

# What is Centrelink?

## Dealing with Centrelink – An overview

Centrelink delivers income support and other payments to Australians. It is part of Services Australia - an Australian Government department delivering payments and services on behalf of a number of government programs including Medicare and Child Support as well as Centrelink.

There are different kinds of Centrelink payments you may be able to get. Common ones include:

- ◆ **Newstart** - if you don't have a job
- ◆ **Youth Allowance** - for students, apprentices and other young people
- ◆ **ABSTUDY** – for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- ◆ **Disability Support Pension** - for people living with a disability
- ◆ **Rent Assistance** - to help low income earners pay rent
- ◆ **Age Pension** – for older Australians over retirement age

You might also be able to get concessions through Centrelink that can help with public transport and medical expenses.

### Contacting Centrelink

When you first contact Centrelink about payments, they can advise if you are eligible for payments or other assistance.

To find out more about making a claim you can visit [centrelink.gov.au](https://www.centrelink.gov.au) or call them on **13 28 50** to avoid face to face contact. If this is not possible visit your local Centrelink office.

If you receive any Centrelink payment, you need to **tell Centrelink about any income and changes** in your circumstances so that you can be paid the correct amount. If you are overpaid benefits, you will probably have to pay money back. A penalty may be imposed, if incorrect information has deliberately been given to Centrelink.

### Tips for dealing with Centrelink

The following list will assist you in satisfying Centrelink's various requirements, ensuring you remain compliant, patient and hopefully with a payment.

1. Diarise all dealings with Centrelink and keep it up to date.
2. Always make the first approach by phone. That's how Centrelink likes it because it can log your call through its call centre and commence its own record of dealings with you. Also, the date of that first call will generally be logged as the official application date, meaning the wait period for benefits starts from that first phone call. Make sure you get a receipt number from the call centre operator.
3. Ensure you have valid proof of identity. Among other things you'll need a tax file number, a passport or driver's license and an ATM card.
4. Never lie or deliberately not tell them something. Dishonestly supplying information regarding your circumstances, your relationship, your income or employment status can result in an overpayment. You'll be issued with a debt repayment demand and may be prosecuted for fraud.
5. Ask if you can have a one main contact staff member. Get their direct telephone number and email address (although Centrelink prefers it when you contact call centres).