistance	<p>If you are single and sharing privately rented accommodation you may be entitled to a higher maximum rate of Rent Assistance than if you were receiving Age Pension and sharing accommodation.</p> <p>Rent Assistance rates are the same as for Age Pension if you are partnered or are not sharing accommodation.</p>	<p>If you are single and sharing privately rented accommodation you may be entitled to a lower maximum rate of Rent Assistance than if you were receiving Carer Payment and sharing accommodation.</p> <p>Rent Assistance rates are the same as for Carer Payment if you are partnered or are not sharing accommodation.</p>
Study assistance	If you are studying you may be entitled to a Pensioner Education Supplement and an Education Entry Payment.	Age Pension customers are not entitled to the Pensioner Education Supplement or the Education Entry Payment.

Circumstances	Carer receives Carer Payment	Carer receives Age Pension
Casual or contract work	If you or your partner ceased any seasonal, contract or casual (intermittent) work in the six months before claiming, and earned income above a certain level, you may have to wait before receiving Carer Payment. This is called a seasonal work preclusion period.	Age Pension customers are not subject to the seasonal work preclusion period.

Bereavement payments—when the person you are caring for dies

Circumstances	Carer receives Carer Payment	Carer receives Age Pension
The person you are caring for is your partner.	<p>You may receive a lump sum bereavement payment if your partner was receiving an income support payment from Centrelink or the Department of Veterans' Affairs. Your regular fortnightly payments will be adjusted to the single rate.</p> <p>You may continue to receive Carer Payment for up to 14 weeks. You may then need to consider transferring to another payment such as Age Pension.</p>	<p>You may receive a lump sum bereavement payment if your partner was receiving an income support payment from Centrelink or the Department of Veterans' Affairs.</p> <p>You will continue to receive Age Pension.</p> <p>Your regular fortnightly payments will be adjusted to the single rate.</p>
The person you are caring for is not your partner and has a partner who is getting a Centrelink pension, or a Department of Veterans' Affairs Service Pension, or has been receiving a Centrelink benefit for at least 12 months.	<p>You are not entitled to any bereavement payments.</p> <p>You may continue to receive Carer Payment for up to 14 weeks. You will then need to consider transferring to another payment such as Age Pension.</p>	<p>You are not entitled to any bereavement payments.</p> <p>You will continue to receive Age Pension.</p>
The person you are caring for is not your partner and has a partner who is NOT getting a Centrelink pension or getting a Department of Veterans' Affairs Service Pension, or has been receiving a Centrelink benefit for less than 12 months.	<p>You may receive a lump sum bereavement payment.</p> <p>You may continue to receive Carer Payment for up to 14 weeks. You will then need to consider transferring to another payment such as Age Pension.</p>	<p>You are not entitled to any bereavement payments.</p> <p>You will continue to receive Age Pension.</p>
The person you are caring for does not have a partner.	<p>You may receive a lump sum bereavement payment.</p> <p>You will continue to receive Carer Payment for the bereavement period. You will then need to consider transferring to another payment such as Age Pension.</p>	<p>You are not entitled to any bereavement payments. You will continue to receive Age Pension.</p>

Note: If you receive Carer Allowance there may be an effect on your payment if you take a break from caring or travel overseas.

For more information contact Centrelink on **13 2717** or phone **13 1021** to make an appointment with your Centrelink Customer Service Centre.

Other help for Carers

Carers Australia

Carers Australia is the national peak body for carers and represents the needs and interests of carers at the national level. Visit www.carersaustralia.com.au

Commonwealth Carer Resource Centres

Commonwealth Carer Resource Centres can assist you with referrals, counselling, support and resources on a range of topics, including carer support groups, home help, financial entitlements, support services and arranging respite. Most of the services are free. Phone **1800 242 636*** or visit www.carersaustralia.com.au

Commonwealth Carer Respite Centres

Commonwealth Carer Respite Centres support carers to access respite or 'take a break'. The centres can provide information and advice about respite options, help with organising emergency or planned respite, and purchase or subsidise for short term or emergency respite when needed. Phone **1800 059 059***.

Commonwealth Carelink Centres

Commonwealth Carelink Centres assist older Australians and their families, people with special care needs and carers with information about community, residential and other aged care services. Phone **1800 052 222*** or visit www.commcarelink.health.gov.au

* Freecall except from mobile phones.

How to find out more

Disabilities, Sickness and Carers 13 2717

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

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

To make an appointment 13 1021

Go to our website at www.centrelink.gov.au

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 to payments available.

What are your responsibilities?

- It is your responsibility to decide if you wish to apply for a payment and to make the application, having regard to your particular circumstances.
- 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.

From what date are benefits payable?

Most government payments are paid from, or after, the date on which the application is made. So the sooner you lodge the payment the quicker you may be paid.

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 about payments.