

Special Benefit Payment Rates

20 March–30 June 2018


centrelink

Rates may change if there is a change in your circumstances, or in legislation.

This factsheet provides information about Centrelink payments and services available if you are experiencing severe financial hardship and need some extra help.

Special Benefit

Basic conditions of eligibility

- In financial hardship and unable to earn a sufficient livelihood for themselves and dependants due to reasons beyond their control.
- Not able to get any other income support payment.
- For short-term payment available funds must not be more than the applicable fortnightly Newstart Allowance or Youth Allowance rate.
- For long-term payment available funds must be no more than \$5,000.

Residence requirements

- Must be an Australian resident, **or**
- A holder of temporary visa subclass 060, 070, 309, 449, 785, 786, 790 or 820.
- Must be in Australia on the day the claim is lodged.
- Available to newly arrived migrants after 104 weeks in Australia as an Australian resident, unless they have experienced a substantial change in circumstances beyond their control after arrival in Australia (some other exemptions may apply).
- May be paid for up to six weeks of a temporary absence from Australia in certain limited circumstances.

Basic rates

- Generally as for Newstart Allowance, Youth Allowance or Austudy.

Newstart Allowance Payment Rates

Status	Fortnight
Single	
No dependent children	\$545.80
With dependent children	\$590.40
Aged 60 or over, after nine continuous months on payment	\$590.40
Principal carer of a dependent child granted an exemption from mutual obligation requirements for foster caring/non-parent relative caring under a court order/home schooling/distance education/large family*	\$762.40
Member of a couple	\$492.80

Youth Allowance Payment Rates

Status	Fortnight
Single, 16–17 years of age, no dependent children	
Living at home	\$244.10
Living away from home*	\$445.80
Single, 18–24 years of age, no dependent children	
Living at home	\$293.60
Living away from home*	\$445.80
Single with dependent children	
Single with dependent children	\$584.20
Principal carer of a dependent child granted an exemption from mutual obligation requirements for foster caring/non-parent relative caring under a court order/home schooling/distance education/large family	\$762.40
Member of a couple	
No dependent children*	\$445.80
With dependent children*	\$489.60
Special rates for long-term income support recipients**	
Single, living at home	\$360.20
Single, living away from home	\$541.70
Member of a couple, no dependent children	\$489.60

*Rent Assistance may be payable.



**For long-term income support recipients who either commence full-time study or an Australian Apprenticeship, having been in receipt of an income support payment for at least six out of the last nine months since turning 22, or who study an approved course in English where English is not their first language.

Austudy Payment Rates

Status	Fortnight
Single, no dependent children	\$445.80
Single, with dependent children	\$584.20
Member of a couple, no dependent children	\$445.80
Member of a couple, with dependent children	\$489.60
Special rates for long-term income support recipients*	
Single, no dependent children	\$541.70
Member of a couple, no dependent children	\$489.60

*For long-term income support recipients who commence full-time study or an Australian Apprenticeship or who study an approved course in English where English is not their first language.

- May be reduced if in receipt of free board and/or lodgings or receiving other forms of support.
- Education Entry Payment of \$208 may be payable (single parents only).
- Pensioner Education Supplement may be payable (single parents only).
- Pharmaceutical Allowance may be payable (see page 3).
- Pension Supplement (see page 3) is paid if recipient has reached age pension age.

Rent Assistance

- Generally as for Newstart Allowance, Youth Allowance or Austudy depending on circumstances.
- See Table F (page 4).

Income test

- No income free area, benefit reduced by one dollar for each one dollar of income.

Assets test

- See Table A (page 4).

Concession Cards, Bonus Payments, Supplements and Allowances

Pensioner Concession Card

Automatically issued to:

- Older benefit recipients, that is:
 - recipients aged 60 and over who are receiving Newstart Allowance, Partner Allowance, Widow Allowance, Parenting Payment (Partnered), Sickness Allowance, or Special Benefit, and who have been in continuous receipt of one or more of the above payments (or an income support pension) for nine months or more.
- Participants of the Pension Loans Scheme who are qualified to receive a part-rate pension.
- The card will generally be cancelled when a recipient is temporarily absent from Australia for longer than six weeks while their primary payment is paid. The card will be cancelled if the card holder ceases to be an Australian resident.

Once a person is no longer qualified for one of these payments, they must generally stop using their card. However, in some circumstances, a person can retain their card for a short period after returning to work. These provisions are designed to assist the transition from income support to work.

Older benefit recipients (as defined earlier)

- Retain their card for a further 26 weeks if their payment stops due to the person or their partner commencing employment, or due to the level of earnings from this employment.

An extension is also available, under certain circumstances, to people under age pension age who remain qualified for certain payments during a nil rate period under the Working Credit Scheme.

Automatic issue Health Care Card

Automatically issued to people who are not qualified for a Pensioner Concession Card who are receiving:

- Newstart Allowance, Partner Allowance, Sickness Allowance, Special Benefit, Widow Allowance, Youth Allowance (job seeker only), Parenting Payment (Partnered) and Farm Household Allowance.
- The card will generally be cancelled when a recipient is temporarily absent from Australia for longer than six weeks while their primary payment is paid. The card will be cancelled if the cardholder ceases to be an Australian resident.

Once people are no longer receiving these payments, they must generally stop using their card. However, in some instances, people can retain their card for up to 26 weeks after returning to work. This provision is designed to assist people to make the transition from income support to work. The provision applies to long-term recipients of Newstart Allowance, Sickness Allowance, Partner Allowance, Special Benefit, Widow Allowance, and Youth Allowance (job seeker). Former long-term recipients of Parenting Payment (Single), Newstart Allowance and Youth Allowance (job seeker) who are a single principal carer of a dependent child also qualify for an extension (in addition to a 12-week Pensioner Concession Card extension).

An extension is also available, under certain circumstances, to people who remain qualified for certain payments during a nil rate period under the Working Credit scheme.

Residence requirements

- Certain residence requirements must be met to qualify for Pensioner Concession Card or Health Care Card.
- **Pension Supplement**
- A Pension Supplement is added to the regular fortnightly payment made to recipients of Age Pension, Carer Payment, Wife Pension, Widow B Pension, Bereavement Allowance, Disability Support Pension (except if aged under 21 without children) and to certain other income support payment or ABSTUDY Living Allowance recipients if the person has reached age pension age.
- The maximum Pension Supplement is currently \$67.30 a fortnight for singles and \$101.48 a fortnight for couples, combined.
- The minimum Pension Supplement is an amount below which the Pension Supplement does not fall until income or assets reach a level that would otherwise reduce a total pension including Pension Supplement to nil. The minimum amount is currently \$36.10 a fortnight for singles, and \$54.80 for couples, combined.
- Pensioners may elect to receive the minimum Pension Supplement amount on a quarterly basis. Instalments will be paid as soon as possible after 20 March, 20 June, 20 September and 20 December each year.
- The Pension Supplement is paid while the person is in Australia or, if outside Australia, only while the person has the right to continue to be paid their social security payment outside Australia. After an absence of more than six weeks outside Australia, the Pension Supplement is reduced to the Pension Supplement Basic Amount.
- The Pension Supplement Basic Amount is currently \$23.40 a fortnight for singles and \$38.40 a fortnight for both members of a couple, combined.
- Recipients of Parenting Payment (Single) under age pension age have the Pension Supplement Basic Amount added to their regular fortnightly payment.

Telephone Allowance (TAL)

Telephone Allowance (TAL) is a quarterly payment to assist with the cost of maintaining a telephone service—it is not paid to assist with the cost of telephone calls.

TAL is paid to telephone subscribers who receive the Disability Support Pension and who are aged under 21 years without children and to Parenting Payment (Single) recipients who are under age pension age. TAL is also paid to telephone subscribers who receive certain social security allowance payments and are in specific circumstances.

A higher rate of TAL is payable to recipients of Disability Support Pension who are aged under 21 years without children if they or their partner also have a home internet connection.

The current rate of TAL is \$115.20 per year (\$28.80 per quarter). The higher rate of TAL is \$171.20 per year (\$42.80 per quarter) for home internet subscribers. This amount is shared between both members of an eligible couple. The payment is made in January, March, July and September each year.

For most pensioners and other income support recipients who have reached age pension age, the value of TAL has been either added into the Pension Supplement or forms part of the rate paid under transitional arrangements.

Pharmaceutical Allowance

Rate: \$6.20 per fortnight for an eligible single person, and \$3.10 per fortnight for each eligible member of a couple (i.e. \$6.20 in total if both members of a couple are eligible). However, where a person is a member of an illness separated couple or a respite care couple, or where a partner is in prison, the rate is \$6.20 per fortnight (i.e. the same as for a single person).

Payment	Conditions under which Pharmaceutical Allowance is paid
Special Benefit	<p>Must be either temporarily incapacitated, or be 60 years or more (but under age pension age) and have been in receipt of income support continuously for at least nine months.</p> <p>Note: Special Benefit recipients are NOT required to be Australian residents in order to be paid Pharmaceutical Allowance.</p>

Note: Pharmaceutical Allowance may be paid for temporary absences until the primary payment ceases, or for up to 26 weeks if the primary payment may be paid indefinitely.

Remote Area Allowance

Basic conditions of eligibility

- Tax-free allowance for pensioners/allowees/beneficiaries.
- Income Zone Tax Offset (formerly Zone Rebate) will be reduced by the amount of the allowance paid.

Residence requirements

- Resident of Ordinary Tax Zone A, **or**
 - Special Tax Zone A (with certain exceptions), **or**
 - Special Tax Zone B.
- Can be paid for the first eight weeks of a temporary absence from the Tax Zone, including for an absence from Australia.

Basic rates

- Single: \$18.20 per fortnight.
- Partnered: \$15.60 per fortnight.
- Plus \$7.30 per fortnight for each dependant.

Income test

- No income test.

Assets test

- No assets test.

Table A—Assets test limits for allowances

Status	Home owner	Non-home owner
Single	\$253,750	\$456,750
Couple combined	\$380,500	\$583,500
Illness separated, couple combined	\$380,500	\$583,500
One partner eligible, combined assets	\$380,500	\$583,500

Allowances, Austudy, Parenting Payment and Special Benefit are not payable if assets exceed these amounts.

Some assets are deemed to earn income, while certain assets are not included in the assets test. Contact us for more information.

Extra Allowable Amount for retirement village and granny flat residents

If your Entry Contribution is equal to or less than the Extra Allowable Amount at the time of entry, you are assessed as a non-homeowner. Your Entry Contribution will count as an asset. You may qualify for Rent Assistance. The Extra Allowable Amount is the difference between the non-homeowner and homeowner assets test limits, currently \$203,000.

Hardship provisions

If you have assets but little or no income you are expected to rearrange your affairs to provide for yourself. In some cases that is not possible. If you are in 'severe financial hardship' you may be able to get an income support payment. Different tests apply to such cases.

Table F—Rent Assistance

Family situation	Fortnight		
	Maximum payment	No payment if rent is	Maximum payment if rent is
Single			
No dependent children	\$134.80	less than \$120.20	more than \$299.93
No dependent children, sharer	\$89.37	less than \$120.20	more than \$240.02
Couple, no dependent children			
Couple, no dependent children	\$127.00	less than \$194.60	more than \$363.93
One of a couple who is separated due to illness*	\$134.80	less than \$120.20	more than \$299.93
One of a couple who is temporarily separated	\$127.00	less than \$120.20	more than \$289.53

*Includes respite care and partner in prison.

- Generally, to qualify for Rent Assistance, a person must be paid a social security payment, ABSTUDY or more than the base rate of Family Tax Benefit Part A, as well as pay a minimum amount of rent to a private landlord or to a community housing provider.

- Rent Assistance for families with children is usually paid with Family Tax Benefit. See Family Tax Benefit for current rates.
- Rent Assistance is not paid:
 - to people paying rent to a government housing authority, although in some situations sub-tenants may qualify for Rent Assistance
 - for residents in Australian Government funded places in nursing homes and other aged care facilities.
- Special rules apply to single sharers, and people who pay board and lodging or who live in a retirement village.
- Rent Certificates are required to verify rent where a person does not have a formal written tenancy agreement or is not named as a tenant in a formal written tenancy agreement.
- Rent Assistance is paid at the rate of 75 cents for each dollar of rent above the minimum rent amount, up to the maximum rate, applicable to the family situation (see Table F on page 4).
- Rent Assistance is paid as part of another payment and it may be reduced due to the income and asset test rules applying to that payment.
- Rent Assistance may be paid for temporary absences overseas until the portability period for the primary payment ceases, or for up to 26 weeks if the primary payment may be paid indefinitely.

Please contact us for detailed information on eligibility and payment rates for Rent Assistance.

Energy Supplement

The Energy Supplement is a tax-exempt payment to assist with household expenses including energy costs.

Energy Supplement payments are paid to eligible recipients automatically at the same time as regular payment cycles for pensioners, other income support recipients, families receiving Family Tax Benefit payments, youth and student payments recipients and Disability Support Pension recipients aged under 21 without dependent children.

From 20 March 2017, Energy Supplement will only be paid to Family Tax Benefit recipients and Commonwealth Seniors Health Card holders as long as they have been continuously receiving the Energy Supplement from 19 September 2016.

Most pension, allowance and family payment recipients can choose to receive the supplement with their regular fortnightly payment or quarterly in arrears. Eligible Commonwealth Seniors Health Card holders will receive the Energy Supplement quarterly in arrears.

Special Benefit

See Newstart Allowance, Youth Allowance and Austudy Energy Supplement amounts - where the rate of Special Benefit is worked out as if the person were qualified for Newstart Allowance, Youth Allowance and Austudy.

Newstart Allowance, Sickness Allowance, Partner Allowance, Widow Allowance

Status	Fortnight
Single	
No dependent children	\$8.80
With dependent children	\$9.50
Aged 60 or over, after nine continuous months on payment	\$9.50
Principal carer of a dependent child granted an exemption from mutual obligation requirements for foster caring/non-parent relative caring under a court order/home schooling/distance education/large family (NSA)*	\$12.00
Member of a couple	\$7.90
Recipients over age pension age	
Single	\$14.10
Member of a couple	\$10.60

Austudy

Status	Fortnight
Single, no dependent children	\$7.00
Single, with dependent children	\$9.20
Member of a couple, no dependent children	\$7.00
Member of a couple, with dependent children	\$7.70
Special Rates for long-term income support recipients**	
Single, no dependent children	\$8.60
Member of a couple, no dependent children	\$7.70
Recipients over age pension age	
Single	\$14.10
Member of a couple	\$10.60

**For long-term income support recipients who commence full-time study or an Australian Apprenticeship or who study an approved course in English where English is not their first language.

Youth Allowance

Status	Fortnight
Single, aged 16–17, no dependent children	
Living at home	\$3.90
Living away from home	\$7.00
Single, aged 18–24, no dependent children	
Living at home	\$4.60
Living away from home	\$7.00
Single with dependent children	
Single with dependent children	\$9.20
Principal carer of a dependent child granted an exemption from mutual obligation requirements for foster caring/non-parent relative caring under a court order/home schooling/distance education/large family	\$12.00
Member of a couple	
No dependent children	\$7.00
With dependent children	\$7.70
Special rates for long-term income support recipients**	
Single, living at home	\$5.70
Single, living away from home	\$8.60
Member of a couple, no dependent children	\$7.70
Single with Youth Disability Supplement	
Aged 16–17, at home, no dependent children	\$5.90
Aged 18–24, at home, no dependent children	\$6.60
Away from home, no dependent children	\$8.50
With dependent children	\$9.20
Member of a couple with Youth Disability Supplement	
No dependent children	\$7.70
With dependent children	\$7.70

**For long-term income support recipients who either commence full-time study or an Australian Apprenticeship, having been in receipt of an income support payment for at least six out of the last nine months since turning 22, or who study an approved course in English where English is not their first language.

How to contact us

Self Service

1. Find out more information, including eligibility at humanservices.gov.au
2. Create a myGov account at my.gov.au then link your Centrelink online account and other government online services.
3. If you have a mobile device, download the Express Plus Centrelink mobile app—so you can complete transactions on the go. Find out more at humanservices.gov.au/expressplus



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Online Security

Keep your information safe online.

Visit humanservices.gov.au/onlinesecurity to find out how.

Online letters

Online letters gives you the choice to receive most of your letters from us in your myGov Inbox, rather than having them sent to your postal address.

You can receive, view, print and save mail from Medicare, Centrelink and Child Support in one secure digital inbox. When you create a myGov account you will automatically receive access to your Inbox.

Most of your letters will be available online. You will continue, however, to receive some letters at your postal address, such as letters with reply-paid envelopes, paper forms that we require you to fill in and return, and some brochures that are not available online.

Electronic messaging

Electronic messaging is a free service that allows you to receive SMS or email messages from us about things that are important. Where appropriate, you may receive SMS or email messages instead of letters. You do not require an online account to use this service.

We will only send you messages that are relevant to your circumstances. Messages do not contain any personal information.

If you are a Centrelink recipient, you will be automatically subscribed to this service when you provide a new mobile phone number or email address.

You can choose how you would like to receive your messages, however, if you live outside Australia, you can only receive your messages by email.

By phone

Centrelink Phone Self Service

The Centrelink Phone Self Service is made up of two lines:

Self service line **136 240**

On the Centrelink self service line you can hear about options relevant to the payment you are on, such as accessing payment information, applying for an advance payment or completing your review of Rent Assistance.

Reporting line **133 276/13 EARN**

The Centrelink reporting line is for recipients who need to report fortnightly to receive their payment. You can report your income from employment and notify your mutual obligation requirements using this line.

For more information about reporting requirements visit humanservices.gov.au/selfservice

Other options

In a service centre

If you don't have a computer at home you can visit one of our service centres and use our self service terminals. Once you have registered to access your account online, you can use the terminals for Centrelink, Medicare and Child Support accounts.

Agents and access points

You can access our services from one of over 225 Access Points and 350 Agents in rural, regional and remote Australia. Access Points provide free self-help facilities where you can conduct your business with us.

Visit humanservices.gov.au for more information about payments and services or call the '13' or '1800' number listed that is most relevant to your situation.

Older Australians **132 300**

About to retire or in retirement
Seniors
Needing help after someone has died

Disability, Sickness and Carers **132 717**

Illness or injury
Caring for someone

Employment Services **132 850**

Looking for work (22 and over)
Farmer, self-employed or rural Australian
Needing help in a crisis
Recently moved to Australia

Families and Parents **136 150**

Guardian

Youth and Students **132 490**

Looking for work (under 22)
Youth Allowance
Austudy
Pensioner Education Supplement

ABSTUDY	Freecall™ 1800 132 317
Assistance for Isolated Children	132 318
Australian Apprentices	133 633
Australian Government Services	
Fraud Tip-off Line	131 524
BasicsCard Balance Check	Freecall™ 1800 057 111
Calling from outside Australia	+61 3 6222 3455
National Business Gateway	131 158
International Services	131 673
Feedback and complaints	Freecall™ 1800 132 468
Farmer Assistance Line	132 316
Financial Information Service	
seminar bookings	136 357
Foreign Income Exchange	Freecall™ 1800 050 041
Income Management	Freecall™ 1800 132 594
Indigenous Call Centre	Freecall™ 1800 136 380
Centrelink Online Services Support Hotline	132 307
For help in other languages	131 202
TTY* Customer Relations	Freecall™ 1800 000 567
TTY* Enquiries	Freecall™ 1800 810 586

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

Note: calls from your home phone to '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 to '1800' numbers from your home phone are free. Calls from public and mobile phones may be timed and charged at a higher rate.



Payment Finder is an interactive online tool to help you find payments relevant to your circumstances. Go to humanservices.gov.au/paymentfinder

Definition of a partner

Under social security and family assistance law, a person is considered to be your partner if you and the person are:

- married, **or**
- in a registered relationship, **or**
- in a de facto relationship.

You're not considered a member of a couple if you and the person are living separately and apart on a permanent or indefinite basis.

Note: two people not physically living together can still be considered a member of a couple.

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 20 March 2018, but may of course change. If you use this publication after that date, please check with us 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 the Department of Human Services' staff. If you do so, please remember that we have not authorised any third parties to provide information or advice to you about payments. If you think a decision about your payment is incorrect, you can contact us and ask for the decision to be reconsidered.

If you are not satisfied with the service you received from the Department of Human Services you can talk to our Customer Relations staff on **Freecall™ 1800 132 468**. If you are still not satisfied, you can contact the Commonwealth Ombudsman on **1300 362 072** or [ombudsman.gov.au](https://www.ombudsman.gov.au)

This publication has been prepared by the Department of Human Services to give you information about payments and services it delivers on behalf of the Department of Social Services, the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, the Department of Jobs and Small Business and the Department of Education and Training.

