

## 8. Centrelink and Benefits



Centrelink contributes to the social and economic outcomes set by the Australian government by delivering services to assist people to become self-sufficient and supporting those in need.

### What Centrelink can help you with?

Centrelink can help you find a job, arrange for recognition of your skills and qualifications, and to access certain courses.

Centrelink can also help you with Family Assistance payments to help with the cost of raising children.

### What Centrelink can not help you with?

As a newly arrived migrant, you are not immediately eligible for social security (unless you are a refugee or humanitarian entrant). You do not have access to the full range of government employment services. If you are a permanent resident, you may be eligible to access some services.

### Can I get the unemployment or sickness benefit in Australia?

You cannot receive the unemployment benefit and certain other social security payments without first becoming an Australian permanent resident. Even if you successfully apply to become a permanent resident, there is a two year stand down period before you can receive the benefit.

The table below provides contact details for Centrelink

Centrelink contact details	
For newly arrived migrants.	<b>See:</b> <a href="#">Have you recently moved to Australia to settle?</a>
Homepage	<b>See:</b> <a href="#">Welcome to Centrelink</a>
Information in other languages	<b>See:</b> <a href="#">Centrelink assistance - we speak your language</a>
How to contact Centrelink (phone and office details)	<b>See:</b> <a href="#">Centrelink - contact details</a>

### Changes which affect New Zealand citizens claiming payments in Australia:

#### What are the changes?

The Australian Government announced changes to the Social Security Act on 26 February 2001 which may affect whether New Zealand citizens can get payments from Centrelink. These changes mean New Zealand citizens arriving in Australia after 26 February 2001 may now have to meet the following criteria to get a payment from Centrelink:

- Become an Australian citizen; OR
- Get a permanent resident visa; AND

#### References:

Centrelink - <http://www.centrelink.gov.au/>

- Satisfy any other requirements including, for most payments, a waiting period (usually 2 years).

Generally, all New Zealand citizens are automatically granted a Special Category Visa (SCV) when they arrive in Australia. Previously, people who were granted SCVs used to qualify as an Australian resident and were able to claim and qualify for all Australian social security payments (as long as you met all other qualifications).

The new rules mean people with SCVs who are affected by the changes will no longer qualify as an Australian resident and will need to get a permanent resident visa or become an Australian citizen to qualify for payments (as well as satisfy any other requirements such as waiting periods). The need to get a permanent visa or Australian citizenship already applies to people who arrive in Australia from any other country.

New Zealand citizens can still travel to Australia to live and work indefinitely and have access to public education and health care.



### **Am I affected by the changes?**

*You will not be affected* by these changes if you are a New Zealand citizen and:

- Are currently getting a Centrelink payment
- Were in Australia on 26 February 2001 as a SCV holder
- Were in Australia for a total of 12 months between 26 February 1999 and 26 February 2001 (this does not have to be a continuous period)
- Have applied for and received a certificate from Centrelink confirming your residence status (applications closed in February 2004)

*Please Note:* You will still have to meet all other requirements, such as a waiting period, to get a payment.

### **What payments are not affected by the changes?**

No matter what date you arrive in Australia, you will still be able to claim these payments or cards:

- Family Tax Benefit
- Baby Bonus
- Maternity Immunisation Allowance
- Childcare Benefit
- Double Orphan Pension
- Health Care Card
- Commonwealth Seniors Health Card.

*Please Note:* You will have to meet all other requirements to receive these payments or cards. This includes waiting periods for concession cards for newly arrived migrants. You will also have access to some employment services such as job search support and self-help facilities and services.

From 1 July 2002, you may be able to claim Age Pension, Disability Support Pension (if you are severely disabled) and Carer Payment (for partners of Disability Support Pensioners) under the revised Agreement. If you are getting a payment under the previous (1995) New Zealand agreement, you will continue to do so provided you remain qualified.

### **References:**

Centrelink - <http://www.centrelink.gov.au/>

## Who can get Child Care Benefit?

You may be eligible for Child Care Benefit if:

- You use approved or registered child care, and
- you or your partner (if you have one) are living permanently in Australia, and
- You are either an Australian citizen, a New Zealand citizen, the holder of a permanent visa, the holder of certain temporary visas, an Australian Government sponsored student or in other special circumstances, and
- Your child is immunised or exempt from the immunisation requirements, and
- You are liable for child care fees for your child.

Guardians, including foster parents and grandparents, responsible for the day-to-day care of children/grandchildren may be eligible for Family Assistance and should contact the Family Assistance Office for more information.

**Approved child care** - is care provided by a service that has been approved by the Australian Government to pass Child Care Benefit on to families as a reduction in their child care fees. Most long day care, family day care, before and after school care, vacation care, some in-home care and occasional care services offer approved care.

All eligible families can get up to 24 hours of Child Care Benefit for approved care per child per week.

If you and your partner are working or undertaking work related activities (including training or studying) for at least 15 hours per week (or 30 hours per fortnight), or you and your partner are exempt from this requirement, you may also be eligible for up to 50 hours of Child Care Benefit per child per week.

**Registered care** - is care provided by nannies, grandparents, relatives or friends and, in some circumstances, private pre-schools, kindergartens, occasional care centres and outside school hours care centres that are registered with the Family Assistance Office.

Parents claiming Child Care Benefit for registered care must be participating in work or work related activities (including training or studying) at some time during the week that care is used.



### References:

Centrelink - <http://www.centrelink.gov.au/>