



DSP & Me

Your guide to the Disability Support Pension



Easy English

DRC
advocacy

The information in this book may not tell you everything about the DSP.

We try to give you the right information.

We do not know that this information is correct when you read it.

We do not know it will be correct in the future.

June 2019

Who is this book for?

This book is for people who

- Think they need a DSP
- Like to read in Easy English.

Who made this book?



Disability Resource Centre made this book.

Our goal is for people with disabilities to

- Have the same rights as people who do not have disabilities
- Have the same chance to join in the things they want to do
- Be asked and listened to about things that matter to them.

Helpful Hints

This book has some hard words.

Hard words are in **blue**.

We will say what the hard word means.



You have rights when you talk with Centrelink.

You can read about your rights on page 37.



You can get help if you need it.

There are places you can get help from
on page 42.

What is the Disability Support Pension?



The Disability Support Pension is a payment from Centrelink.

It is also called the DSP.

It is for people who

- have disabilities
- have health issues

and

- cannot work more than 15 hours a week.

What is Centrelink?



Centrelink is a department of the Australian Government.

Centrelink decide if you get a DSP.

Centrelink make payments for the DSP.

What if I need money while I apply for a DSP?

There are other payments you could get.

To find other payments and services you can



- Call the Disability, Sickness and Carers line at Centrelink on 132 717



- Go to a Centrelink branch

Or



- Look at the payments and services online



[www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink)
[services/centrelink](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink)

Type in **Payments and Services** into the search box.



Things to know before you read this book

We do not know if you will get a DSP.

The rules for a DSP can be hard to understand.

When you apply for a DSP

1. You need to take a lot of steps
2. These steps could take you a long time.

You can see these steps on page 8.

You can use page 8 to show you

- How far you have come
- How many more steps you have to go.

You do not have to read this book all at once.



You can ask a friend or family member or
someone you trust to read this book with you.

Steps to apply for a DSP



- Step 1** Age and where you live
- This information is on page 9



- Step 2** Medical evidence
- This information is on page 11



- Step 3** Program of Support
- This information is on page 22



- Step 4** Income and assets
- This information is on page 28



- Step 5** DSP application checklist
- This information is on page 30

- Step 6** How do I apply for a DSP?
- This information is on page 32

- Step 7** What happens now?
- This information is on page 35

Step 1. Age and where you live



Your disabilities are part of getting a DSP.

You must also show Centrelink

- **Your age**

You need to be between 16 and 65.

- **How long you have been in Australia**

You have to be an Australian citizen

or

You have lived in Australia for 10 years.

and

You have lived in Australia at least 5 years in a row.

You may have a **Qualifying Residency Exemption**.

A **Qualifying Residency Exemption** is when you

- Have lived in Australia for less than 10 years
- You got a disability when you were in Australia
or
- You were under 16 when you first came to
Australia
and
- Your disability stops you working 15 hours a
week.

If you do not have **Qualifying Residency Exemption**

and

Have lived in Australia less than 10 years.

It is likely you will **not** get a DSP.

Step 2: Medical Evidence



To get a DSP you must show

- What disabilities you have got
- How your disabilities affect your day to day life.

Information about this needs to be from your

treating doctor.



This is the doctor who can give medical evidence about your disability.

Example of a **treating doctor**

- If you have a disability that affects your heart.
- A heart doctor will treat you.
- They are called a Cardiologist.
- Your Cardiologist is your **treating doctor.**

You may have another **treating doctor** for a different disability.

Your family doctor can help you find the right **treating doctor.**

If you have a **manifest impairment**

You can apply for a DSP when you are diagnosed with this.

You have a **manifest impairment** if you

- have an IQ under 70
- have category 4 HIV AIDS
- have two years or less to live
- are blind
- need nursing home level care.

If you have a manifest impairment that is diagnosed.

➤ Go to Step 4: Income and Assets

Step 4 is on page 28.



How do I get medical evidence from my treating doctor?



- Make a booking to see them.
- Let them know you are applying for the DSP.

You may need to see them more than one time.



You can take someone with you to your appointment.

What should I do before I see my treating doctor?

Write

- A list of the disabilities or health issues you have
- How they affect you
- Why it makes it hard for you to work.

You can ask a friend or family member or someone you trust to help.

You can use this book to help you talk to your **treating doctor**.

What do I do when I see my treating doctor?



Your **treating doctor** needs to write a letter.

The letter must say if your disability or health issue is

1. **Diagnosed**

This means what your disability is

and

How your disability affects you.

2. **Stabilised**

This means if your disability will not get better

or

Your doctor knows how your disability or health issue may change.

3. **Treated**

Being treated could be

- Medicine
- Counselling
- An operation in hospital
- Other medical help.



Reasonably treated is when your treatment is

- not too far away
- can make a big change
- is likely to help
- does not cost you too much
- is safe.

Fully Treated is when all treatments you can do have finished.

or

Your treating doctor can show

- What changes treatment could make
- These changes can happen in the next two years.

Your treating doctor must also say if your disability

- Will not get better in the next 2 years

and

- Stops you working over 15 hours a week.

Centrelink use **impairment tables** to decide if you get a DSP.

Impairment tables are lists for different parts of the body.



These lists are about your disability.

- What you can do
 - What you could do with treatment
- or
- What you can't do.

Where can I find the impairment tables?



You can go to Centrelink to find the impairment tables.

or



If you use a computer



www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2011L02716

Your treating doctor will use the impairment tables to know your **functional capacity**.



An example of **functional capacity** is

1. You have a disability in your legs
2. You can walk to the end of your street before resting
3. You cannot walk to the local shops
4. Treatment could help you walk to the shops.

Your **functional capacity** is how far you can walk after treatment.

The impairment tables will give your functional capacity points.

You need at least 20 points for a DSP.

Your **treating doctor** can write this in a letter. You give this letter to Centrelink when you apply for a DSP.

On the next page is a letter you can show your treating doctor.

This letter shows your doctor what they need to tell Centrelink:



Letter for my treating doctor

I have identified you as a doctor who is able to give evidence in my Disability Support Pension (DSP) application for one or more of my disabilities.

I may be eligible for income support that could make a big difference to my life.

To apply for a DSP I need a medical report to show the following information about my disability or health issue:

- Diagnosis
- Treatment
- If or how much it has stabilised
- If I am prevented from working 15 hours a week for the next 2 years.

Please look at the Impairment Tables which measure the level of functional impact of my disability or illness. These can be found at www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2011L02716

I may be eligible for a DSP immediately if my disability scores 20 points or more on one impairment table. If I have 20 points but they are across two or more tables, I will have additional requirements related to finding work before applying for the DSP.

I will be eligible for the DSP immediately if I have an IQ less than 70, terminal illness, permanent blindness, category 4 HIV/AIDS or need nursing home level care.

For more information

Social Security Rights Victoria (SSRV) have produced a DSP Toolkit for Doctors which can be found at www.ssrv.org.au/disability-support-pension-toolkit/.

If you have any questions you can call the SSRV Workers Assistance Service on (03) 9481 0655 for free advice.



Am I ready to apply for a DSP?

You are ready to apply if you have letters from your treating doctors.

and

The letters show your disability is

- Diagnosed
- Treated
- Stabilised
- Stopping you from working for 15 hours a week
- Has 20 points or more on one impairment table list.



➤ Go to Step 4. Income and assets

Step 4 is on page 28.

You are not ready to apply if you have letters from
your treating doctors

and

The letters show your disability

- Has 20 or more points on the impairment tables.
- The 20 points are on more than one list.

You are **not** ready to apply for a DSP yet.

➤ Go to Step 3. Program of Support

Step 3 is on page 22.



You are **not** likely to get a DSP if you have letters
from your treating doctors

and

The letters show your disability has less than 20
points on the impairment tables.

If your disability or health issues gets worse.

- You can ask your treating doctors to check again if
you now score over 20 points.

What if I do not have 20 points?

There are other payments and services you could get.

To find other payments and services you can



- Call the Disability, Sickness and Carers line at Centrelink on 132 717



- Go to a Centrelink branch

or



- Look at the payments and services online

[www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/
services/centrelink](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink)

Type in Payments and Services into the search box.

Step 3. Program of Support



A Program of Support is a plan you make with a **Disability Employment Service**.



A **Disability Employment Service** is also called a Job Access Provider.

They are paid by the government.



You and your **Disability Employment Service** must agree on your plan.

Your plan must help you to

- Get ready for work
- Learn new work
- Find work
- Get work
- Keep working.

Your plan should

- Have the right supports for your disability
- Be for at least 18 months
- Give 3 years for you to finish it.



If you cannot do your plan

- Tell your Disability Employment Service why
- Ask them to write a new plan with you.

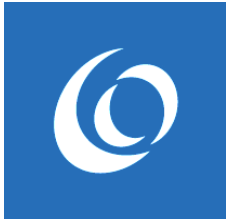
In your Program of Support, you must show

Active Participation.

Active Participation means you have done what was agreed in your plan.

You might take time off because of issues with your disabilities.

The time off will not count in the 18 months of a Program of Support.



You can talk to your Disability Employment Service about these issues to show

- You cannot keep doing the Program of Support or
- You need different activities in your plan.



Have I finished a Program of Support?

You have finished a Program of Support when you have

- ✓ Done everything you had to in your plan
- ✓ This was done in 18 months over the last 3 years.
or
- ✓ Your **Disability Employment Service** stopped your Program of Support.

This is because your disability stopped you from finishing it.



When you have finished your Program of Support.

Ask your Disability Employment Service to complete a form that says:

- When you started
- What you did in your plan
- If you showed Active Participation
- When you finished
- Why you finished.
- What help or supports you used.

When you have this form from your Disability Employment Service



➤ Go to Step 4. Income and assets

Step 4 is on page 28.

What if I have not finished a Program of Support?

You are not ready to apply for a DSP yet.



If you are not happy with your Program of Support you can ask Centrelink for an **Employment Services Assessment**.

This is a test which looks at

- Your disability
- Work you have done before
- What work you can do now
- What work you could be trained for
- Other issues that may affect you.

With your **Employment Services Assessment** you can



- Ask your **Disability Employment Service** to make a new plan
- Change your **Disability Employment Service**.

**What if my Disability Employment Service says
I can work for 15 hours a week?**

If you have finished a Program of Support
and

Your Disability Employment Service thinks you can
work for 15 hours a week.

You are **not** likely to get a DSP.

There are other payments you could get.

There are services that can help you.



You can talk to Centrelink about other payments
and services.

Page 6 of this book shows you how to find other
payments and services at Centrelink.



Step 4: Income and Assets

You must tell Centrelink about your **income**.

Income includes money you get from

- Work
- Workcover payments
- Any other money you make.



You must also tell Centrelink about your **assets**.

Assets are things you own that are worth money.

Assets may include:



- Your car
- Special things you own
- Money you have saved

Your income and assets affect how much DSP you may be paid.

If you have a partner and you live with them.

Centrelink may also need to know the **income** and **assets** of your partner.

There are 3 ways you can tell Centrelink about your **Income** and **Assets**:



1. Visit a Centrelink office and ask for an **Income and Assets** form.



2. If you use a computer you can find the Income and Asset form online.



www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/forms/sa369



3. In **myGov**

myGov is an online system Centrelink uses to tell you about your payments.



www.my.gov.au

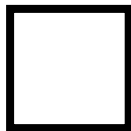
Step 5. DSP Application Checklist

You are almost ready to apply for the DSP.

This list shows the things you need before you apply for a DSP.



Tick the box if you have got it ready.



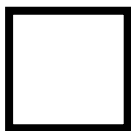
I am an Australian Citizen

or

I have [Residency Visa](#)

A [Residency Visa](#) is a letter from the government that says you can live in Australia.

You only need a Visa if you are not an Australian Citizen.



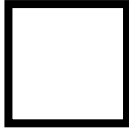
Identification Documents

Things that prove who you are.

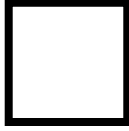
These may be your

- Driver's license
- certificate
- Proof of age card
- Passport.





Letters from your treating doctors



Consent to disclose medical evidence form

This form allows your treating doctors to tell Centrelink about your disability



You can get this form from Centrelink

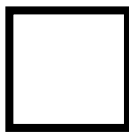
or



www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/forms/sa472



Program of Support form



Income and Assets form

or

You have updated your income and assets on MyGov

Step 6. How do I apply for a DSP?

There are 2 ways you can apply for a DSP.

1. Paper form



Visit a Centrelink office and ask for a Disability Support Pension claim form.

or



You can get the Disability Support Pension claim form online.



www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/forms/sa466



- Answer all of the questions on the form and give it to Centrelink.
- You will also need to give Centrelink the things in the checklist.

The checklist is on page 30.

- Ask Centrelink to stamp and date your form.



2. Apply online at myGov

If you have a **myGov** account



www.my.gov.au



- Click on the **Centrelink** box
- Click on **make a claim**
- Find **Disabled, ill or injured** in the list of claims.
- Click **get started**.
- You can now apply for the DSP online.

You do not have to finish it all at once.

You can save your application and finish it later.

What if I need help to apply for a DSP?



A **nominee** can apply for you.

A **nominee** is a friend, family member, an organisation or someone you trust.

Your **nominee** can talk to Centrelink with you.

This person must agree to be your **nominee**.

You will need to fill out a form with your **nominee**.



This form is called **Authorising a person or organisation to enquire or act on your behalf**.



You can get this form from a Centrelink office.

or



www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/forms/ss313

Step 7: What Happens Now?



Centrelink may contact you for more information.

You may need a **job capacity assessment**.



In a **job capacity assessment** Centrelink staff will look at

- Letters from your treating doctors
- How your disability affects your work
- Help or equipment you use for your disability.
- How many hours a week you can work



For your **job capacity assessment** you can bring

- Someone to help you
- New letters from your treating doctor.

You may need a **disability medical assessment**.

A **disability medical assessment** is a test made by a doctor.

This doctor is hired by Centrelink.



The doctor will

- Contact you by text or mail
- Make a time to see you
- Ask how your disability affects you
- Write a report to Centrelink about this.



Centrelink will use your **disability medical assessment** when they decide if you get a DSP.

For people aged under 35

Your **job capacity assessment** may say you can work between 8 and 15 hours a week.

You may be asked to do a work activity.

You will need to do this activity to be paid a DSP.

My Rights with Centrelink



Rights are

- Actions you are allowed to do
- Actions Centrelink must do if you ask them to.

This is so you are treated fairly.

Privacy



Centrelink cannot give information to other people.

You must be ok with this first.

See or change your Centrelink file



You have a right to get a copy of:

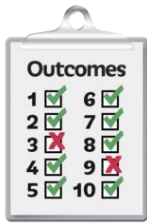
- Your Centrelink file
- Anything you have given Centrelink.

You will need to show who you are

and

What information you want.

This right is called Freedom of Information



When Centrelink make a decision about you

You can ask

- Why the decision was made
- What the law says about the decision.

You should get this information in 28 days in a letter or on myGov.

Centrelink Interviews

You may need to meet with Centrelink.

You can have the interview questions given to you before the meeting.

You can answer in writing.

You have 7 to 14 days to answer the questions.

Independent Advice

You can have independent advice on a Centrelink matter.

Independent means from someone who does not work at Centrelink.





An Advocate

You can have an advocate at

- Centrelink meetings
- Disability medical assessments.
- Job capacity assessments.

Making a Statement

Centrelink can ask you for information.

They must ask you in writing.

You can have 7 days to answer.



Complain about how you have been treated

You can complain to Centrelink

- About how Centrelink workers treat you
- If Centrelink lose your paperwork
- If you are treated unfairly for having a disability.

You need to say

- What happened that made you want to complain
- How you want it fixed.

Centrelink must answer your complaint in 10 days.

Appeals

You can appeal a Centrelink decision about your DSP if you do not agree.

If the decision is found wrong it will be changed.

And you should receive up to 13 weeks back pay.

You can apply for a DSP again at the same time as your appeal.



Reference Numbers

Reference numbers are a set of letters and numbers.

You can get reference numbers of

- Centrelink workers
- Phone calls
- Complaints
- DSP Applications
- Emails.

You can use reference numbers to show:

- Who a Centrelink worker is
- What the Centrelink worker said
- What you said.



My Rights with a Disability Employment Service

Your Disability Employment Service must



- Look for jobs you can do.
- Tell you about jobs you can do.
- Tell you about your rights.
- Tell you what you must do by the Law.
- Help you write a resume.
- Tell you everything they can do for you.
- Look at any issues you may have finding a job.
- Not discriminate against your disability.

Where Can I Get Help?



This is a list of Disability Advocates who can help you in Victoria.

Disability Resources Centre



9671 3000



advocacy@drc.org.au

Action on Disability in Ethnic Communities



9480 7000



info@adec.org.au

Association for Children with a Disability



9880 7000 or 1800 654 013



mail@acd.org.au

Barwon Disability Resource Council



5221 8011



info@bdrc.org.au

Communication Rights Australia (CRA)



9555 8552



info@communicationrights.org.au

Colac Otway Region Advocacy Service



5232 1009



info@coras.com.au

Deaf Victoria



0431 476 721



info@deafvictoria.org.au

Disability Justice Australia



9474 0077



info@dja.org.au

Disability Discrimination Legal Service




9654 8644



info@ddls.org.au

Gippsland Disability Advocacy

 5175 0444


@ administration@gdai.org.au

Grampians Disability Advocacy

 1800 552 272

@ admin@grampiansadvocacy.org.au

Leadership Plus

 9489 2999


@ admin@leadershipplus.com

Melbourne East Disability Advocacy

 9877 7990


@ office@meda.org.au

South West Advocacy

 5561 4584

@ admin@swadvocacy.com.au

Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service

 5227 3338

@ legal@villamanta.org.au

Youth Disability Advocacy Service


 0467 763 155

@ ydas@yacvic.org.au

I need legal information about the DSP.

You can call Social Security Rights Victoria

Social Security Rights Victoria (SSRV)

 9481 0355 or 1800 094 164

You can call on Mondays and Wednesdays

Between 9:30am to 12:30pm.

English is my second language, where can I get help?



You can speak to Centrelink in languages other than English.

You can call Centrelink on 131 202.

I have hearing or speech impairment, where can I get help?



You can call the Centrelink TTY service

Phone 1800 810 586

I need help finding identification documents.

Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages may provide copies of birth certificates and marriage certificates.

Phone 1300 369 367

Web www.bdm.vic.gov.au

I am having trouble with my money or bills

The National Debt Helpline may link you to a person who can talk with you in your area.

Phone 1800 007 007

I am worried and upset and need to talk to someone.

Lifeline

 **13 11 14**

Beyond Blue

 **1300 224 636**



This book was made with help from the Victorian
Government Office for Disability
and
Social Security Rights Victoria.

You can get more copies of this book.

You can this book at www.drc.org.au

or

Contact the Disability Resources Centre



📞 9671 3000

@ advocacy@drc.org.au

