COVID-19 AND CENTRELINK
This factsheet provides information on what Centrelink can do if you have been affected by COVID-19.

This factsheet covers:

- What payments am I eligible for?
- When will I get my payment?
- How do I apply for payments?
- Do I need to complete mutual obligations?


What payments am I eligible for?

If you:

- lose your employment as a permanent employee, or
- are stood down without pay as a permanent employee, or
- lose income as a sole trader, self-employed person, casual worker or contract worker, or
- lose income due to being required to care for someone who is affected by COVID-19

you may be eligible for Jobseeker Payment or Youth Allowance Jobseeker.

If you:

- are self-isolating or
- caring for someone who is self-isolating

following advice from the government or a health professional, you may be eligible for Crisis Payment.

If you:

- are receiving a Centrelink payment,
- or have a Seniors or Veteran health care card

you are eligible for two one-off Economic Support Payments. You may also be eligible for the Coronavirus supplement. If you receive the Coronavirus supplement, you will only receive one Economic Support Payment.

If you are a new Centrelink recipient, you will get the Economic Support Payments and Coronavirus supplement once you start receiving your main payment. You must register your intent to claim by 13 April to be eligible for the Economic Support Payments.
Jobseeker Payment and Youth Allowance Jobseeker

If you have lost income or employment as result of COVID-19, you may be eligible for:

- Jobseeker Payment if you are over 22
- Youth Allowance Jobseeker if you are under 22

You will be required to meet the income tests for these payments. However, your assets will not be taken into account for the period of the Coronavirus supplement. Your partner’s income will be taken into account, and you will only be able to access JobSeeker payment if your partner earns less than $79,762 per annum.

In most cases, you will not be able to receive the JobSeeker Payment or Youth Allowance for jobseekers if your employer is paying you the JobKeeper subsidy announced on 30 March 2020. If your employer offers you the JobKeeper subsidy and you have already applied for JobSeeker Payment, you can withdraw your claim and shift to the JobKeeper subsidy.

Crisis Payment

If you are:

- required to be in quarantine or self-isolation as a result of advice from, or a requirement made by the government or a health professional regarding COVID-19, or
- caring for an immediate family member or a member of your household who is Required to be in quarantine or self-isolation

you may be eligible for Crisis Payment.

You must contact Centrelink within 14 days after starting the quarantine or self-isolation period and let them know about your intention to claim. You must then make a claim within 14 days after the contact day.

Economic Support Payment

If you:

- have registered your intent to claim a Centrelink payment, or
- have applied for a Centrelink payment, or
- are receiving a Centrelink payment, or
- have a Pensioner Concession Card, Commonwealth Seniors Health Card or Veteran Gold Card

before 13 April 2020, you will receive two $750 one-off Economic Support Payments. These will be paid to you automatically. If you receive the Coronavirus supplement, you will only receive one Economic Support Payment.

To ensure you receive this payment, make sure Centrelink has your correct details by checking myGov or calling the relevant Centrelink contact line.

If you are a Cashless Debit Card or Income Management participant, the payment will be quarantined to your respective card.
For more information and a full list of eligible Centrelink payments, see 

Coronavirus Supplement

If you receive an eligible Centrelink payment, from 27 April you will automatically be paid an extra $550 a fortnight for the next 6 months. Eligible payments include:

- Jobseeker Payment
- Youth Allowance Jobseeker
- Youth Allowance Student
- Austudy
- Abstudy
- Parenting Payment
- Farm Household Allowance
- Special Benefit recipients

If you receive the Coronavirus supplement, you will only receive one Economic Support Payment.

If you are a current Disability Support Pension recipient and switch to Jobseeker Payment, your DSP will be cancelled. You may also lose your Pensioner Concession Card.

The DSP is a more suitable payment if you have a long term disability or medical condition and you are unable to work 15 hours or more per week in the next 2 years. If you stay on DSP, you will:

- keep your Pensioner Concession Card;
- get a $750 Economic Support Payment now; and

If you cancel your DSP to claim the JobSeeker Payment, there are some things you should know:

- DSP eligibility rules have changed and it may not be the same as when you first claimed it, so you may not be able to get DSP if you try to claim it again.
- To claim DSP again, you will need to:
  - submit a new a complete DSP claim and provide recent medical evidence from your treating health professionals; and
  - attend any assessments, if required, including a Job Capacity Assessment and Disability Medical Assessment.
- In some cases, you may need to have actively participated in a Program of Support before you can get DSP.

If you claim the JobSeeker Payment, you will need to:

- meet mutual obligation requirements; and
- connect with a job service provider and agree to a Job Plan.

You will need to consider how you will meet these requirements taking into account your disability or medical condition.

Get advice from one of our member centres before switching from DSP to Jobseeker payment.
**When will I get my payment?**

If you are eligible for a payment, you can receive it from the date that you register your intent to claim with Centrelink. You should register your intent to claim as soon as possible.

Once you are receiving a Centrelink payment, you will automatically get the two Economic Support Payments and the Coronavirus Supplement.

The first Economic Support Payment will start on 31 March, and most people will receive it by 17 April. The second payment will start on 13 July.

The Coronavirus Supplement will start on 27 April.

**Waiting Periods**

If you are eligible, you will be able to access the payment straight away.

You will not have to serve the one week Ordinary Waiting Period, Liquid Asset test Waiting Period or Seasonal Work Preclusion Period. If you are already serving one of these waiting periods, it will be waived.

The Newly Arrived Residents Waiting Period (NARWP) will be temporarily waived. When the Coronavirus supplement ceases in September 2020, you will be required to serve any remaining NARWP. However, the time you were receiving the Coronavirus supplement will count towards your NARWP.

Income Maintenance Periods and Compensation Preclusion periods will continue to apply, as payments under these arrangements are treated as income.

You cannot access annual leave, sick leave or Income Protection Insurance at the same time as receiving Jobseeker Payment and Youth Allowance Jobseeker.

If you are accessing employer entitlements such as annual leave or sick leave, or Income Protection Insurance, you must tell Centrelink.

If you do not declare your income fully to Centrelink or inform Centrelink honestly about your circumstances, you may receive a debt in the future and/or be liable to prosecution.

**How do I apply for a payment?**

For a step by step guide on claiming payments, see our factsheet ‘Claiming Centrelink payments during COVID-19’.

When you are applying for Jobseeker Payment and Youth Allowance Jobseeker, you will be required to:

- make an initial declaration about your identity, residency status and income
- if you are a worker, make a declaration that you have been made redundant or had your hours reduced (including to zero) as a result of the economic downturn due to COVID-19
- if you are a sole trader, make a declaration that your business has been suspended or had turnover reduced significantly
If you pay rent, you should also declare the amount you pay to qualify for Rent Assistance.

A number of previous requirements for claiming the payments will be removed temporarily, including the requirements for:

- Employment Separation Certificates, proof of rental arrangements and verification of relationship status
- Job Seeker Classification Instrument assessment for those people who have recently left jobs and are therefore job ready
- Making an appointment with an employment service provider before you can be paid

If you are having issues with your payment or your claim is rejected, you have the right to appeal.

It is a good idea to lodge the appeal within 13 weeks of the decision so you can receive full back payment if you are successful.


**Will I need to complete mutual obligations?**

You will not be penalised for not performing mutual obligations from 24 March to 27 April 2020.

This means that your payment cannot be suspended and you cannot receive any demerit points or have your payment reduced or cancelled for not meeting your mutual obligations.

If mutual obligations are reinstated after 27 April 2020, you may still be able to obtain an exemption.

If you are receiving a Centrelink payment that requires you to complete mutual obligations and you’re affected by COVID-19, Centrelink may grant you a Major Personal Crisis exemption for a period of 14 days.

This will mean you will not have to complete your mutual obligations, including:
- attending appointments
- looking for work
- doing any of the activities in your Job Plan.

You can apply for a Major Personal Crisis exemptions by calling Centrelink on your regular payment line and telling them why you are isolated. Reasons can include:
- a doctor or government authority has told you to isolate yourself because of possible exposure to coronavirus
- you need to isolate yourself after reading the [latest health alerts](https://www.health.gov.au/adminhtml/site domicile/healthalerts/index.nsf/Home) from the Department of Health

You will not need to provide a medical certificate.
If you are a **principal carer**, you may also claim this exemption if:

- your child’s school or childcare centre has closed, or
- you’re caring for an adult with a disability or special needs whose day service or supported workplace premises has closed

If you are a **student**, you may be taken to have a reasonable excuse for not meeting study activity if you are unable to attend studies due to COVID-19.

If you are a **sole trader** that has become eligible for Jobseeker Payment, you will automatically meet your mutual obligation requirements during this period by continuing to develop and sustain your business.

You will be able to negotiate to complete your activities online. Work for the Dole and other group activities will be suspended.

If you are experiencing issues with your provider, you can call the Department’s National Customer Service Line on 1800 805 260.

If you are a participant in the **Community Development Program**, you will not be required to attend face-to-face appointments, activities in group settings such as Work for the Dole. You will not receive a financial penalty or any other compliance action for failing to engage in your CDP mutual obligations. These arrangements apply while the biosecurity arrangements announced by the government on 20 March 2020 continue.

**Where can I get help?**


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This factsheet does not constitute legal advice. Please contact any of our member centres if you wish to obtain free legal advice. Find your closest member centre at www.ejaustralia.org.au