



Early access to superannuation benefits for CSS members

Who should read this?

CSS members who wish to claim their CSS benefit early on severe financial hardship or other specified grounds and members who have been granted access under a determination made by the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA).

What is in this fact sheet?

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What you should know up front

It is important that you read the disclaimer at the end of this fact sheet. Before making any decisions, please read the **CSS product disclosure statement** and consider seeking advice from a licensed professional such as a financial planner, accountant or solicitor.

On what grounds can I get early access to my CSS benefit?

You can qualify for early access to your superannuation benefits on two grounds.

Financial hardship

To qualify for a release on the grounds of severe financial hardship, you must have been continuously receiving Commonwealth income support payments for:

- > 26 weeks if you are under 55; or
- > 39 weeks if you are over 55.

You will need to provide us with your Centrelink Customer Reference Number which we will use to confirm your eligibility with Centrelink. If you are receiving a benefit from the Department of Veterans Affairs, you will need to provide a letter from them confirming your payments.

Generally speaking, we will only release money for reasonable family expenses that are due and payable immediately. You may need to provide documentary evidence to support your application.

We will assess your application against the relevant guidelines and determine how much of your superannuation will be released. The amount released cannot exceed \$10,000 gross and only one payment can be approved in any 12 month period.

Specified grounds

If you do not qualify for early access to your superannuation benefits on severe financial hardship grounds, you may consider asking the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA) to approve the release of benefits on specified grounds. Some examples of the types of expenses you may be able to claim include:

- > medical expenses
- > renovations to your home necessitated by severe disability
- > mortgage payments—to prevent loss of your home.

All enquiries regarding applications for early release on these grounds should be directed to APRA on **1300 131 060**. An application form is also available from their website at **www.apra.gov.au**. If you have already received an APRA approval for the release of your benefit on specified grounds, you do not need to complete Section B of our **Early access to superannuation benefits application form** which deals with the release of benefits on financial hardship grounds.

You will need to supply a copy of your APRA approval letter with your application.

Which Commonwealth income support payments are accepted?

Commonwealth income support payments include:

- > income support supplements
- > service pensions
- > social security benefits
- > social security pensions.

Family allowance, Austudy payments or youth allowance payments in relation to full-time study are not eligible.

To ensure you have been receiving a benefit for the appropriate period, please complete the authority in **Section B** of the form to allow us to confirm your details with Centrelink.

If you are receiving a benefit from the Department of Veterans' Affairs, you must include a statement from them with your application. This statement is only valid for 21 days from the date on the statement and must refer to you and not to other members of your family.

What evidence will I need to provide?

Some claims require specific documentary evidence, for example:

Motor vehicle expenses (registration, insurance, repairs and/or purchase) – in order to approve these claims you must provide a statutory declaration stating why your motor vehicle is considered an essential living expense. For example, you live in a remote area with no public transport, or you rely on the vehicle due to a medical condition. You must also supply a current quote for repairs, or for the cost of a new vehicle.

Establishing a household – If you are in financial hardship because you need to set up a new household, then in order for your claim to be considered you must provide:

- > a letter from a real estate agent or landlord detailing the bond and rent payable.
- > a list of **essential** household items required and their approximate cost. Please note that items such as televisions, stereos and computers are not considered essential.

Please note: Personal loans from family and friends will not be considered as evidence of immediate expenses associated with everyday living.

Money will be released for some items on only one occasion. What are these items?

- > Clearing a credit card or general interest loan debt (minimum payments due will be considered for future claims)
- > Private school fees

What components of my benefit can be released?

If you are a contributing or a preserved member, you can access any of your taxed components – this includes your member component, post-1990 productivity, Fund earnings on your benefit and any taxed transfer values.

How does the early release reduce my final benefit?

When you access part of your benefit under financial hardship or other specified grounds, instead of reducing your benefit at that time, we create an Early Release Deduction Amount (ERDA) for you. This is done to ensure that your defined benefit is unaffected until we pay your final benefit.

The amount paid to you will be recorded in the ERDA. The amount recorded in the ERDA will increase with Fund earnings (or decrease if earnings are negative). The total amount in the ERDA will be deducted from your lump sum benefit at the time it is paid. The amount of the ERDA and Fund earnings will be recorded on your annual Member Statement.

Please note that if you are a number of years away from retirement, the amount of your early release could significantly reduce your final benefit from the CSS.

Will I lose my pension entitlement?

No. You will retain all of your benefit options, including your pension options.

It is important to note that if you are a deferred benefit member, the amount of your pension will be reduced.

What steps do I take to have my benefits released?

Complete the CSS Early access to superannuation benefit application form, available at www.css.gov.au, taking note of the checklist. Then send your form, along with any documentation, to us for processing and approval.

Where can I get more information?

EMAIL members@css.gov.au

PHONE 1300 000 277

FAX 02 6272 9612

MAIL CSS
PO Box 22
Belconnen ACT 2616

WEB www.css.gov.au