



WELFARE RIGHTS & ADVOCACY SERVICE

Age Pension

This factsheet explains who can receive Age Pension and answers some common questions about this payment. Age Pension is a Centrelink payment for people who have reached Age Pension age.

What age can I receive Age Pension?

This depends on what year you were born. If you were born before 1 July 1952 it also depends on whether you're male or female. Men born before 1 July 1952 are eligible at 65. Women born before 30 June 1947 have now reached the qualifying age. Women born **between 1 July 1947 and 1 July 1952** are eligible for Age Pension according to the table below:

Women born between:	become eligible when they turn:
1 July 1947 and 31 December 1948	64 ½
1 January 1949 and 30 June 1952	65

Men and women **born on or after 1 July 1952** are eligible for Age Pension according to the table below:

Men and women born between:	become eligible when they turn:
1 July 1952 and 31 December 1953	65 ½
1 January 1954 and 30 June 1955	66
1 July 1955 and 31 December 1956	66 ½
1 January 1957 and after	67

How long must I have lived in Australia?

To qualify for Age Pension you must have been an **Australian resident** for a total of **10 years**, at least five of these in one continuous period. You must also be an **Australian resident** and **in Australia** on the day your claim is lodged, unless you are claiming under an International Social Security Agreement.

If you have spent a significant amount of time in another country, or have significant ties to another country before you claim, Centrelink may make the decision that you are no longer residing in Australia and are therefore not an Australian resident. In deciding whether you are residing in Australia, Centrelink must look at your accommodation in Australia, your established links with Australia, for example assets such as property, bank accounts and family ties and how often and for how long you travel outside Australia. They must also consider whether you intend to remain permanently in Australia.

What if I want to live overseas?

Once Age Pension is granted, it can be paid overseas **indefinitely for any absence** (including living overseas permanently), subject to rules about **proportional portability** and the **restriction for former residents**.

Proportional portability means that if you have spent less than 420 months (35 years) in Australia between age 16 and Age Pension age, you can only receive a proportion of your normal amount of payment overseas.

If a former resident who has been living overseas, returns to Australia and again becomes an Australian

resident and then claims Age Pension, they need to remain in Australia for at least two years before they can leave and be paid overseas.

Should I stay on Disability Support Pension or Carer Payment once I reach Age Pension age?

The rate of payment, income and asset tests and concession card provided for Age Pension are the same as for Disability Support Pension or Carer Payment.

Age Pension is generally the better payment for a person of Age Pension age because:

- there are no reviews about medical eligibility (for Disability Support Pension) or about the amount of care provided (Carer Payment);
- unlike with Carer Payment, there is no care receiver income and asset test for the person receiving care where the carer is receiving Age Pension;
- if you are a carer you may also be entitled to Carer Allowance whether you are on Age Pension or Carer Payment;
- there is no limit on the number of hours a week you can work, volunteer or study on Age Pension;
- if you are intending to go overseas portability provisions for Age Pension outside Australia may be more generous than those for Disability Support Pension.

However you may be better off on either Disability Support Pension or Carer Payment if:

- you are studying, as you may be able to get Pensioner Education Supplement or Education Entry Payment;
- you currently get the higher rate of Mobility Allowance, as this cannot be paid to Age Pensioners;
- you are single and sharing privately rented accommodation, as you may be eligible for a higher maximum rate of Rent Assistance than if you receive Age Pension and share accommodation;
- you have a partner who currently receives Wife Pension, as she will lose access to Pensioner Education Supplement if you transfer to Age Pension;
- you are caring for someone other than your partner, who is not receiving social security payments and that person dies, as you may be entitled to a bereavement payment;
- you receive Carer Payment as, in addition to the Pension Supplement, you will also receive a Carer Supplement.

If you're not sure whether to transfer to Age Pension from your current payment, speak to a Centrelink officer about it. Once you transfer, you generally can't change back.

What if I get a Service Pension from the Department of Veterans' Affairs?

You can't receive both Age Pension from Centrelink and a Service Pension from the Department of Veterans' Affairs at the same time. There are significant advantages in claiming a Service Pension rather than Age Pension. See the Department of Veterans' Affairs website at: <http://www.dva.gov.au/>

What if I can get a pension from another country?

If you may be entitled to a pension from a foreign country, Centrelink will require you to make a claim. Centrelink **is not automatically informed** about any pension money you receive from a foreign country, and it is very important to tell Centrelink about any money you receive. If you don't, you could get a debt, or even be prosecuted.

How do my assets and income affect my Age Pension payments?

The rate of your Age Pension payments is calculated under both an income and an asset test. The test that results in the lower rate is the test that applies. If your income or assets exceed the limits set by Centrelink you will not receive Age Pension. You can check with Centrelink about the current limits, which are different depending on whether you are single or a member of a couple, and whether you own your own home or not. See Centrelink's "A Guide to Australian Government Payments" booklet, which is available online at www.humanservices.gov.au or ask for a copy from your local Centrelink office.

What if I want to sell or give away my home or use the capital in my home?

Centrelink does not treat your home as an asset if it is your 'principal place of residence'. However if you sell your home to buy a new home, transfer the title in your home to a family member, or borrow money against your home and give the money away to family members, this can have negative consequences on your Age Pension payments. You may get a reduced rate of payment or be prevented from receiving any payments.

Before you undertake any restructure of your financial resources you should get advice about the potential impact on your Age Pension. Contact Centrelink's **Financial Information Service** on 13 23 00 for advice.

If you have already transferred or given away assets without realising the implication for your pension, you may need help in applying to have the value of an asset exempted under the hardship rules. If a debt is raised, you may need help applying to have the debt waived because of your special circumstances. In these situations, contact a Welfare Rights Centre/Advocate for advice (see contact details at www.welfarerights.org.au)

What about concession cards and other benefits?

You will automatically receive a Pensioner Concession Card and the Pension Supplement if you qualify for Age Pension. If you rent privately and receive Age Pension you may be entitled to Rent Assistance.

People of age pension who do not qualify for Age Pension based on their assets or income levels, and who do not receive a Department of Veterans' Affairs Service Pension, can apply for the Commonwealth Seniors Health Card which has no assets test, but is income tested. Holders of the **Commonwealth Seniors Health Card** automatically qualify for the Seniors Supplement.

Appeal rights

If you think a Centrelink decision is wrong you have the right to ask for a review. Appealing is easy and free. Simply tell Centrelink that you are not happy with its decision and that you would like to appeal to an Authorised Review Officer (ARO).

You can appeal to an ARO at any time. However, to receive back pay from the date you were affected by the original decision, you must ask for a review within 13 weeks of receiving written notice of the original decision. If you appeal more than 13 weeks after receiving the decision and you are successful, you will only receive back pay from the date you appealed. For more information on appealing see the factsheet "Appeals – how to appeal against a Centrelink decision".

Interpreters

If you think you need an interpreter, or if you feel more confident with an interpreter, you should use one of the three **free** available interpreter services.

- Most Centrelink offices have interpreters available at regular times each week. Your local Centrelink office can tell you about their available languages and times.
- You can telephone the Centrelink Multilingual Call Centre on 131 202 and speak to a bilingual Centrelink officer.
- You can also call the **free** Telephone Interpreter Service (TIS) on 131 450 and ask for an interpreter.

Please note: This information contains general information only and is accurate at May 2015. It does not constitute legal advice. If you need legal advice about social security entitlements, please contact your local Welfare Rights Centre/Advocate. Welfare Rights Centres are community legal centres, which specialise in social security law, administration and policy. They are entirely independent of Centrelink. All assistance is free. Contact Welfare Rights & Advocacy Service on (08) 93281751 or by email at welfare@wraswa.org.au