



# 2014-15 Budget – Changes to Disability Support Pension portability

## What was announced in the Budget?

The 2014-15 Budget announced that the Government would limit the period a person can normally be paid and continue to qualify for the Disability Support Pension (DSP) outside Australia to four weeks in a 12-month period.

DSP recipients, who remain outside Australia, on a temporary absence for more than four weeks, will have their payment stopped.

DSP recipients with a severe and permanent disability and no future work capacity will continue to be able to apply for unlimited portability of their pension.

In limited circumstances and as defined in the legislation, disability support pensioners may be granted an indefinite period of payment overseas if they have a terminal illness and are planning to return to their family for care and support, or country of origin. There is also a limited discretion in the legislation to extend a person's portability period if they are overseas and are prevented from returning to Australia because of an unexpected event. These reasons include the death of a family member of the person or a serious accident involving the person or a family member of the person.

DSP can also be paid for a longer period in the case of approved overseas study that is part of a full-time course in Australia, or where the recipient is severely disabled and dependent on a family member who is posted overseas by their employer.

The scenarios below explain how the new arrangements apply to DSP recipients travelling overseas.

## Departure before 1 January 2015

A DSP recipient who leaves Australia prior to 1 January 2015 will be paid under the current six-week portability rules for that trip. However, any DSP recipient outside Australia on 1 January 2015, will have the days accruing from 1 January 2015 counted as part of the four-week portability period.

Example: Sam is receiving the DSP and departs on a 40 day overseas trip on 17 December 2014 and expects to return to Australia on 26 January 2015. Because Sam was overseas on 1 January 2015, the period overseas from 1 January 2015 up to and including 26 January 2015 will count towards the four week portability period. Therefore Sam will have 2 days portability remaining from his four week portability period in a 12-month period.

## Travel booked and paid for before the Budget announcement

DSP recipients who have booked and paid for travel before 14 May 2014 will have special arrangements applied. These arrangements will allow their DSP to be paid outside Australia for up to six weeks for trips that commence after 1 January 2015 and conclude before 1 January 2016. Payment prior to 14 May 2014 could have been a part or full payment.

## Multiple trips within the twelve month period

A DSP recipient can travel overseas, and retain their pension, for up to four weeks in a 12-month period. The four weeks can comprise a number of shorter trips, provided the total overseas travel does not exceed four weeks (28 days) in a 12-month period while paid DSP.

Example: In April 2015, James (DSP recipient) and his carer Chris travelled to Fiji for seven days. On their return they booked a further overseas trip to Bali for fourteen days, from 15 July 2015. In November 2015 they were invited to a wedding in Thailand and decided to use the balance of their four week portability entitlement. James and Chris were able to take advantage of the opportunity to take multiple trips in the 12-month period.

## Rolling twelve month period

The period of 12 months is determined on a rolling basis. For example, if a DSP recipient departs Australia on a temporary overseas trip on 1 May 2015 the 12-month portability entitlement period commences from that date and ends on 30 April 2016. If the person does not depart overseas again until 20 December 2018, then the 12-month period will commence from that date.

Example: Robyn purchased tickets for a four week cruise around New Zealand which departed on 1 May 2015. Robyn has used her four week portability entitlement for the 12-month period and will not be able to travel, and retain her full rate of payment, before 30 April 2016 (unless special circumstances apply). Robyn did not travel overseas again until 20 December 2018. Her four week portability period would commence from that date.

## Additional temporary absences

In limited circumstances defined in legislation, a person may be granted additional temporary absences, provided each absence does not exceed four weeks. These circumstances include attending an acute family crisis, seeking medical treatment not available in Australia or for a defined humanitarian purpose.

## What if you stay overseas for more than four weeks in a 12-month period?

Anyone who stays overseas for more than four weeks in a 12-month period will have their payment stopped unless they have applied for, and been granted, an extension to their portability period. They will not be eligible to be back paid for any unapproved period in excess of four weeks that they spend overseas.

## What to do if you are planning to be overseas for longer than four weeks or your payment is suspended?

For more information visit [humanservices.gov.au/paymentoverseas](http://humanservices.gov.au/paymentoverseas). If you know that you are going to be overseas for more than four weeks, in a 12-month period, please notify the Department of Human Services on 13 2717 before you depart Australia.

If your payment is suspended while overseas, please contact the Department as soon as possible after returning to Australia to have your payment restarted, subject to ongoing entitlement.