



Australian Government

Department of Families,
Housing, Community Services
and Indigenous Affairs

Disability Support Pension

Better and Fairer Assessments

Information for Doctors

Improved assessment processes for the Disability Support Pension (DSP) are being implemented. This includes:

- improvements to DSP assessments to fast track decisions for claimants who are clearly or manifestly eligible
- a review of the Impairment Tables
- enhanced Job Capacity Assessments undertaken by suitably qualified DSP assessors
- a new Health Professional Advice Unit in Centrelink
- improved information on employment assistance for people receiving DSP
- a workforce re-engagement contact pilot.

Job Capacity Assessments

From 1 July 2010, people who claim DSP have their work capacity assessed by a more qualified, senior assessor. DSP Assessors have access to clearer guidelines on the assessment of work capacity. In determining a claimant's current work capacity, DSP Assessors will take into account a person's prior work history, their previous access to employment services, and their treating doctor's report as well as any other available medical evidence.

DSP Assessors also have access to a new Health Professional Advice Unit in Centrelink (see below).

Assessments for manifest cases

From 1 July 2010, the DSP assessment process has been simplified to fast-track decisions for claimants who are clearly, or manifestly eligible due to a congenital disability, catastrophic injury or illness. This will help them receive financial support more quickly.

In manifest DSP cases, the claimant's medical report will be used to grant DSP on the basis of prognosis alone. In cases where the prognosis is unclear the claimant's treating doctor may be contacted by DSP Assessors for more information. Health Professional Advice Unit Officers may also contact treating doctors in complex cases. Where a person is manifestly eligible for DSP their entitlement will be assessed without the need for a Job Capacity Assessment.

Health Professional Advice Unit

Centrelink's Health Professional Advice Unit is a team of health professionals, including medical practitioners. The Advice Unit will provide medical advice and opinions to decision makers to assist in determining a person's eligibility for DSP or a Temporary Incapacity exemption from participation requirements (where the person receives an Activity Tested Centrelink payment).

The Advice Unit, when required, will review medical information provided in DSP claims and provide advice and interpretation to DSP Assessors on a claimant's medical condition(s) and its impact on their work capacity. This includes advice on whether a person's condition is manifest.

- Treating doctors contacted by the Advice Unit may be paid a fee of \$80.00 for a telephone report or \$150.00 for a written report.

Improving the lives of Australians

Review of Impairment Tables

The Tables for the Assessment of Work-related Impairment for Disability Support Pension (Impairment Tables) are being reviewed and will be updated to make sure they are consistent with contemporary medical and rehabilitation practice.

The Impairment Tables are being reviewed in consultation with medical and allied health professionals and disability stakeholders. An Advisory Committee has been established to oversee the review. Updated Impairment Tables will be introduced from 1 January 2012.

Information on employment assistance for people receiving DSP

There will always be some people on DSP who are unable to work. However others may have a partial capacity to work, or to be reskilled to help them get work in a different field. People on DSP who engage in work may also need extra support to keep working.

Having a job provides opportunities and reduces barriers for people with disability. People with disability who can work, want to do so but may need some support.

Centrelink is writing to people in receipt of DSP who work, or have recently been in work, to provide information on the Government programs and services available that can help them now or in the future. For example, there is Job in Jeopardy Assistance and an Employment Assistance Fund which can provide help to DSP recipients who have difficulty staying at work because of their disability.

Workforce re-engagement contact pilot

Centrelink is conducting a workforce re-engagement contact pilot in selected areas over a three year period. This will target new DSP recipients who have been assessed as having a current or future work capacity of 8–14 hours a week.

Centrelink will contact new DSP recipients when they are first granted DSP, again at three months and after 12 months to outline the assistance and incentives available to help those who may be able to work, or participate in study, training or volunteer activities. The contact may be face-to-face, by telephone, or by invitation to a seminar.

The aim of the pilot is to work out the best ways of providing information and support to help people on DSP who may be able to work.

More information

For more information about Centrelink payments and services for people with disability – Disability Support Pension and Disability Employment Services:

- go to www.centrelink.gov.au for a range of products and publications about specific Centrelink support and services
- call **13 2717**
- visit the local Centrelink Customer Service Centre.

For more information about employment services for people with disability and their employers:

- go to www.jobaccess.gov.au
- contact a JobAccess Advisor on **1800 464 800**.