

Managing Money

Carers are usually family members or friends who provide support to children or adults who have a disability, mental illness, chronic condition or who are frail aged. Carers may be parents, partners, brothers, sisters, friends or children of any age.

Carers may care for a few hours a week or all day every day. Some carers are eligible for government benefits, while others are employed or have a private income.

Caring has many direct and hidden financial costs, which stretch the budget. Financial assistance is available to offset or directly subsidise some of the costs, even if only to a small extent. However, with or without financial assistance, managing money is an important part of the role of most carers.

? How do I get financial assistance?

Many carers do not apply for financial assistance because they are unsure who to contact or are put off by the procedures. Don't feel ashamed or embarrassed about asking for assistance. If you do not, you and the person you care for could lose out on money specifically allocated by government for helping people who are ill, have a disability or who are frail aged.

A good starting point for help and information about financial assistance is your local **Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre** which can be contacted on **1800 242 636***.

You can also call **Centrelink** on **13 27 17#**. The **Centrelink Multi-lingual Service** can be contacted on **13 12 02#**.

? What sort of financial assistance is available?

You, or the person you care for, may be eligible for some of these payments and concessions.

Centrelink

- Carer Payment – For carers who are caring on a long-term basis for an adult or child who has a disability, is chronically ill or is frail aged and needs full-time care and attention. This payment is income and assets tested and eligibility is dependent on an assessment of care needs.
- Carer Allowance – For carers who care on a long-term basis for a child or an adult who has a disability, is frail aged, or is chronically ill. There is no income or asset test for this payment and it is tax-free. It can be paid in addition to other Centrelink payments such as Carer Payment or Age Pension.
- Disability Support Pension – For people who are unable to work full-time for at least two years because of a disability.
- Concession Cards: Pensioner Concession Card (PCC) and Health Care Card (HCC) – You, or the person you care for, may be entitled to one of these cards if a payment is granted. PCC and HCC cards entitle the holder to many concessions including prescription medicines, transport fares, rates, power bills and car registration.
- Rent Assistance – For people who get a payment such as the Carer Payment and pay rent for private accommodation.

'Mostly it comes down to money – financial independence would enable us to purchase free time and so relieve stress.'

Department of Veterans' Affairs

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) provides some financial assistance to veterans, war widow(er)s, their families and carers. You can contact DVA by calling 13 32 54#.

Program of Aids for Disabled People (PADP)

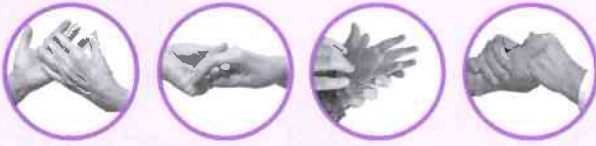
This scheme provides equipment, aids and home modifications to help people to remain living independently in their own home.

? What can I do if I'm not happy with a decision ?

If you are not satisfied with the result of an application for assistance or the way you were treated there is usually a way to have your complaint heard.

Your community legal centre or welfare rights centre can give you specific advice about your entitlements and how to get them if you are having any problems. Check in your local telephone directory for the services closest to you.





If you think a decision is incorrect ask for it to be reviewed. If you don't agree with the decision after it has been reviewed both Centrelink and DVA have independent tribunals to review decisions where a claim has been refused or payment reduced, suspended or cancelled.

? Should I get professional advice?

If you feel you need extra assistance you should seek help from an expert. You may want to consider getting professional advice if you are:

- considering paying an accommodation bond;
- planning to leave your current employment to become a full-time carer;
- planning to set up a trust or company for the person you care for;
- unsure what to do about any financial matter; or
- getting into debt.

? Who can help me?

- A Centrelink social worker.
- Your bank.
- Your union or trade association.
- Specialist debt helpline.
- A financial adviser.
- A solicitor.

Centrelink's Financial Information Service can be contacted on 13 23 00#.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs can be contacted on 1300 551 918#.

Other organisations which may be able to help you plan ahead are:

Commonwealth Carer

Resource Centre 1800 242 636*

Kids Helpline 1800 551 800*

Veterans' Affairs

Network (VAN) 13 32 54#

Aged and Community Care

Information Line 1800 500 853*

Dementia Helpline 1800 639 331*

Contenance Helpline

(for information on the Contenance Aids

Equipment Scheme) 1800 330 066*

National Information Centre

for Retirement Investments 1800 020 110*

Australian Tax Office (ATO)

Helpline 13 28 61#

ATO Problem Resolution 13 28 70#

✔ Managing money – a checklist

There is a lot to consider when managing your finances and those of someone you care for. This checklist may help. Review it regularly just in case your circumstances change.

- Do I have a workable budget?
- Are my files and accounts organised?
- Are my insurance policies up to date?
- Do I have superannuation?
- Do I need help managing my credit?
- Are there any additional types of financial assistance that might help me?
- Do I have an up to date will, Power of Attorney and Enduring Power of Attorney?
- Does the person I care for have an up to date will, Power of Attorney and Enduring Power of Attorney?
- Is my relationship with the person I care for legally recognised?

? Where can I get more information?

There is a lot more information for carers available on a range of topics. Commonwealth Carer Resource Centres in each state and territory provide carers with referral to services and practical written information to support them in their caring role. Contact your **Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre** on **1800 242 636***. Alternatively, carers may use the services provided by the carer association in each state or territory.

The **Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS)** can help you if you need assistance with a language other than English. TIS can be contacted on **13 14 50#**.

COMMONWEALTH CARER RESOURCE CENTRE
1800 242 636*

*Free call from local phones, mobile calls at mobile rates
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A national network of
carers associations
www.carersaustralia.com.au