

## Centrelink Payments and Domestic Violence

Your Rights and Responsibilities

### What's in this Factsheet

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To contact Centrelink, go to your local Centrelink office, or call 131794 to make an appointment.

### Can I get a Crisis Payment?

- You can apply for a Crisis Payment if you have experienced domestic violence and you have left home, or your partner has left or been removed from your home because of the violence.
- A Crisis Payment is a one-off payment, in addition to regular Centrelink payments.
- To be eligible for a Crisis Payment you must be eligible for ongoing Centrelink payments (either as an existing, or new, customer). The amount of the Crisis Payment is half of your normal fortnightly payment.
- You will only get a Crisis Payment if you have little or no savings.
- You need to contact Centrelink within seven days from the day that:
  - you decided not to go home; or
  - you decided not to have your partner back into your home.
- To claim, call Centrelink on 131794.

### Ongoing Centrelink payments - Getting what you are entitled to

- If you are not already on Centrelink payments:
  - you should contact Centrelink as soon as possible to see if you are eligible for a new, or different payment;
  - even if you are working, you may be entitled to some payment;
  - you can generally only be paid from the day you make contact with Centrelink.
- If you are on Centrelink payments, you need to tell Centrelink every time your relationship changes.
  - If you had a partner and now you are single, you need to tell Centrelink.
  - Single people generally get a higher rate of payment.
  - On-again-off-again relationships and relationships involving domestic violence can all count as "relationships" for Centrelink depending on your circumstances.
  - If you're not sure how your current situation would be assessed, call the Welfare Rights Centre for free advice.
  - If you do not tell Centrelink every time your relationship stops and starts could end up with a large debt and be taken to court.

- If you are caring for children, you need to:
  - tell the Family Assistance Office (for Family Tax Benefit); and
  - claim child support with the Child Support Agency, if it is safe to do so.
- If you are on an activity tested payment you can ask for an exemption from the activity test if you have experienced domestic violence.

### What can I do if Centrelink won't help me?

- If Centrelink doesn't believe you, or says you are not entitled to a payment, you have the right to appeal.
- Appeals can be made by calling Centrelink. You need to do this within 13 weeks, if possible, so that you can get back-pay if you're successful.
- If your payments are suspended, you should appeal straight away and should ask for payment pending review so that you keep receiving your payments while the appeal is under way.
- You should get advice about appealing.

### Tips for dealing with Centrelink

- For a crisis payment or immediate assistance, go into your local Centrelink office.
- On the telephone, or by appointment, we also suggest you speak with:
  - a Centrelink Social Worker who understands domestic violence and can help with your claim (call 131794); or
  - an Indigenous Officer if you are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (call 136380).
- When calling Centrelink, or making an appointment, tell Centrelink if you want a Crisis Payment, ongoing payments, and/or you need to update your details.
- To speak to Centrelink in another language call 131202, or call the Telephone Interpreter Service (TIS) on 131450.
- If you have any documents from the police or court about the domestic violence, tell the Centrelink officer you are dealing with, and take the documents to any appointment.

### My ex said they'd dob me in to Centrelink

- You have an obligation to tell Centrelink the truth about your current situation so that your payments are calculated correctly.
- If Centrelink contacts you about past payments, or suspends your current payment, you should get advice from your local Legal Aid office or the Welfare Rights Centre.

### Where can I get more help or advice?

- If you are struggling financially, it's worth contacting charities or emergency relief providers in your area.
- The Welfare Rights Centre gives advice over the phone about Centrelink problems and appeals: (02) 9211 5300 or 1800 226 028 (outside Sydney metropolitan area).
- Legal Aid provides criminal law advice on Social Security prosecutions. To find your closest criminal solicitor who can give you advice about this, call Law Access 1300 888 529.