



Retiring and claiming your CSS benefit

Who should read this fact sheet?

Any member who would like information about the retirement process and what they need to do to claim their CSS benefit.

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What should I know up front?

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.

When should I start preparing for retirement?

As a CSS member, you should start preparing for retirement well in advance of your planned retirement age.

There are many factors to consider which may influence the amount you receive on retirement, such as:

- > the amount you contribute
- > your salary
- > your length of service
- > your investment choice
- > your age at retirement

If you would like to find out more about how these factors affect your benefit, you can use the i-Estimator, our online calculator. This is available at www.css.gov.au.

You'll need an access number to use this service. If you don't have one, or you've misplaced it, call us on 1300 000 277 and we can give you one over the phone.

What about the 54/11 option?

This commonly used term refers to the option of resigning prior to turning 55 (at least 2 days prior to your 55th birthday), preserving your benefit and claiming a deferred benefit after you reach age 55.

If you choose this option, your deferred benefit will include an indexed pension (paid as your employer component). This pension is calculated based on 2.5 times your accumulated basic contributions, multiplied by a pension factor based on your age at claim. You will also be able to take your member and productivity components as a lump sum or additional non-indexed pension.

If you instead choose to continue working and retire at or after age 55, your indexed pension is calculated using a percentage of your final salary. This percentage is based on your age and years of contributory service.

As the two calculation methods are very different, it is highly recommended you obtain benefit estimates for both scenarios well in advance of your 55th birthday.

How do I prepare for retirement?

It is important to consider seeking financial advice before making decisions regarding your CSS benefit.

In preparation for your financial planning and decision making you can get information such as:

- > your super details and equity from your most recent annual member statement
- > a benefit estimate from us, if you are within 12 months of your proposed retirement date

You can also access the following information and fact sheets on our website:

- > a benefit estimate, using the **i-Estimator**
- > the benefit options you will be entitled to and how they are calculated. Refer to the fact sheets relevant to your retirement situation.
- > restrictions that may apply to you when you claim your benefit, such as compulsorily preserved amounts.
- > how tax affects your benefit. Please refer to the **Tax and your CSS benefit** fact sheet.
- > general retirement information from our 'At work for you' workshops.
- > factors you should take into account specific to your age. Refer to the '**Choose your lifestage**' section of the website.

Doing as much research as you can will ensure you have a better understanding of the CSS and the retirement process.

What financial advice might I need?

There are several important decisions you need to make about when and how you claim your CSS benefit. It is recommended you seek financial advice regarding decisions such as:

- > when you should retire
- > which investment choices you should make
- > which benefit option is best for you when you claim
- > if you take a lump sum, whether you should take it as cash or roll it over to another fund
- > how to claim the best tax concessions for your situation
- > the best way to pay your surcharge debt (if you have a surcharge debt you will have been advised by the ATO) and
- > whether or not to claim the reduced pension option, available in return for a higher spouse's and/or children's pension in the event of your death.

These are just some of the things you will need to consider in order to make the best decisions for your retirement.

What investment options do I have?

As a CSS member, you are able to invest your money in either the Default Fund or the Cash Investment Option.

In the CSS Default Fund, the key investment objective is to maximise long-term real returns within some risk constraints. ARIA expects to achieve, over the long-term, an average real return of 4.5% per annum after tax and fees. In the current inflation environment, this equates to a nominal return of 7% per annum over the long-term. For more information on this investment strategy, refer to the **Investments** section on our website.

The Cash Investment Option provides an alternative to the CSS Default Fund investment strategy. It is an opportunity to have more surety of earnings for your funded accumulation (member and productivity) components, in exchange for the possibly higher, but more volatile return of the CSS Default Fund. For more information see the **CSS Cash Investment Option** fact sheet.

How do I claim my benefit?

Completing the right application form

It is important you complete the benefit application form relevant to your retirement situation. For example, there are different forms for leaving work under age 55, over age 55 and for retrenchment/redundancy. If you complete the incorrect form, it is likely your election will be invalid and you will need to complete another one.

Forms are available from your personnel area, the [CSS website](#) or by calling us on **1300 000 277**.

If you are unsure which form to complete, or need help completing the form, you can contact us for help.

When do I need to submit my benefit form?

There are time restrictions on when you can make an election to claim your CSS benefit.

These differ depending on your exit type and the option you are taking:

If you are electing to preserve your benefit in the CSS, you must make that election **within 21 days of ceasing employment**. Most other elections can be made within 3 months of your cease date. Please refer to your specific benefit application form for further details.

You can also submit your form before your cease date or claim date. Elections to preserve your benefit cannot be made more than one month before you cease employment. All other elections can be made up to three months in advance.

Where do I send my form?

If you are a contributing member, you need to give your completed form to your personnel section. They will then complete their section of the form and send it to us. It is your employer's responsibility to send the form to us as soon as possible so that we can commence processing your claim. You may wish to contact them to ensure they have forwarded your form.

If you already have a deferred benefit, please send your form directly to us at the address provided on the form.

Remember to include all required documentation when submitting your form. These requirements are listed on each form. If you don't provide everything we need, your payment may be delayed.

What happens once I have submitted my form?

Once we receive your form, we will check that it's complete and correct and will contact you if there are any issues. If you would like to confirm we have received your form, call the benefit payments team on **1300 289 548**.

If your payment requires a standard calculation, it will take approximately ten working days from the date we receive your benefit application form (or your claim date, whichever is the later) for your benefit to be processed. If it requires a more complex calculation, it will take longer. If you would like to know in advance which category your payment is in, please call us on the above number.

Once your benefit has been processed, we will send you a letter with the details of your entitlement. Payments to bank accounts usually take 2-3 working days to become available after we process your claim. If you are rolling over money to another fund, we will send the cheque directly to that fund. You will be notified of this in your letter.

What if I change my mind after completing the form?

If you have submitted your form and need to make amendments, call the benefit payments team on **1300 289 548** as soon as possible.

CSS legislation does not allow you to change your claim date or withdraw your claim for a deferred benefit after you have made a valid election to do so.

Most other decisions may be changed before we process your application, such as your benefit option or bank account details. If this is the case, you will need to provide your new instructions in writing.

After we have processed your benefit, it is unlikely we can make changes except in certain circumstances. It is therefore very important to carefully consider your choices when completing your form.

Retirement is an exciting and important time for you. We look forward to helping you make the most of your superannuation.

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

Warning - This Document Contains General Advice or Information Only

Any advice in this document has been prepared without taking account of your personal objectives, financial situation or needs. Because of this, you should, before acting on any advice in this document, consider the appropriateness of the advice, having regard to your objectives, financial situation and needs. You may wish to consult a licensed financial planner to do this.

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