

Centrelink Payments and Domestic Violence

Your Rights and Responsibilities

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To contact Centrelink, go to your local Centrelink office, or call 13 61 50 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 13 61 50.

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 within 14 days.
 - 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 do not tell Centrelink every time your relationship stops and starts you could end up with a large debt and be taken to court.
 - If you're not sure how your current situation would be assessed, call the Welfare Rights Centre for free advice.
- If you are caring for children, you need to:
 - Update Centrelink of any changes in care arrangements and



- Claim child support with the Child Support Agency, if it is safe to do so. If you are concerned that claiming child support might put you at risk, ask to speak to a Centrelink social worker as you may be eligible for an exemption from claiming child support.
- 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?

- You have the right to appeal any unfavourable decision Centrelink makes about your payments or entitlements.
- If you do not agree with a decision Centrelink has made, request a review of the decision either over the phone or at your local office. In most cases you have 13 weeks from the date of the decision to request a review. 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 (call 13 61 50); or
 - an Indigenous Officer if you are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (call 1800 136 380).
- To speak to Centrelink in another language call 13 12 02, or call the Telephone Interpreter Service (TIS) on 13 14 50.
- 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 your ex partner has made a false 'tip off' about you or is threatening to, contact Centrelink immediately to discuss your concerns.
- 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: 1800 358 511 (free call outside Brisbane).
- Legal Aid provides criminal law advice on Social Security prosecutions. To find your closest criminal solicitor who can give you advice about this, call Legal Aid 1300 65 11 88.



Please note: This factsheet contains general information only. It does not constitute legal advice. If you need legal advice, please contact a solicitor. **Acknowledgement:** This resource was adapted by the Women's Legal Service in QLD. Originally developed by the National Association of Community Legal Centres, Community Legal Centres NSW and a number of community legal centres with the assistance of an Australian Human Rights Framework – Education Grant from the Australian Government. The flower artwork has been kindly provided by Sista Girl Yarnz Group in Campbelltown, New South Wales; a group of Aboriginal women who seek to support and empower women affected by domestic or family violence. **Last updated:** June 2014.



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