

This factsheet provides information about how COVID-19 might affect your client's Centrelink payments. It is general information only. If your client needs more specific advice, or they don't receive the payment they think they are eligible for, please contact us at refugeeservice@legalaid.nsw.gov.au or call us on 8713 6725.

What are the new payments?

There are 2 new payments your client might be eligible for:

1. Coronavirus Supplement
2. Economic Support Payment

What is the Coronavirus Supplement?

Eligible people will get an extra \$550 a fortnight paid into their bank account for six months from 27 April 2020. Your client does not need to do anything. Centrelink will pay the money automatically.

Who is eligible for the Coronavirus Supplement?

If people are getting any of the following income support payments, they will be eligible:

- JobSeeker Payment, this is the new name for Newstart and also includes Sickness Benefit, Wife Pension, Bereavement Allowance, Sickness Allowance, Widow Allowance, Partner Allowance
- Youth Allowance
- AUSTUDY
- Parenting Payment - partnered or single
- Special Benefit

What is the Economic Support Payment?

Eligible people will get two Economic Support Payments (ESP) of \$750 each. The first will be paid sometime between 31 March 2020 and 17 April 2020. The second payment will be processed from 13 July onwards. Not everyone will get both payments; some people will only get the first but not the second payment.

Who is eligible for the Economic Support Payment?

To get the first payment, a person must have been living in Australia and getting a payment or holding a concession card at 12 March 2020.

To get the second payment, a person must have been living in Australia and getting a payment or holding a concession card at 10 July 2020.

People can get both of these payments if they were living in Australia and getting a payment or holding a concession card between 12 March and 10 July 2020. This will probably apply to most of your clients.

People will only get the first \$750, and not the second, if they are getting the Coronavirus Supplement. That means people getting JobSeeker, Parenting Payment, AUSTUDY, Special Benefit and Youth Allowance will only get the first Economic Support Payment, not the second.

People will get the first Economic Support Payment if they are receiving:

- Age Pension
- Disability Support Pension
- Carer Payment
- Carer Allowance
- Bereavement Allowance
- Newstart Allowance
- Partner Allowance
- Sickness Allowance

- Widow Allowance
- Family Tax Benefit A
- Family Tax Benefit B
- JobSeeker Payment
- Parenting Payment
- AUSTUDY
- Special Benefit
- Youth Allowance
- Pensioner Concession Card
- Commonwealth Seniors Health Card

All these people listed above will get the first and the second Economic Support Payment except those who receive:

- JobSeeker Payment
- Parenting Payment
- AUSTUDY
- Special benefit
- Youth Allowance

What else do I need to know to help my clients?

My client has lost their job because of COVID-19, or they are subject to a waiting period.

For people who don't currently get a Centrelink payment the rules have changed. It is now easier to get a payment, especially if they have lost their job because of COVID-19 or they are subject to a waiting period.

Does my client need to look for work or attend AMEP class to get the JobSeeker payment?

Changes have been made to the mutual obligations requirements for people getting JobSeeker Payment, Youth Allowance, Parenting Payment and Special benefit. If you need more information about the changes, please contact us.

What if my client has debts with Centrelink?

Centrelink has stopped imposing debts and recovering debts for people getting some social security payments including Family Tax Benefit and Child Care Subsidy. If a person is currently repaying a Centrelink debt you should contact the Centrelink Debt Line on 1800 076 072 and request a pause or stop on repayments.

Does a Centrelink application affect visa applications or citizenship?

There are no consequences for visas or citizenship if people who are not on Centrelink now apply for it. Every permanent resident has the right to income support. There is no impact on either the persons visa status or their ability to sponsor family from overseas for humanitarian visa.

Refugees on temporary protection visas?

Refugees on a Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) or a Safe Haven Enterprise Visa (SHEV) are eligible for Special Benefit, the Coronavirus Supplement and the first Economic Support Payment. However, if a person on a SHEV receives Special Benefit for more than 30 months, this may affect their eligibility for another permanent visa. Students over 18 on a SHEV or TPV studying full time are not eligible for these supports.

COVID-19: Changes to Centrelink for refugees

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People seeking asylum

People seeking asylum, including those on a Bridging Visa, are not eligible for any Centrelink payments. They might be eligible for support through the Status Resolution Support Service, but this is not a social security benefit, so they won't get the Coronavirus Supplement or the Economic Support Payment.

Payment or Allowance	Coronavirus Supplement	Economic Support Payment No 1	Economic Support Payment No 2
JobSeeker Payment	Yes	Yes	No
AUSTUDY	Yes	Yes	No
Special benefit	Yes	Yes	No
Parenting Payment – single or partner	Yes	Yes	No
Youth Allowance	Yes	Yes	No
Age Pension	No	Yes	Yes
Disability Support Pension	No	Yes	Yes
Carer Payment	No	Yes	Yes
Carer Allowance	No	Yes	Yes
Bereavement Allowance	No	Yes	Yes
Newstart Allowance	No	Yes	Yes
Partner Allowance	No	Yes	Yes
Sickness Allowance	No	Yes	Yes
Widow Allowance	No	Yes	Yes
Family Tax Benefit A	No	Yes	Yes
Family Tax Benefit B	No	Yes	Yes
Pensioner Concession Card	No	Yes	Yes
Commonwealth Seniors Health Card	No	Yes	Yes

How can clients get help?

For free legal help you can call 1300 888 529 or [call your local Legal Aid NSW office](#).

If you need an interpreter, call the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450 and ask for LawAccess NSW. If you find it hard to hear or speak, call the National Relay Service on 133 677 and ask for LawAccess NSW or visit www.relayservice.gov.au.

This factsheet is intended as a general guide to the law. Do not rely on this information as legal advice. We recommend you talk to a lawyer about your situation. This information is correct at the time of writing, however, it may change.

For advice send us an email to refugeeservice@legalaid.nsw.gov.au

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