

Are you leaving Australia?



English

Under certain circumstances, you can continue to get your payment if you leave Australia. Whether you can continue to be paid, and for how long, depends on many different factors, such as the type of payment you receive, the country to which you are travelling, how long you are going for, and how long you have lived in Australia.

Because of all the different rules which may affect the decision, it is very important that you tell Centrelink as early as possible about your intended departure. The correct decision must be made about your payment during your absence taking your individual circumstances into account. If you don't tell Centrelink, your payment could be stopped if you leave Australia. Centrelink may be advised by Australia's immigration department if you leave or return to Australia. We may use this information to ensure your payment is correct while you are outside Australia and after you return.

The following information provides some general rules for each of the different payment types and is provided as a guide only. Remember, that there may be other things specific to your circumstances which may affect the payment of your pension or benefit outside Australia.

Will I continue to be paid?

For all payment types

- In order to continue to get payments if you leave Australia, you must continue to meet qualifications for your payment type. This means, for example, if you receive a Disability Support Pension, you remain incapacitated for work, or for most payments (e.g. Family Assistance, Parenting Payment, payments for widows, payments for students etc.) you must remain an Australian resident (i.e. you are not leaving Australia permanently).
- Any income and assets test which applies to you will continue to be applied while you are outside Australia.

If your income or assets increase to above the disqualifying limit during your absence, your payment will be cancelled in exactly the same way as it would if you were in Australia. If your payment is cancelled while you are outside Australia, it may not be able to be re-granted while you remain outside Australia.

- You must continue to fulfil all your obligations while outside Australia. For example, you must advise of any changes to your circumstances and provide information requested by Centrelink. Your payment may be stopped if you do not.

Age Pension

You can generally get Age Pension for the total period of absence, however, your rate may change after you have been away from Australia for 13 weeks. It may change again if you remain outside Australia for more than 26 weeks.

Austudy

If you are a full time student, you can be paid Austudy for up to 13 weeks of a temporary absence as long as you remain enrolled as a student (e.g. during holidays or semester breaks), or for the entire period of absence if it is for the purpose of undertaking study as part of a full time Australian course.

Carer Payment and Carer Allowance

If the person being cared for is travelling with you, you can be paid Carer Payment and/or Carer Allowance for the first 13 weeks of a temporary absence only (if you are studying outside Australia you can be paid Carer Payment for more than 13 weeks in some circumstances).

If the person being cared for is not travelling with you, generally you may only be paid Carer Payment and/or Carer Allowance for the number of unused respite days remaining for the calendar year. The maximum number

of respite days allowed each calendar year is 63 days. If the child being cared for is under 16 years of age and remains in Australia with your partner, Carer Allowance (but not Carer Payment) may be paid while the you are outside Australia for up to 13 weeks without the use of respite days.

If you are caring for a partner who is receiving Age Pension or Disability Support Pension it may be possible for you to be paid Carer Payment longer if you are travelling to certain countries with which Australia has a social security agreement (see separate heading).

Disability Support Pension

Disability Support Pension can be paid for the first 13 weeks of an absence. It may be paid longer if:

- you are terminally ill and are leaving Australia permanently, **or**
- you are studying an approved unit of a full time course outside Australia, **or**
- you left Australia before 1 July 2004 and were told at the time you could be paid indefinitely, and you have not returned to Australia to live since that time. If that is the case, you can return to Australia for a visit and leave again under your original conditions. If, however, you return to Australia to live, you will be subject to a 13 week period (unless qualified under one of the above conditions) upon any subsequent departure.

It may be possible for you to be paid longer if you are travelling to a country with which Australia has a social security agreement. This would usually only be possible if you are 'severely disabled' (see separate heading).

Family Tax Benefit

You can receive Family Tax Benefit outside Australia for up to three years of a temporary absence. For the first 13 weeks of the absence the full rates of Family Tax Benefit Part A and Family Tax Benefit Part B are payable (if you are otherwise entitled to these), reducing to minimum rate Family Tax Benefit Part A after this time.

Special rules apply if you only return to Australia for a short period. See "minimum periods of return" on page 3 for more information.

People who were granted Family Tax Benefit based on being the holder of certain temporary visas (e.g. partner provisional visas) are generally **not** payable during a temporary absence, unless the absence is for one of the reasons explained under Special Benefit. If granted Family Tax Benefit based on a temporary protection visa, you cannot be paid outside Australia at all.

Mature Age Allowance, Partner Allowance, Widow Allowance, Mobility Allowance, Pensioner Education Supplement

You can be paid these allowances for the first 13 weeks of a temporary absence only. If you are studying outside Australia you can be paid for more than 13 weeks in some circumstances (excluding Mature Age Allowance, Mobility Allowance and Pensioner Education Supplement).

Newstart Allowance

You can be paid Newstart Allowance during a temporary absence for as long as is needed but never for more than 13 weeks, but only if the absence is:

- to seek eligible medical treatment (i.e. recognised medical treatment of a kind not available in Australia)
- to attend to an acute family crisis (e.g. visiting a family member who is hospitalised with a serious illness or critically ill, or if a family member has died), **or**
- for a humanitarian purpose (i.e. international adoption, custody or legal proceedings).

You will be required to provide sufficient evidence of your reason for travel.

You can also be paid Newstart Allowance for training camps with Armed Forces Reserves.

Parenting Payment

You can be paid Parenting Payment for the first 13 weeks of a temporary absence only (if you are studying outside Australia you can be paid for more than 13 weeks in some circumstances).

If you are getting Parenting Payment (Single) because your partner has died, it may be possible for you to be paid longer if you are travelling to certain countries with which Australia has a social security agreement (see separate heading).

Sickness Allowance

You can be paid Sickness Allowance during a temporary absence for as long as is needed but never for more than 13 weeks, but only if the absence is:

- to seek eligible medical treatment (i.e. recognised medical treatment of a kind not available in Australia)
- to attend to an acute family crisis (e.g. visiting a family member who is hospitalised with a serious illness or critically ill, or if a family member has died), **or**
- for a humanitarian purpose (i.e. international adoption, custody or legal proceedings).

You will be required to provide sufficient evidence of your reason for travel.

Special Benefit

You can generally **not** be paid Special Benefit during a temporary absence, unless the absence is:

- to seek eligible medical treatment (i.e. recognised medical treatment of a kind not available in Australia)
- to attend to an acute family crisis (i.e. visiting a family member who is hospitalised with a serious illness or critically ill, or if a family member has died), **or**
- for a humanitarian purpose (i.e. international adoption, custody or legal proceedings).

You will be required to provide sufficient evidence of your reason for travel.

Payment outside Australia is not available to customers granted Special Benefit based on being the holder of a temporary protection visa.

Widow B Pension

You can get Widow B Pension for the first 13 weeks of an absence only (if you are studying outside Australia you can be paid for more than 13 weeks in some circumstances), unless:

- your legal husband died, **or**
- you have 10 years' Australian residence.

In these cases, Widow B Pension can be paid for the total period of absence, however your rate may change after you have been away from Australia for 13 weeks. It may change again if you remain outside Australia for more than 26 weeks.

It may also be possible for you to be paid longer if you are travelling to certain countries with which Australia has a social security agreement (see separate heading).

Wife Pension

You can get Wife Pension for the first 13 weeks of an absence only (if you are studying outside Australia you can be paid for more than 13 weeks in some circumstances) unless you have 10 years' Australian residence.

If you do have 10 years' Australian residence, Wife Pension can be paid for the total period of absence, however your rate may change after you have been away from Australia for 13 weeks. It may change again if you remain outside Australia for more than 26 weeks.

It may also be possible for you to be paid longer if you are travelling to certain countries with which Australia has a social security agreement (see separate heading).

Youth Allowance

If you are a full time student you can be paid Youth Allowance for up to 13 weeks of a temporary absence only, as long as you remain enrolled as a student (e.g. during holidays or semester breaks). If your travel is longer than 13 weeks and is for the purpose of undertaking study as part of a full time Australian course, your payment can continue until the end of your study.

If you are an Australian Apprentice, your Youth Allowance will continue to be paid as long as your Commonwealth Registration remains current.

If you are not a full time student or Australian Apprentice, you can be paid Youth Allowance during a temporary absence for as long as is needed but never for more than 13 weeks, but only if the absence is:

- to seek eligible medical treatment (i.e. recognised medical treatment of a kind not available in Australia)
- to attend to an acute family crisis (e.g. visiting a family member who is hospitalised with a serious illness or critically ill, or if a family member has died), **or**
- for a humanitarian purpose (i.e. international adoption, custody or legal proceedings).

How much will I be paid?

If your absence is temporary and Centrelink has determined that your payment is payable during your absence, you will continue to be paid your normal rate plus any supplements for which you remain qualified for the first 13 weeks of your absence.

However for payments which are payable indefinitely (such as Age Pension and Widow B Pension), you will not receive these supplements at all if you leave Australia permanently, or will receive them for no more than the first 13 weeks of a temporary absence. If you are still outside Australia after 26 weeks, your normal rate may change, and will generally be calculated as a proportion dependent on the amount of time you have spent in Australia between the ages of 16 and age pension age. Centrelink will let you know what proportion is to be used when you advise of your departure.

Remote Area Allowance is only available for the first eight weeks of a temporary absence.

Concession cards generally only remain valid for the first 13 weeks of a temporary absence from Australia.

Other factors to consider

International social security agreements

- Australia has social security agreements with many different countries. For a full list of current agreement countries, please contact Centrelink. If you are travelling to an agreement country, and receive a payment which is covered under the terms of the agreement (usually Age Pension and Disability Support Pension if severely disabled, and sometimes Wife Pension, Widow B Pension, Parenting Payment and Carer Payment under certain conditions), you may be able to use the agreement to help you to continue to receive payment past the period normally available. You will be told if this is possible when you advise Centrelink of your departure.

Former resident rules

- If you are receiving Age Pension or Disability Support Pension and returned to live in Australia and were granted a payment within the last two years, your payment may not be payable to you outside Australia until you have been in Australia for two years since your most recent arrival for residence. You will be told if this is the case when you advise Centrelink of your departure.

Minimum periods of return

- Some payments such as Parenting Payment and Family Tax Benefit have a minimum amount of time which must be spent in Australia after an absence before the payment can be paid to you again outside Australia. If you have only recently returned to Australia and are receiving one of these payments, then how long you can be paid (if at all) for any later departures may depend on whether you have been back in Australia for at least 13 weeks.

“You are **“severely disabled”** if:

- your medical impairment(s) prevent you from doing any work for eight hours per week or more for the next two years, **and**
- benefiting from training, education or rehabilitation to the extent of being able to work at least eight hours per week or more, **or**
- you are permanently blind.

What do I need to do now?

If you are thinking about travelling outside Australia, Centrelink will be able to tell you if your payment can be paid to you and for how long. You may want to factor this information in to your decision about whether you travel or not.

If you already have plans, then you must advise Centrelink. Centrelink will be able to tell you exactly how the absence will affect your payment, taking all your circumstances into account, and ensure that you receive the right amount while you are outside Australia. If you do not notify Centrelink, your payment may be stopped, and you will be required to pay back any amount that you have been overpaid.

You must notify Centrelink before you go—it is a good idea if you do so about six weeks before your departure date, so you have all the information you need. If you need to leave in a hurry, make sure you tell Centrelink as soon as you can.

If you are receiving a Centrelink payment and are travelling outside Australia (or to Norfolk Island) you need to call us on:

Employment Services	13 2850
Retirement	13 2300
Disability, Sickness and Carers	13 2717
Family Assistance Office	13 6150
Youth and Students	13 2850
To speak to Centrelink in languages other than English	13 1202

TTY 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.)

Note: calls from your home phone to Centrelink ‘13’ numbers from anywhere in Australia are charged at a fixed rate. That rate may vary from the price of a local call and may also vary between telephone service providers. Calls from public and mobile phones may be timed and charged at a higher rate.

If you are already outside Australia, call us on one of these numbers:

From Austria	0800 295 165 (free call)
From Canada	1888 2557 493 (free call)
From China (North)*	10 800 6100 427
From China (South)*	10 800 2611 309
From Denmark	8088 3556 (free call)
From Germany	0800 180 2482 (free call)
From Greece	0080 0611 26209 (free call)
From India	000 800 61 01098
From Indonesia	001 803 61 035
From Italy	800 781 977 (free call)
From Republic of Korea	003 081 32326
From the Netherlands	0800 0224 364 (free call)
From New Zealand	0800 441 248 (free call)
From Philippines	1800 1611 0046 (free call)
From Portugal	800 861 122 (free call)
From Singapore	800 6167 015
From Spain	900 951 547 (free call)
From Thailand	001 800 611 4136
From Turkey	00 800 6190 5703 (free call)
From United Arab Emirates	8000 610 4319
From UK	0800 169 5865 (free call)
From USA	1866 3433 086 (free call)

From other countries **+61 3 6222 3455** (you can reverse the charges if this service is offered by your local telephone provider)

*China (North) is the provinces of Beijing, Tian Lin, He Bei, Shan Xi, Nei Mong Gu, Hei Long Jiang, LiaoNing, Ji Lin, Shan dong and He Nan. All other provinces are considered to be China (South) for this purpose.

Note: these international free call numbers connect you directly to Centrelink International Services. This free call may not be available from every location within the country, and may not be free from mobile phones or public phones. You may need to insert coins/card in pay phones as for a local call and this may not be refunded at the end of the call.

Disclaimer

The information contained in this publication is intended only as a guide to payments and services 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 March 2010, 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 your application 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.