

COVID-19 AND CENTRELINK

This factsheet is about JobSeeker Payment and other Centrelink entitlements that may be available if you have been affected by COVID-19.



If you need help with any of these issues you can contact your local member centre for free legal advice. Find your local member centre at <http://ejaustralia.org.au/legal-help-centrelink/>

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 (job seeker).

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 Family Tax Benefit**, or
- have a Seniors or Veteran health care card

you may be eligible for either one or two Economic Support Payments of \$750. You may also be eligible for the fortnightly Coronavirus Supplement.



JobSeeker Payment and Youth Allowance (job seeker)

What is JobSeeker Payment?

JobSeeker Payment is a new payment that has replaced Newstart Allowance and Sickness Allowance.

To be eligible for JobSeeker Payment a person must:

- be between 22 and Age Pension age
- meet residence rules, and
 - o be looking for work, or
 - o undertaking approved activities, or
 - o be temporarily unable to work due to illness or injury.

What is Youth Allowance (job seeker)?

Youth Allowance (job seeker) is available for young people who are 16 to 21 years of age and looking for work or temporarily unable to work.

How have JobSeeker Payment and Youth Allowance changed because of the COVID-19 pandemic?

The Government has made significant changes to JobSeeker Payment and Youth Allowance (job seeker) that will apply for six months, until late September / early October 2020. These temporary arrangements include:



- **Waiver of waiting periods** - Under the temporary COVID-19 arrangements, most of the usual waiting periods are not being applied. This means that:
 - o 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, the remainder of the waiting period will be waived.
 - o The Newly Arrived Residents Waiting Period (NARWP) will be temporarily waived. When the COVID-19 arrangements cease in September to October 2020, you will be required to serve any remaining NARWP but the time you were receiving the Coronavirus Supplement will count towards your NARWP.
 - o Income Maintenance Periods and Compensation Preclusion periods will continue to apply.
- **Income test** - JobSeeker Payment is income-tested. Under the temporary partner income test, if your personal income is less than \$194 per fortnight you will be entitled to JobSeeker Payment if your partner is not on a pension and your partner's income is less than \$3,068.80 per fortnight. This revised partner income test does not apply to Youth Allowance - it only applies to people who are 22 years and over, for JobSeeker Payment.
- **Assets test** - Assets will not be taken into account for assessing JobSeeker Payment or Youth Allowance.
- **Coronavirus Supplement** - JobSeeker Payment and Youth Allowance recipients will be paid the Coronavirus Supplement, an additional \$550/fortnight. For more information see the [Services Australia web page](#).
- **The First Economic Support Payment (\$750)** - The first Economic Support Payment was paid to people who were entitled to JobSeeker Payment, Youth Allowance and other eligible payments between 12 March and 13 April 2020. For people with claims that had or have not been processed, the first Economic Support Payment will be paid when the claim is granted. The Second Economic Support Payment (\$750), to be made in July, will not be paid to people receiving the Coronavirus Supplement. This means that it will not be paid to JobSeeker Payment and Youth Allowance recipients.
- **Mutual obligations** - Mutual obligation requirements have been lifted until 8 June 2020. From 9 June 2020 mutual obligations will be gradually reintroduced, with JobSeeker Payment recipients required to undertake at least one appointment with their employment services provider (online or over the phone). During the initial period from 9 June, suspensions and financial penalties will not apply to job

seekers who do not meet this requirement. Special circumstances exemptions from mutual obligations will continue to be available. Sole traders and people who are self-employed will continue to be exempt from mutual obligation requirements to enable businesses to be re-established.

- **Other requirements for JobSeeker Payment and Youth Allowance (job seeker) that have been temporarily removed** - When claiming JobSeeker Payment, people will not generally need to:
 - o Provide an Employment Separation Certificate, proof of rental arrangements or verification of relationship status
 - o Undertake the JobSeeker Classification Instrument – the questionnaire used to assess whether people who have recently left jobs are ‘job ready’ or need additional support
 - o Make an appointment with an employment service provider.

Who can claim JobSeeker Payment and Youth Allowance (job seeker) under the temporary COVID-19 rules?

Under the COVID-19 arrangements you may be eligible for JobSeeker Payment or Youth Allowance (job seeker) if you have:

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

If you are accessing annual leave, sick leave or income protection insurance, you may not be able to receive JobSeeker Payment or Youth Allowance (job seeker) for the period covered by the leave. If you are in this situation, you should still lodge a claim so that JobSeeker Payment can commence ASAP once the leave period is over.

When will payments start?

Although it may take some time for Centrelink to process your claim, payment should date back to the date your ‘intention to claim’ was lodged (online, over the phone or in person) – as long as you lodged your claim within 14 days of lodging your intention to claim.

Currently, processing delays mean it may take some weeks to receive payment but:

- If you lodged your ‘intention to claim’ between 23 and 29 March 2020, and you then lodged your full claim by 19 April 2020, payment should be backdated to 23 March 2020
- If you lodged your ‘intention to claim’ after 29 March 2020, and you lodged your claim within 14 days, your payment should be backdated to the date you lodged your ‘intention to claim’.

Leave entitlements can affect the date from which payment can be made. It is important to register an intention to claim JobSeeker Payment or Youth Allowance (job seeker) as soon as possible, even if you are receiving leave entitlements, so your JobSeeker Payment can commence when they finish.

You do not need to claim one-off \$750 Economic Support Payments separately – they are paid automatically if you are eligible.

The Coronavirus Supplement of \$550 per fortnight will also be paid automatically if you are eligible, with payments starting from 27 April.

Do I still need to report income under the temporary arrangements?

Yes.

If you do not report changes to you or your partner's income you may incur a debt.

Information for people on DSP or Carer Payment

Can people on DSP or Carer Payment get the Coronavirus Supplement?

No. People on Disability Support Pension or Carer Payment are not entitled to the Coronavirus Supplement. Eligible payments are limited to:



- JobSeeker Payment
- Youth Allowance (job seeker)
- Youth Allowance (student)
- Austudy
- Abstudy
- Parenting Payment
- Farm Household Allowance
- Special Benefit



Warning about DSP: Some people on DSP have thought about switching to JobSeeker Payment so they can get the Coronavirus Supplement. It is important to understand the negative consequences of doing this.

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
- get a \$750 Economic Support Payment in mid-July.

If you cancel your DSP to claim 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 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.

Can people on DSP or Carer Payment get the Economic Support Payments?



Yes.

If you were receiving DSP or Carer Payment at any time between 12 March and 13 April 2020 you will already have received the first \$750 Economic Support Payment.

If you are still waiting for your DSP or Carer Payment to be granted and you lodged your intention to claim by 13 April 2020, you will receive the first one-off \$750 Economic Support Payment and the fortnightly Coronavirus Supplement once you start receiving your Centrelink payment.

People who are receiving an eligible Centrelink payment or concession card on 10 July 2020 will receive a second Economic Support Payment of \$750 – but only if they do not receive the Coronavirus Supplement with their payment. Disability Support Pension and Carer Payment recipients will be entitled to the second payment.

What is Crisis Payment? Who can get it?



You may be eligible for 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 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.

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 (job seeker), 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 that turnover has 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

What if my claim is rejected or I have a problem getting my payment?



If your claim is rejected, you have the right to have the decision reviewed by an Authorised Review Officer, and then the right to appeal to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. Reviews and appeals are often successful. If you lodge the appeal within **13 weeks** of the decision you can receive full back payment if you are successful.

You can seek review of a decision by:

- Phoning or visiting Centrelink
- Completing a form called 'Review of Decision' and returning it to Centrelink. It is important to appeal within 13 weeks of receiving the original decision in writing to ensure back payment.

For more information read this factsheet: [Factsheet: Appealing a Centrelink Decision](#)

Legal help

Although it's not necessary, it's a good idea to get legal advice before appealing.

[Find specialist legal help in your area](#)

For all general and media inquiries contact eo@ejaustralia.org.au or call [0448007201](tel:0448007201).

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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