

# Weekly Payment of income support to Centrelink's vulnerable customers

Weekly Payment of income support to Centrelink's most vulnerable customers

## Background

Changes to the social security law have been passed by Parliament in response to the Australian Government's White Paper - *The Road Home: a National Approach to Reducing Homelessness*. As part of the strategy for addressing homelessness, weekly payments of social security benefits can now be made for the most vulnerable recipients, including those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Receiving income support benefits on a weekly basis is voluntary. Centrelink will work with vulnerable people to assess their needs and offer weekly payments where this is the best option for the customer.

## Questions and Answers

### 1. What are weekly payments?

Vulnerable people will now be able to receive their Centrelink income support weekly instead of fortnightly. While the payment amount will stay the same, weekly payments will assist the most vulnerable customers to budget more easily. A weekly payment gives people an opportunity to stabilise and improve their circumstances. The aim is to prevent people becoming homeless as a result of having difficulty managing their money to last to the end of the fortnight. Receiving their income support payments weekly will be a great assistance to better manage their funds.

Weekly payments will be offered in conjunction with other services and referrals as appropriate (e.g. services such as housing authorities, drug rehabilitation or domestic violence counselling).

### 2. When will weekly payments commence?

Weekly payments are available now.

### 3. How can I get weekly payments?

Centrelink Social Workers can provide access to weekly payments if this is seen as the most beneficial approach to assist a customer who has difficulty making their money last to the end of the fortnight.

### 4. What are the eligibility criteria for receiving weekly payments?

Centrelink will take into account all of the circumstances of the individual when determining eligibility for weekly payments. Eligible recipients who have difficulty managing their finances to the end of a fortnight may include those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, with mental health issues, or gambling and/or substance addictions. Some victims of domestic violence may also be offered weekly payments.

### 5. What if my Centrelink payments are being income managed?

Income managed customers are unlikely to need weekly payments.

### 6. Will I still be able to receive an urgent payment?

No. Customers receiving weekly payments are ineligible for urgent payments.

### 7. What income support payment types will be eligible for weekly payments?

Weekly payments are available for the following payment types:

- Age Pension
- Disability Support Pension
- Wife Pension
- Widow B Pension

- Carer Payment
- Special Benefit
- Bereavement Allowance
- Newstart Allowance
- Youth Allowance
- AUSTUDY payment
- Partner Allowance
- Sickness Allowance
- Widow Allowance
- Parenting Payment (Single)
- Parenting Payment (Partnered)
- ABSTUDY.

**8. How will weekly payment effect my income support payment?**

Recipients will retain their fortnightly instalment periods. An instalment period is the period during which a person's income and assets are taken into account and applied to the rate of social security payment for which the recipient qualifies.

Weekly payments are made by retaining the 14 day instalment period, whilst simply dividing the basic entitlement into 2 equal parts. The first payment is generally made on day 8 (i.e. in arrears and based on their assessment from the previous fortnight) and the balance paid generally on day 15 (which is day 1 of the following 14 day entitlement period). Reporting periods are retained fortnightly and any adjustments are made in the second basic entitlement payment.

Centrelink Customer Service Adviser's will be able to provide further information on how weekly payments will affect an individual's circumstances.

**9. How long can I be receiving weekly payment?**

Centrelink will conduct regular reviews of weekly payments to ensure that weekly payments are assisting the recipients to better manage their funds. The frequency of the review will depend on the person's circumstances. Twelve months will be the maximum period for a person to receive weekly payments without a review.

**10. How will my regular deductions work?**

Your regular deductions such as the Rent Deduction Scheme, Debt Withholdings and Child Support Agency deductions will be split over two weeks.

**11. Can I still receive Rent Assistance if I am on weekly payments?**

Yes. Your Rent Assistance is considered part of the basic entitlement and therefore will be split across both weekly payments.

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