

Carer Payment and Carer Allowance

The Carer Payment and Carer Allowance are payments for people who provide care to:

- An older person who is frail and aged
- A person living with a severe disability
- A person living with an illness

This factsheet covers:

- Carer Payment
- Carer Allowance
- Assessment of care
- Breaks from caring
- Appealing a rejection or cancellation

Claims for Carer Payment and Carer Allowance can now be made online. For more information about claiming online please see:

[How to claim Carer Payment](https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/how-to-claim-carer-payment)

(<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/how-to-claim-carer-payment>)

[How to claim Carer Allowance](https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/how-to-claim-carer-allowance)

(<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/how-to-claim-carer-allowance>)

CARER PAYMENT

Carer Payment is an income support payment that Centrelink pays to a person who is unable to support themselves through substantial paid employment due to providing full-time daily care for either someone who is:

- living with a severe disability/disabilities or medical condition/s, or
- an older person who requires additional care.

In order to qualify for this payment, the person must:

- provide constant care in the home of the Care Receiver (see the section on constant care below), and
- be caring for a person who has the required point score on the relevant disability assessment tool (see the section on assessment of care below), and
- be an Australian resident and be caring for a person who is an Australian resident (note there are waiting periods for a person recently arrived in Australia), and
- living in Australia, and
- be under the pension income and assets test limits, and
- show that care is required permanently or for a minimum of 6 months, unless the condition is terminal.

Constant care

To qualify for Carer Payment for a child or an adult you must personally provide constant care.

The personal care must be provided on a daily basis for a 'significant period' each day, generally equivalent to a working day. If you work, study or train for more than 100 hours over a 4-week period Centrelink does not consider you to be providing constant care. You may need to use respite time if this happens (see below).

If you are not sure whether you meet this requirement you can lodge a claim and check whether you are eligible for the payment. Contact your closest member centre if you need advice on this. You can find your closest member centre at: <http://ejaustralia.org.au/legal-help-centrelink/>

Care can include any supervision you provide to the person. For example, you may provide care for a person who may be at risk of falling if they are left alone, or are unable to independently take their medicine. These circumstances will be an important factor to include in your claim as they demonstrate the level of care you provide.

To assist with your claim, it is important to provide a report from the person's treating doctor. The report should explain the reasons why care is necessary and how much time it takes you to provide this level of care.

You must tell Centrelink if you are working, even if you only work a few hours.

If you are currently receiving an income support payment, you have a legal obligation to notify Centrelink of your present circumstances, or any change in your circumstances, including the income you currently receive.

CARER ALLOWANCE

Carer Allowance is a supplementary payment for carers. Carer Allowance can be paid in addition to other payments, such as Newstart Allowance. The Carer Allowance is not asset tested.

In order to qualify for this payment, the person must:

- be caring for a person who has the required points score on the relevant disability assessment tool, and
- provide care and attention to the person on a daily basis, and
- be caring for a person who is an Australian resident, and
- be under the income limit, and
- show that care is requirement permanently or for a minimum of 12 months, unless the condition is terminal.

Assessment of care

There are different requirements for the assessment of care and eligibility depending on whether you care for a child (or children), or an adult, and whether you live with the person who requires care.

When you claim Carer Payment or Carer Allowance for an adult, you will need to submit two forms to Centrelink, which must be completed by:

- you, the person providing the care, and
- the treating health professional of the person receiving care.

These forms can be found at:

[Additional forms to complete for Carer Payment](https://www.servicessaustralia.gov.au/other-forms-you-may-need-to-complete-carer-payment)

(<https://www.servicessaustralia.gov.au/other-forms-you-may-need-to-complete-carer-payment>)

[Additional forms to complete for Carer Allowance](https://www.servicessaustralia.gov.au/other-forms-you-may-need-to-complete-carer-allowance)

(<https://www.servicessaustralia.gov.au/other-forms-you-may-need-to-complete-carer-allowance>)

Each answer to the questions on the forms is awarded a number of points according to Centrelink's assessment tool to determine if the person providing care qualifies for Carer Payment or Carer Allowance.

If the person receiving care is under the age of 16, they will have to score high enough on the Disability Care Load Assessment (Child) Determination 2010 (DCLA).

If the person receiving care is over the age of 16, they will have to score high enough on the Adult Disability Assessment Determination 1999 (ADAT).

If the person receiving care is in the terminal phase of a terminal illness and has evidence from a medical practitioner that they are not expected to live for more than 3 months, they will automatically be given the minimum qualifying score for both Carer Payment and Carer Allowance. Importantly, the other requirements of the relevant payment must still be met.

You must answer all questions carefully and accurately. The questions are about what daily activities the person receiving care can do. You should answer the questions by taking into account any aids or medication the person receiving care uses.

BREAKS FROM CARING ('RESPITE')

If you receive Carer Payment or Carer Allowance, you can take breaks from caring for up to 63 days in any calendar year and you will still continue to receive your payment.

These 63 days are called 'respite'. You will need to notify Centrelink before you take respite.

The 63-day period may be extended if you have 'special reasons'. This is to be determined at Centrelink's discretion. If you think this applies to you, you can ask Centrelink for an extension.

In addition to the 63 days of respite you may still qualify for Carer Payment if the person being cared for is hospitalised and meets the hospitalisation requirements. To satisfy the hospitalisation requirements you must provide regular additional care while the person is in hospital.

APPEALING A REJECTION OR CANCELLATION

If your claim for Carer Payment or Carer Allowance is rejected, you have a right to appeal this decision to an Authorised Review Officer.

You should appeal within 13 weeks of receiving the decision to ensure you receive full back pay from the date of claim if your appeal is successful.

You can lodge the appeal by contacting Centrelink and letting them know you disagree with the decision to reject your claim for payment and you would like the Authorised Review Officer to review the decision.

If the claim was rejected due to insufficient points on the DCLA or ADAT assessment, there will be no discretion to exempt you from meeting this requirement.

This means the decision can only be changed if a new questionnaire is completed by you and the treating doctor.

This often means submitting a new claim.

You can ask Centrelink for a new form, take it to the treating doctor and ask them to review their answers. In some cases, the treating doctor may agree that one or more of their answers was incorrect and change them. However, if they do this, they should write a letter explaining why they have changed their answer – for example, if they completed the form quickly and made a mistake.

See our factsheet on 'Appealing to Centrelink' for more information on this process.

Where can I get help?

You can get free legal advice from your closest member centre, which can be found at <http://ejaustralia.org.au/legal-help-centrelink/>

This factsheet was informed by previously published factsheets from Welfare Rights Centre Sydney and Basic Rights Queensland.

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