

Disability Support Pension (DSP) Information Pack

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About

The DSP is a Centrelink payment designed for people who have a **continuing inability** to work due to a disability or health issues. Your claim for the DSP will need to be supported by **medical evidence** from your treating medical professionals. This medical evidence needs to be specific and can be quite confusing. This information pack is designed to make this process as clear and simple as possible, for both you, and your treating doctors.

DSP Eligibility Requirements

In order to be eligible for the DSP, you must be between 16 and 65 years of age. You must also be either an Australian citizen or have been a permanent resident in Australia for at least 10 years. You must also meet the Income and Assets test. There are also certain criteria that each of your **health conditions** must meet. Each of these criteria must be covered in your doctor's **report** or **letter**, and the report from your doctor should be as recent as possible. These criteria are:

- A. Fully Diagnosed** – Each of your conditions must be **diagnosed** by a doctor or specialist, and this must be stated in your doctor's letter/report.
- B. Fully Treated** – Each of your conditions must be **fully treated**. That is, you must be receiving, or have received all 'reasonable'* treatment options that have been suggested by your doctor. This can be in the form of, for example, medication, or treatment such as psychology sessions or physiotherapy.

***What is 'reasonable' treatment?** Centrelink will consider your conditions as fully treated, even if there are treatment options available that you haven't tried. Factors to determine if treatment is reasonable include:

- I. **Too expensive** – the cost of the treatment is too expensive for a reasonable person to afford.
- II. **Too Risky** – If the treatment carries a risk to your health or wellbeing.
- III. **Benefit** - The treatment must be expected to “substantially benefit” your condition.
- IV. **Too Far from your home** - The treatment must be available at a “reasonable distance” from your home.

C. Fully Stabilised – Each of your conditions must be **fully stable**. That is, either you have tried all reasonable treatments and any further treatment is **not** going to help your conditions improve to the point where you will be able to work in the next two years; OR; you haven’t tried all treatments available, but this is because one of the above points (I - IV) applies.

Work Capacity - If you have medical evidence that clearly states all of the above points, it is then helpful if your doctor can state how many hours they think you can work **each week**.

In order to be eligible, your doctor must think that your health conditions **prevent you from working 15 hours per week**. For example, if they think that you may be able to work for 7 hours per week, you will still be eligible. But if they think you can work for 15 or more hours per week, you **will not** be eligible for the DSP.

Impairment Tables: Centrelink have a ‘measure’ that they use for determining how much your health conditions affect your day-to-day life. These are called **‘Impairment Tables’**, and there are 15 of these, each relating to a different part of the body.

The doctor must look at the Table that relates to your health condition. For example, if you suffer from **back pain**, the doctor must look at **“Table 4 – Spinal Function”**. If you suffer from **Depression**, the doctor must look at **“Table 5 – Mental Health”**.

These tables allocate points, depending on how much your conditions affect you in your daily life. A copy of all the Tables can be found online at www.comlaw.gov.au/Series/F2011L02716. Or, you can **contact our office** on **(03) 52222 5499** and we can send you copies of the Tables that are relevant to you.

In order to be **immediately eligible** for the DSP, your doctor must give you a rating of at least **20 points, in one single table**. This means that your condition is rated as '**severe**'. If you have a few different medical conditions, and your doctor gives you ratings that **add up to 20 points** in a few different tables, you may also be eligible, but you also need to pass an **extra hurdle**. That is, you must have completed a **Program of Support** with a Disability Employment Service, such as Matchworks. This is explained in more detail below.

Program of Support (POS)

A program of support is designed to help get you ready for work or keep working, by training you or helping you to look for a job. If your doctor assesses you as having a **total of 20 points or more over several tables**, but none of your conditions are regarded as '**severe**', you must show that you have '**actively**' participated in a 'Program of Support' in order to qualify for the DSP. You will need to participate in the POS, for a total of **18 months**, within the last **3 years**. It is important to note that periods that you have been exempt from participating in the program due to a **medical exemption (certificate)** do NOT count towards the 18 month period.

In general, there are **2 ways** that you can meet the POS requirements. One of these is if you **finish the 18 month program**, and your Disability Employment Service thinks that you are **still not able** to get work or keep a

job **for at least 15 hours** per week. The other way is if your Disability Employment Service **cancels your program** because of your disability or health conditions.

Generally, Centrelink will communicate with your Disability Employment Service provider directly to find out this information, but it is also a good idea to ask your provider to complete a Centrelink form, called '**Participation in a Program of Support**' that states all of the details about your participation in the POS.

If you do not meet the requirements

These are the basic requirements you must meet to be eligible for the DSP. Remember that if you do not meet these requirements, there **may be other** Centrelink payments you are entitled to, and you should **contact your local Centrelink office** or phone the Disability, Sickness and Carers line on **132 717**. Also, if your disability or health conditions worsen, and you have **new medical evidence** that shows this, you can always reapply.

Getting the correct evidence

Enclosed in this pack are some template letters which you can take with you to your doctor, specialist, or mental health clinician. **Please note** that for mental health conditions, your evidence must be from either a **psychiatrist** or a **clinical psychologist**. Evidence from a counselling or registered psychologist, for example, will not be taken into account by Centrelink.

You should take the template letters with you when you visit your doctor or psychiatrist/clinical psychologist. This will give them a clear idea of what they must include in their report. It is often a good idea to **book a double appointment if possible**, to allow the doctor time to prepare the letter during your appointment.

Included in this pack is also a shortened version of the template letters that allows your doctor to 'fill in the blanks' if they are time limited and cannot prepare a full letter of support for you. Also included is a resource booklet from the Disability Resource Centre (DRC) called 'DSP & Me' which is in an 'easy-to-understand English version.

Filling out the DSP application

Once you have gathered all of the required medical evidence, you can fill out the DSP application form which is available online or at your local Centrelink office. If you need help filling out this form, you can ask a friend or family member, your local community legal service, or an advocate or support person. Once completed you can submit the application form and your medical evidence to your local Centrelink office, or online through the MyGov app.



Claims for the DSP can then take several months, so it is then a matter of waiting until you receive news of the outcome.

Disability Support Pension Checklist

Before you submit your DSP application, it is a good idea to make sure you have considered all of the following:

- That you are aged between 16 and 65 years of age.
- That you are an Australian Citizen or have been a permanent resident in Australia for at least 10 years.
- That you meet Centrelink's Income and Assets Test (If you currently receive a Centrelink payment, you may not need to provide this information to Centrelink again).
- You have medical evidence for each of your disabilities or health conditions that states that the condition is fully diagnosed, fully treated, and stabilised (see Section: DSP Eligibility Requirements AND template letters).
- If you do not have any disabilities or health conditions that your doctor has rated as 'severe', that you have also completed or been exempt from a Program of Support with a Disability Employment Service provider (see Part F, Section 1. DSP Eligibility Requirements).
- You have completed all relevant sections of Centrelink's Disability Support Pension application form.
- If you would like a support person to be able to make enquiries about your application on your behalf, that you have also completed Centrelink's "Authorising a Person or Organisation To Enquire Or Act On Your Behalf" form available [here](#).