

# Pensioner News

Issue 2 July 2003

## ComSuper moves office

In April this year ComSuper staff relocated from Unit 1 to Unit 4, Cameron Offices, Chandler Street, Belconnen. If you live in Canberra or if you are visiting and would like to speak to us in person, we are just down the road from where we used to be. All our other contact details remain unchanged.



*New ComSuper Pensioner Contact Centre*

## Online access to member details

Are you interested in Internet online services? Later this year ComSuper will begin introducing such services. To allow for the provision of this style of service, a suitable level of security and authentication must be established. To start the process a form has been included in this mailout. If you wish to take advantage of online services, complete and sign the form, then post it to ComSuper. ComSuper will then mail out a Personal Identification Number (PIN) to enable you to commence using the available online facilities. It is expected that the PIN mailout will be in September/October this year to coincide with the commencement of online services.

Please take the time to consider the advantages of maintaining the following details yourself, online:

- address and contact details
- banking, BSB and account details.

In the future you may also be able to set up automatic deductions that you want paid out of your pension. At the moment we are looking at what demand there is for this service and what the costs might be. See 'Pension deduction survey' on page 3.

## Contribution from PSS/CSS Boards

### Bank of Wisdom update

We would like to thank all those who sent in useful tips to the Public Sector and Commonwealth Super Schemes (PSS/CSS) online Bank of Wisdom. The purpose of the Bank is to share with existing members the knowledge gained by retired members through years of experience.

We are currently reviewing the suggestions sent in and developing the Bank so it can sit on our websites and be easily accessible. We will keep you up to date with progress in future editions of *Pensioner News*.

It's not too late! If you have knowledge gained only since retiring that you think someone planning for retirement would benefit from, you can still send it in via **the Schemes' websites:** [www.pss.gov.au](http://www.pss.gov.au) or [www.css.gov.au](http://www.css.gov.au)

Simply click on **member feedback** at the top right-hand corner of the home page and use the online feedback form

or **email:** [member.feedback@csb.gov.au](mailto:member.feedback@csb.gov.au)

or **post:** PSS/CSS Board Communications, GPO Box 1907, Canberra City, ACT 2601.

You will be contacted by the PSS/CSS if your tip is going to be used, so please provide an email address, phone number or postal address with your contribution.

*The PSS/CSS Boards*

# 13 23 66

## PSS/CSS retired members and their families given access to financial planning services

Last year, the Public Sector and Commonwealth Super Schemes (PSS/CSS) made an investment in **State Super Financial Services (SSFS)**. This means that, as a retired member, you and your family are welcome to access SSFS's financial planning and investment management services.

This service is available to current and former public sector employees and their families in NSW and the ACT, Melbourne and Brisbane—with plans to expand nationally in the future.

You can meet with a professional financial planner without cost or obligation. SSFS does not charge entry, exit or switching fees on their investment products. They do charge a single competitive management fee, which is paid only by individuals who choose to become clients. There is no cost to members who do not access this new service.

For more information, simply call State Super Financial Services direct on 1800 620 305 (toll free) or go to: [www.ssfs.com.au](http://www.ssfs.com.au)

## Family law and your super

From 28 December 2002 the changes introduced by the *Family Law Legislation Amendment (Superannuation) Act 2001* allow for superannuation pensions to be split on the breakdown of a legal marriage either by agreement between parties (ratified by the Family Court) or by court order.

A pensioner or their spouse can apply to ComSuper for information about the superannuation pension being paid to assist in negotiating a property settlement. To apply for information, the person must complete a **Form 6** declaration form. The form can be found on your scheme's **website** (see back page), or it can be obtained from ComSuper. Please call **13 23 66** if you need one.

If you intend to obtain a court order under the new legislation, you must give ComSuper a copy of the proposed court order and allow ComSuper (on the Trustees' behalf) 28 days in which to consider it before it is issued by the Court.

When an agreement or final court order has been served, ComSuper will put the agreement or order into effect. The superannuation pension will be split in accordance with the percentage shown on the agreement or court order.

## Changes to taxation

In the 2003–2004 Budget the Government announced that tax thresholds would rise for Australian taxpayers with effect from the first payday in July 2003. Subject to the legislation passing through Parliament, ComSuper will implement the tax reduction as soon as possible in the new financial year.

### Personal tax thresholds

Current tax thresholds	New tax thresholds from 1 July 2003	Tax rate
Income range (\$)	Income range (\$)	(%)
0–6,000	0–6,000	0
6,001–20,000	6,001–21,600	17
20,001–50,000	21,601–52,000	30
50,001–60,000	52,001–62,500	42
60,001+	62,501+	47

### Providing further benefits for seniors

Seniors eligible for the Senior Australians Tax Offset will pay no tax on annual incomes up to \$20,500 for singles compared with \$20,000 currently, and up to \$33,612 for couples compared with \$32,612 currently. Seniors will also benefit from an increase in the Medicare Levy threshold for senior Australians.

Seniors eligible for the Tax Offset can request ComSuper to reduce the tax withheld from their pension by completing a Withholding Declaration form, which is available from our web site. You can also obtain a copy by calling the Contact Centre on 13 23 66, or from the Australian Taxation Office (ATO).

If you have any enquiries regarding personal taxation, you can contact the ATO on 13 28 61.

## Things you need to know

### Fortnightly tax deduction and tax offset

A tax deduction applies to you if you purchased a pension with your post-June 1983 personal contributions.

A tax offset (formerly called tax rebate) may apply to you if you purchased a pension with your member contributions and/or your funded productivity contributions.

In the past we advised the amount of your post-June 1983 contributions and the amount of your portion eligible for a tax offset on your Payment Summary. You could claim these tax concessions at the end of the financial year through your income tax return.

Since 1 July 2002 ComSuper has been able to take into account these tax concessions each fortnight when making your pension payment. This change gives you the benefit of the tax concession each fortnight rather than having to wait until the end of the financial year.

We will continue to advise each year the amount of the post-June 1983 contributions and the portion eligible for tax offset on your Payment Summary so that you can include this information on your tax return.

If you do not wish to claim a tax deduction or a tax offset on a fortnightly basis, please write to us and we will amend your superannuation record accordingly.

## Spouse eligibility

On the death of a pensioner (where the pensioner was previously a contributor), their spouse will receive a reversionary benefit (spouse pension) if they had a marital relationship with the pensioner at the time of death. The spouse rate of pension was covered in the previous issue of this newsletter.

### What does 'marital relationship' mean?

A marital relationship means a bona fide domestic relationship, as husband and wife (whether or not legally married) between a pensioner and a member of the opposite sex, where:

- they had been living as husband or wife continuously for at least three years immediately before the time of death; or
- they had been living as husband or wife continuously for less than three years immediately before the time of death and, in the opinion of the Trustees, they ordinarily lived as husband or wife on a permanent and bona fide domestic basis having regard to any relevant evidence, including whether:
  - (a) the person was wholly or substantially dependent on that other person;
  - (b) they were legally married to each other;
  - (c) they had a child who was born of their relationship or who was adopted by them during the period of the relationship;
  - (d) they jointly owned a home which was their usual residence; and

- (e) there is any other evidence the Trustees consider relevant.

A further reason which may entitle your spouse to receive a pension is if they were a person who previously had a marital relationship with you though not at the time of your death, but:

- were legally married to you at the time of death, and
- the Trustees are satisfied that the person was wholly or substantially dependent on you at the time of your death.

Spouses who are separated due to temporary absence, or are separated due to illness, may be eligible to receive a reversionary benefit.

### Additional requirement—five-year rule

If the marital relationship between the parties commenced after the deceased person became a pensioner and attained age 60, then the person will only be regarded as a spouse if the relationship began at least five years before the pensioner's death. Under the Civilian Schemes, where a marital relationship commenced after the pensioner's 60th birthday and had lasted less than five years at the time of death of the pensioner, a spouse's application form should still be completed and forwarded to ComSuper as it is possible that a benefit may still be paid on an act of grace basis.

### Sharing of spouse's benefit

Where you are survived by more than one eligible spouse, the pension payable to each spouse will be determined by the Trustees or the DFRDB Authority, generally according to financial need.

### Continuation of spouse's entitlement on remarriage

Where an eligible spouse is receiving a pension and remarries, the pension continues to be paid until their death.

## Pension deduction survey

ComSuper is examining the feasibility of providing a deduction service from fortnightly pension payments, e.g. for health insurance. As part of this study some pensioners will be contacted later in the year and asked to participate in a survey. Should you be contacted, your assistance would be appreciated. ComSuper will not be in a position to provide further details until September 2003.

# How to contact us:

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## Call us on 13 23 66

You can dial **13 23 66** from anywhere in Australia for the cost of a local call (mobile charges apply to mobile phones).

We are available between 9:00 am and 5:00 pm Eastern Standard Time Monday to Friday (apart from 2:00 pm to 3:00 pm on the Thursdays alternate to pension payday).

When you ring 13 23 66 you are greeted with an introductory message that welcomes you to ComSuper. To be connected to an advisory officer you are asked to select from a menu of three choices:

**PRESS 1—if you are receiving a pension or retirement pay from any scheme**

PRESS 2—if you are a contributor or have a preserved benefit in the DFRDB or MSBS

PRESS 3—if you are a contributor or have a preserved benefit in the PSS or CSS

You don't have to listen to the list of choices or to the whole welcome message each time you ring. To shorten your call, as soon as the welcome message begins, PRESS 1.

Retired members with a hearing impairment can use a special **TTY facility: (02) 6272 9827**

## Email us

If you are receiving a pension from the 1922 Scheme, PSS, CSS or Papua New Guinea Superannuation Scheme please use the following email address to contact us:

**[commonwealth.pensioners@comsuper.gov.au](mailto:commonwealth.pensioners@comsuper.gov.au)**

If you are receiving a pension from the DFRB, DFRDB or MSBS please use the following email address to contact us:

**[military.pensioners@comsuper.gov.au](mailto:military.pensioners@comsuper.gov.au)**

**Fax** your enquiry to **(02) 6272 9811**

**Write to** **ComSuper, PO Box 22, Belconnen ACT 2616**

**Log on** to your scheme's website:

**[www.pss.gov.au](http://www.pss.gov.au)**

**[www.css.gov.au](http://www.css.gov.au)**

**[www.dfrdb.gov.au](http://www.dfrdb.gov.au)**

**[www.militarysuper.gov.au](http://www.militarysuper.gov.au)**

**13 23 66**