



Your relationship status

Your relationship status can affect what payments you can get and your payment rate.

Payments

We need to know if you are single or a member of a couple as this can affect:

- the type of payment you get
- your eligibility for a payment, and
- the amount you get.

Your income and assets may affect your payment. If you are a member of a couple, your partner's income and assets may also affect your payment.

Member of a couple

Under social security and family assistance law, you are considered a member of a couple if you and the person you have a relationship with are:

- married
- in a registered relationship, or
- in a de facto relationship.

You are not considered a member of a couple if you and the person are living separately and apart on a permanent or indefinite basis.

You may still be a member of a couple if you are not physically living with your partner. For example, your partner may travel away regularly for work.

Assessing your relationship

To determine if you are a member of a couple, we may need to assess your relationship. We will look at five factors:

- financial aspects of your relationship
- nature of your household
- social aspects of your relationship
- if you have a sexual relationship, and
- nature of your commitment to each other.

If you tell us you are a member of a couple, we do not usually assess your relationship against these factors. We may look at these factors if your circumstances change.

We can decide you are a member of a couple even if all of these factors are not part of your relationship.

Special provisions

If we decide you are a member of a couple but you believe this will result in unfair hardship, contact us on your regular payment line. We may consider you as single under special provisions in the *Social Security Act 1991*. We assess each case individually.



Relationship types

You may be married, in a registered or de facto relationship.

Marriage

Marriage is defined in the *Marriage Act 1961* as the union of two people to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life.

Registered relationship

This is a relationship registered under Australian state or territory law, including civil unions.

Registered relationships are recognised in:

- the Australian Capital Territory
- New South Wales
- Queensland
- Tasmania, and
- Victoria.

Australian state or territory law does not recognise relationships registered in other countries. However, you can still use this to show that you and your partner are in a de facto relationship.

De facto relationship

A de facto relationship is where you and your partner are in a relationship similar to a married couple but you are not married or in a registered relationship. There is no minimum time period for a relationship to be de facto.

Living separately and apart

We understand living arrangements are not the same for all couples.

For us to assess you as living separately and apart we need to confirm:

- you and your partner are living apart permanently or indefinitely, and
- there has been an estrangement or breakdown in your relationship.

Generally, there must be a physical separation as well as an emotional separation.

If we decide you are living separately and apart, your payment will be at the single payment rate. Only your income and assets will affect your payment eligibility and rate.

Relationship changes

You need to tell us when your circumstances change. This includes starting a new relationship or separating from your partner. If you do not tell us, we may pay you the wrong amount and you will have to repay the money. There may also be other penalties.

To tell us about a change in your relationship, you may need to complete a form. The way you tell us will depend on which payment or benefit you get.

When you start a relationship

If you only get family payments

Contact our families line in English on **136 150** when you start a relationship if you get either or both of these payments:

- Family Tax Benefit
- child care assistance.

You will need your partner's details, including all of the following:

- name and date of birth
- Tax File Number
- income estimate
- date when you both became partnered.

If you get any other payments

If you get any other payments when you start a relationship, complete and return a *Partner details* form in English.

When you separate

You can use the *Separation details* form in English to let us know you have separated from your partner. You do not need to use this form if:

- you told us you are separated as part of a new claim for another payment, or
- you get family payments only.

Contact our families line in English on **136 150** when you separate if you get a families payments and will not be claiming another payment. Families payments include:

- Family Tax Benefit
- child care assistance.

If you are separated and live in the same house as your ex-partner, you each must complete and return a *Relationship details – Separated under one roof* form in English.

If it will put your safety at risk, your ex-partner does not need to complete this form. Please let us know on your form if you have any safety concerns with asking your ex-partner to complete it.

If you are single and share a house

You may need to complete and return the *Relationship details* form in English if you are single and share housing. This includes sharing with anyone other than an immediate family member aged 16 years or older.

To download forms in English, go to humanservices.gov.au/forms.

Relationships and safety concerns

If you need to tell us about a change in your relationship and you are concerned about your safety, we may be able to help. We can support you if you are in, have left, or are preparing to leave a family and domestic violence situation.

For more information in English, go to humanservices.gov.au/domesticviolence.

Privacy

We take your privacy very seriously. Our staff are trained to make sure information about your relationship is protected from unauthorised access or misuse.

For more information in English, go to humanservices.gov.au/privacy.

Reviews and appeals

If you are not happy with a decision we made, you have the right to question it. You also have the right to ask for a review by an Authorised Review Officer.

If our decision to consider you a member of a couple has reduced or cancelled your payment, you can request to be paid at the single rate during the review.

For more information in English, go to humanservices.gov.au/reviewsandappeals.

For more information

- go to humanservices.gov.au/moc for more information in English
- go to humanservices.gov.au/yourlanguage where you can read, listen to or watch information in your language
- call **131 202** to speak with us in your language about Centrelink payments and services
- call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) on **131 450** to speak with us in your language about Medicare and Child Support payments and services
- visit a service centre.

Note: calls from your home phone to '13' numbers from anywhere in Australia are charged at a fixed rate. That rate may vary from the price of a local call and may also vary between telephone service providers. Calls to '1800' numbers from your home phone are free. Calls from public and mobile phones may be timed and charged at a higher rate.

Disclaimer

The information contained in this publication is intended only as a guide to payments and services. It is your responsibility to decide if you wish to apply for a payment and to make an application with regard to your particular circumstances.