

Tips on dealing with Centrelink

1. Most things can be done online

It can take hours to get through to Centrelink on the phone! Only call if you have tried doing it yourself online first or you have a complex issue and need to talk to someone. Be prepared to wait. You can now do most things through Centrelink's online service, such as update your address, report your income, change your relationship status and apply for claims.

[Find the right phone number](#) for the service you need. Or call **136 240**.

2. Get all your documentation before making a claim

When you submit a claim for any payment you will be asked to provide documentation related to your claim. This will be proof of birth documents such as a birth certificate or passport, pay slips, bank statements, medical evidence and separation certificates. If you want to get your claim assessed as quickly as possible, make sure you submit everything they have requested as soon as possible.

3. Never send anything to Centrelink by snail mail

It will very likely get lost. Even before Centrelink moved most of their services online, snail mail to Centrelink would almost always get lost in the system. It might be tempting to put forms in the mail, rather than going in to a Centrelink office, or dealing with their online submission process, but don't do it! You will regret it!

4. Don't go in to a Centrelink office if you need to apply for a payment

You will just have to wait in line for ages to finally speak to someone, who will then put you on a computer, so that you can do it online. This is only useful if you don't have other access to a computer (even then, you don't have to wait in line to use the Centrelink computers).

5. Take a buddy with you

You're allowed to take a support person with you for dealings with Centrelink. If you have a complicated situation, take someone with you (if you can). It will usually make the whole situation more bearable (fun even? no, not fun); also, they might understand things that you miss; and they can be helpful if you're feeling nervous.

6. Take notes of what you are told

If you have a complicated situation, it's possible to get told very different things by different Centrelink staff. Surprise – they're not all experts on every situation. Keeping notes on what you've been told by various Centrelink staff (including their names and the date/time) can help if you end up following incorrect advice – especially if you're facing a penalty for doing so.

7. Contact a Centrelink social worker

Dealing with Centrelink can be stressful and if you are feeling vulnerable and confused you might find it helpful to speak with a social worker. Ask to speak with a social worker when you call or attend at a Centrelink office.

Contact Centrelink social workers: **132 850** (8am – 5pm)

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