

Centrelink provides various options for people who want to claim a payment. These options include visiting a Customer Service Centre, calling Centrelink, or visiting the Centrelink website at www.centrelink.gov.au for claim information and to download and print forms. To ensure a customer is paid from the earliest possible date refer to the “Intent to Claim” section in this chapter.

The Family Assistance Office provides similar options for people who want to claim family assistance. See the “How to contact the Family Assistance Office” section in this chapter.

Legal basis for payment

Centrelink delivers a variety of payments on behalf of its policy departments and other government entities. Most of these payments are regulated by Commonwealth Acts of Parliament. These Acts contain specific conditions about qualifications for payment, the amount and calculation of payment, and conditions that govern continued payment.

Sometimes a payment may be regulated in whole or in part by departmental guidelines or by legal documents other than Acts of Parliament. Copies of relevant parts of any such guidelines or documents are available on request from a Centrelink Customer Service Centre or Call Centre.

To work out whether people are eligible for a payment or other assistance, Centrelink needs to collect information about their circumstances. In some cases, people may be able to provide this information over the phone or when they first visit a Customer Service Centre.

After a person contacts Centrelink they will be provided with a claim package or information that tells them everything they need to do to complete their claim. It also tells them what they need to bring if they have an interview with Centrelink.

People claiming payment (and their partners) should provide documents proving who they are, their age, residence, and details of their income and assets. Not providing these documents may mean payment cannot be made or will result in delays. People having difficulty getting documentation should tell Centrelink. Lodging claims should not be delayed because documents are not available.

Customers may also have to ensure that they continue to receive their payment by meeting requirements such as remaining connected with an employment service provider if they are a working age customer. Any requirements will be fully explained to customers during the initial stages of their contact with Centrelink.

Intent to Claim

For most payments it is possible to notify of an “Intent to Claim”.

An Intent to Claim means the person, or someone else on their behalf, tells Centrelink they want to apply for a payment. People do not have to fill out any forms to register an Intent to Claim, but the person must be qualified for the payment on the day they made contact if their payment is to be backdated to that date.

After an Intent to Claim is made, the person must lodge their claim with Centrelink within 14 days so that, if they are eligible, their payment may be backdated from the date they first registered their Intent to Claim.

People can register their Intent to Claim with Centrelink (and download claim forms and other information) by visiting www.centrelink.gov.au, by phone or in person at a Customer Service Centre.

People should contact Centrelink immediately if they have any difficulty returning their claim within 14 days. In some circumstances the 14 day period may be extended. Centrelink will advise the person if they have a longer period to lodge their claim.

Important: Intent to Claim processes do not apply to Family Tax Benefit, Child Care Benefit, Baby Bonus, Maternity Immunisation Allowance, or Double Orphan Pension.

If the customer, the customer’s partner, or a customer cared for by the person making the claim is suffering from a medical condition which has a significant adverse effect on their ability to lodge the claim, it may be lodged within 13 weeks after the contact, provided the medical condition was continuous. The 14 day period can also be extended for up to 13 weeks under other circumstances. For example, a customer may have practical difficulties in meeting the 14 day timeframe as a result of living in a remote area or outside Australia (if claiming under an International Social Security Agreement), or if an emergency interferes with their plans to lodge within the 14 day period.

Important: Backdating to the registration date of an Intent to Claim does not apply to Family Tax Benefit, Child Care Benefit, Baby Bonus, Maternity Immunisation Allowance, Farm Help and the Exceptional Circumstances Relief Payment. Payments such as ABSTUDY, Assistance for Isolated Children and Pensioner Education Supplement may be backdated to an earlier date of eligibility if an Intent to Claim has been registered and the claim has been lodged, within specified periods.

How to contact Centrelink

If a person wants to register an Intent to Claim, to make a claim, or get further information about a payment, they can call into any Customer Service Centre, visit the Centrelink website, or call one of the following numbers:

- **To speak to Centrelink in a language other than English**—call Centrelink on **13 1202**.
- **ABSTUDY** customers have the option of personally completing and lodging a claim form, or speaking with a Customer Service Adviser who will assist in completing the form over the phone—call Centrelink on **13 2317**.
Most ABSTUDY customers can lodge either a claim or an Intent to Claim during the calendar year in which they undertake full-year study (or by the end of the course when they are undertaking a short course) to receive assistance in that year. Customers who have notified Centrelink of an Intent to Claim can also receive backdated payments if they lodge their claim within 13 weeks of the date the Intent to Claim was notified. ABSTUDY customers who are full-time Australian Apprentices must lodge their claim within 14 days of registering an Intent to Claim as there are no backdating provisions for ABSTUDY Australian Apprentice claims. A customer claiming as a full-time Australian Apprentice should contact Centrelink when they commence their Australian Apprenticeship (apprenticeship or traineeship). Different closing dates apply to ABSTUDY Pensioner Education Supplement customers. Contact Centrelink for more information.
To register an Intent to Claim, to make a claim, or for more information about ABSTUDY, customers can call Centrelink or visit any Centrelink Customer Service Centre.
For more information on ABSTUDY, see Chapter 5 or visit the Centrelink website at www.centrelink.gov.au
- **Age Pension**—call Centrelink on **13 2300**.
A claim for Age Pension can be lodged up to 13 weeks before a person qualifies for payment. If a claim is lodged in advance, then payment starts from the date of qualification.
Age Pension claimants (and their partners) may be interviewed to determine eligibility, and to gather “Proof

of Identity”, age, residence, details of income and assets, and any other information needed to decide eligibility and calculate the rate of payment.

Veterans receiving a disability pension from the Department of Veterans’ Affairs (DVA) and their partners may also choose to have their Age or Wife Pensions paid through DVA.

For more information about Age Pension, see Chapter 12 or visit the Centrelink website at www.centrelink.gov.au

- **Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme**—call Centrelink on **13 2318**.
Customers must lodge a claim form, or register an Intent to Claim, by 31 December of the year for which assistance is sought. Customers who have registered an Intent to Claim with Centrelink prior to 31 December have 13 weeks from the date of registration to lodge a form. Centrelink will consider late applications that are a result of circumstances beyond an applicant’s control.
For more information about the Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme, see Chapter 5 or visit the Centrelink website at www.centrelink.gov.au
- **Austudy**—call Centrelink on **13 2490**.
Customers claiming Austudy should contact Centrelink to notify of their Intent to Claim. This can be done by phone or online.
For more information about Austudy, see Chapter 5 or visit the Centrelink website at www.centrelink.gov.au
- **Bereavement Allowance**—call Centrelink on **13 2300**.
If a claim is lodged within four weeks of the partner’s death, payment can be made from the date of the death. Otherwise, payment will start from the date the claim is lodged. A claim made after 14 weeks from the date of death will only be paid if a woman was pregnant when her partner died.
For more information about Bereavement Allowance, see Chapter 11 or visit the Centrelink website at www.centrelink.gov.au
- **Carer Allowance/Carer Payment**—call Centrelink on **13 2717**.
A claim for Carer Allowance or Carer Payment (or both) can be made on one combined claim form. Medical evidence about the person being cared for will also be required.
Carer Allowance or Carer Payment (or both) can also be claimed when the care receiver is temporarily in hospital and will be returning to their home on release from hospital, as long as the carer is providing some care during the hospital stay.
For more information about Carer Payment and Carer Allowance, see Chapter 10 or visit the Centrelink website at www.centrelink.gov.au

- **Commonwealth Seniors Health Card**—call Centrelink on **13 2300**.

Self-funded retirees may test their eligibility for a Commonwealth Seniors Health Card, once they have reached age pension age, by submitting a claim form.

For more information, see Chapter 12 or visit the Centrelink website at www.centrelink.gov.au

- **Crisis Payment**—call Centrelink on **13 2850**.

Crisis Payment is paid to those who have been forced from their home by an extreme circumstance such as fire or domestic violence, and who have to establish a new home. Crisis Payment may also be paid to a person subjected to domestic or family violence who opts to remain in their home after the family member responsible has left or been removed. It is also paid to those who have been imprisoned, including psychiatric confinement, for at least 14 days after having been charged with an offence. To qualify for Crisis Payment the person must be in severe financial hardship and must be eligible to receive a specified Centrelink payment at the time of claiming the Crisis Payment and, in most cases, must claim Crisis Payment within seven days of the extreme circumstance occurring or of being released from prison.

For more information about Crisis Payment, see Chapter 7 or visit the Centrelink website at www.centrelink.gov.au

- **Disability Support Pension**—call Centrelink on **13 2717**.

A person making a claim may be interviewed and will be asked to provide a report from their own doctor. The person may also be referred for a Job Capacity Assessment. If they are assessed as being able to work for at least 15 hours a week in the next two years, they will not qualify for Disability Support Pension but may be eligible for an alternative payment such as Newstart Allowance or Youth Allowance.

An authorised advocate or nominee can complete the applicant's form if the applicant is unable to do so.

Important: To legally act on behalf of a person applying for or getting an income support payment from Centrelink, an authority for a nominee form needs to be completed. The form can be obtained by calling **13 2717** or by asking at a Centrelink Customer Service Centre.

For more information about Disability Support Pension, see Chapter 9 or visit the Centrelink website at www.centrelink.gov.au

- **Disaster Recovery Payment**—call Centrelink on **13 2850**.

Claims should be made within 14 days of the disaster on an Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment claim form and lodged at the nearest Centrelink Customer Service Centre or alternative site approved by Centrelink.

Important: The Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs can only declare a major disaster for the purposes of the *Social Security Act 1991* when there has been a significant loss of life, severe illness or injury and widespread damage.

For more information about Disaster Recovery Payment, see Chapter 7 or visit the Centrelink website at www.centrelink.gov.au

- **Employment Entry Payment**—call Centrelink on **13 2850**.

A person who receives Newstart Allowance, Youth Allowance (job seeker), Special Benefit (if the customer is a sole-parent and not residentially qualified for Parenting Payment), Parenting Payment or Disability Support Pension can receive an Employment Entry Payment if they meet certain conditions and apply within 28 days of returning to work or increasing their working hours. Other allowance recipients may also receive this payment.

For more information about Employment Entry Payment, see Chapter 13 or visit the Centrelink website at www.centrelink.gov.au

- **Exceptional Circumstances Relief Payment**—call the Australian Government Drought Assistance Hotline **13 2316**.

Exceptional Circumstances Relief Payment forms are available from any Customer Service Centre. Once completed, the form and supporting documentation should be taken to the nearest Customer Service Centre.

For more information about Exceptional Circumstances Relief Payment, see Chapter 6 or visit the Centrelink website at www.centrelink.gov.au

- **Professional Advice and Planning Grants**—call the Australian Government Drought Assistance Hotline **13 2316**.

All applicants are required to lodge a paper claim for Professional Advice and Planning Grants (including supporting documentation) and proof of identification in accordance with Centrelink "Proof of Identity" guidelines. Forms can be lodged at any Centrelink Customer Service Centre.

For more information about Professional Advice Planning Grants, see Chapter 6 or visit the Centrelink website at www.centrelink.gov.au

- **Fares Allowance**—call Centrelink on **13 2490** (Youth Allowance, Austudy and Pensioner Education Supplement) or **13 2317** (ABSTUDY).

Customers claiming reimbursement need to lodge their form before 1 April in the year following the year of study. Customers claiming for pre-booked Fares Allowance need to lodge their form far enough in advance to allow for booking for travel.

For more information about Fares Allowance, see Chapter 5 or visit the Centrelink website at www.centrelink.gov.au

- **Farm Help—Supporting Families Through Change**—call Centrelink on **Freecall™1800 050 585**.

Claim forms are available from Centrelink. Once completed, the form, along with the required supporting documentation, should be sent or taken to the nearest Centrelink Customer Service Centre.

For more information about Farm Help—Supporting Families Through Change, see Chapter 6 or visit the Centrelink website at www.centrelink.gov.au

- **Mobility Allowance**—call Centrelink on **13 2717**.

A person making a claim may be asked to provide medical evidence.

For more information about Mobility Allowance, see Chapter 9 or visit the Centrelink website at www.centrelink.gov.au

- **Newstart Allowance/Youth Allowance (job seeker)**.

A person must be qualified for Newstart Allowance or Youth Allowance (job seeker) to be eligible to lodge a claim. Apart from age and residency requirements, a person claiming Newstart Allowance must be unemployed on the day they contact Centrelink. A person who is the principal carer of dependent children or who has been assessed as having a partial capacity to work may work part-time and still be considered unemployed for the purposes of income support. For assistance call Centrelink on **13 2850** (if aged 21 years or over) or **13 2490** for Youth Allowance (if under 21 years and unemployed).

If the person worked in the previous 12 months and is claiming Newstart Allowance or Youth Allowance, they will need to provide an Employment Separation Certificate (called an “SU1”) from their last employer.

The certificate shows the date last worked, the reasons for ceasing work, termination payments and any compensation payments. If the employer does not provide a certificate, the employee should ask for one. The employer is required by law to issue a certificate when asked. Some employers provide this information to Centrelink electronically. If a person cannot get a certificate, they should tell Centrelink.

For more information about Newstart Allowance and Youth Allowance (job seeker), see Chapter 2 or visit the Centrelink website at www.centrelink.gov.au

- **Parenting Payment**—call Centrelink on **13 6150**.

This is a payment for parents or guardians to help with the cost of raising children. To qualify for Parenting Payment from 1 July 2006 a person must have a dependent child under six years of age (if partnered) or under eight years of age (if single). If a person’s youngest child is over these ages they may be eligible for

Newstart Allowance or Youth Allowance. People receiving Parenting Payment on 30 June 2006 may have different provisions. For more information about Parenting Payment, see Chapter 3 or visit the Centrelink website at www.centrelink.gov.au

- **Pensioner Education Supplement**—call Centrelink on **13 2490**.

Pensioner Education Supplement is an addition to the primary “qualifying” payment. Claims should be lodged with the required supporting documentation by particular dates depending on the course and other circumstances.

For more information about Pensioner Education Supplement, see Chapter 5 or visit the Centrelink website at www.centrelink.gov.au

- **Pharmaceutical Allowance**.

A separate claim is not required as eligibility is automatically assessed as part of a claim or reassessment for a pension or an allowance.

For more information about Pharmaceutical Allowance, see Chapter 13 or visit the Centrelink website at www.centrelink.gov.au

- **Remote Area Allowance**.

A separate claim for Remote Area Allowance is not required as eligibility is automatically assessed when a person is granted a payment and resides within a nominated tax zone, or when a person receiving a payment moves permanently to a nominated tax zone.

The remote areas are Tax Zone A, Special Zone A and Special Zone B. These include the Torres Strait Islands, Lord Howe Island, the Cocos (Keeling) Islands and Christmas Island. Residents of ordinary Tax Zone B and some regions within Tax Zone A, such as Norfolk Island, are not entitled to the allowance.

For more information about Remote Area Allowance, see Chapter 13 or visit the Centrelink website at www.centrelink.gov.au

- **Rent Assistance**.

Rent Assistance is assessed when a person is claiming a Centrelink income support payment or there is a change in their accommodation circumstances (excluding Farm Help income support or Exceptional Circumstances Relief Payment and interim income support payments paid on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry). To receive Rent Assistance customers must verify their liability to pay rent.

For more information about Rent Assistance, see Chapter 13 or visit the Centrelink website at www.centrelink.gov.au

- **Sickness Allowance**—call Centrelink on **13 2717**.

A person claiming Sickness Allowance is required to provide a medical certificate from their doctor and confirm that they still have a job or study to return to.

For more information about Sickness Allowance, see Chapter 9 or visit the Centrelink website at www.centrelink.gov.au

- **Special Benefit**—call Centrelink on **13 2850**.

Special Benefit assists those who are in severe hardship due to circumstances outside their control. Special Benefit is a discretionary payment and it is only paid in certain circumstances.

For more information about Special Benefit, see Chapter 7 or visit the Centrelink website at www.centrelink.gov.au

- **Telephone Allowance**.

A separate claim is not required as payment is made automatically to eligible customers who have a phone service connected in Australia in their (or their partner's) name.

For more information about Telephone Allowance, see Chapter 13 or visit the Centrelink website at www.centrelink.gov.au

- **Widow Allowance**—call Centrelink on **13 2850**.

People claiming Widow Allowance have an interview to ensure they receive appropriate support and are made aware of the additional services and payments for which they may be eligible.

For more information about Widow Allowance, see Chapter 11 or visit the Centrelink website at www.centrelink.gov.au

- **Youth Allowance (students) and Australian Apprentices**.

People claiming Youth Allowance (student) should contact Centrelink to lodge their Intent to Claim. This can be done over the phone (students **13 2490** and Australian Apprentices **13 3633**) or online. People will be advised of when to lodge the claim to ensure full entitlement and of other documentation that will be required when lodging the claim.

For more information about Youth Allowance (students), see Chapter 5 or visit the Centrelink website at www.centrelink.gov.au

To arrange an appointment with Centrelink

People can make an appointment at a Centrelink Customer Service Centre by calling **13 1021**.

How to contact the Family Assistance Office

A Family Assistance Office has been set up in all Medicare offices, Centrelink Customer Service Centres and Australian Taxation Offices to deliver the Australian Government's payments for families. The Family Assistance Office has its own website at www.familyassist.gov.au

- **Child Care Benefit—approved care**—call the Family Assistance Office on **13 6150**.

People receiving Family Tax Benefit can apply for Child Care Benefit over the phone by calling the Family Assistance Office or online at www.familyassist.gov.au. If the person is not receiving Family Tax Benefit, a form needs to be completed and returned to the Family Assistance Office. Alternatively, people can choose to pay full child care fees during the year and then lodge a claim for Child Care Benefit as a lump sum following the end of the financial year.

For more information about Child Care Benefit, see Chapter 3 or visit the Family Assistance Office website at www.familyassist.gov.au

- **Child Care Tax Rebate**

- For child care costs after 1 July 2006, the rebate is paid by the Family Assistance Office after Child Care Benefit for approved care is reconciled. Call the Family Assistance Office on **13 6150**.
- For child care costs in the 2004–05 and 2005–06 financial years, the rebate is claimed through the tax system. Call **13 2861** or visit www.ato.gov.au for more information.

- **Child Care Benefit—registered care**—call the Family Assistance Office on **13 6150**.

To become a registered care provider, contact the Family Assistance Office for a registered care form and information on the requirements for registered carers in the relevant state or territory.

Claims for registered care are available over the phone or from Family Assistance Office shopfronts. Claims must be lodged with paid receipts for child care within 52 weeks of the care being provided.

For more information about registered care, see Chapter 3 or visit the Family Assistance Office website at www.familyassist.gov.au

- **Double Orphan Pension**—call the Family Assistance Office on **13 6150**.

A person claiming Double Orphan Pension who has not claimed Family Tax Benefit for the child must have their potential entitlement to Family Tax Benefit assessed. This is regardless of whether they choose to get Family Tax Benefit by instalments or through the tax system. Proof of the child being an orphan, and "Proof of Identity" and residence of the guardian and child are needed.

For more information about Double Orphan Pension, see Chapter 3 or visit the Family Assistance Office website at www.familyassist.gov.au

- **Family Tax Benefit**—call the Family Assistance Office on **13 6150**.

Claim forms for newborn children are also available from hospitals.

Claims can be lodged from outside Australia by contacting Centrelink International Services (see the back cover of this book for the relevant phone numbers for Centrelink International Services), or can be downloaded from www.centrelink.gov.au

For more information about Family Tax Benefit, see Chapter 3 or visit the Family Assistance Office website at www.familyassist.gov.au

- **Baby Bonus**—call the Family Assistance Office on **13 6150**.

Claim forms for Baby Bonus for newborn children are available from hospitals. The claim for adopted children and children with carers (other than the parents) are available from the Family Assistance Office. Claim forms for stillbirths and babies who die shortly after birth are also available from hospitals.

For more information about Baby Bonus, see Chapter 3 or visit the Family Assistance Office website at www.familyassist.gov.au

- **Maternity Immunisation Allowance**—call the Family Assistance Office on **13 6150**.

A claim for Maternity Immunisation Allowance may be lodged when applying for Baby Bonus. The claim will be paid on confirmation of immunisation after the child is 18 months of age. If a customer is not getting Family Tax Benefit when the child turns 18 months, a separate claim may need to be lodged. A claim for Maternity Immunisation Allowance must be lodged before the child's second birthday.

For more information about Maternity Immunisation Allowance, see Chapter 3 or visit the Family Assistance Office website at www.familyassist.gov.au

To arrange an appointment with the Family Assistance Office

People can make an appointment at a Family Assistance Office by calling **13 6150**.