

Australian Pension News



A new international social security agreement with Latvia

On 1 January 2013 the social security agreement between Australia and Latvia commenced.



If you have lived in Australia and Latvia, the new agreement may be able to help you receive an Australian Age Pension and/or one of the following Latvian pensions:

- Age pension
- Survivor's pension.

The agreement allows you to combine your periods of residence in Australia, and periods of social security insurance in Latvia to help you qualify for benefits from both countries.

If you are already receiving Australian Age Pension you don't need to claim again under the new agreement. If you might be entitled to receive a Latvian pension, you may be required under Australian law to lodge a claim for that payment.

You can get claim forms for both the Australian Age Pension and Latvian pensions from the Latvian State Social Security Agency.

For more information:

- go to the Department of Human Services website and download the *Social Security Agreement between Australia and Latvia* factsheet, available in English and Latvian, or
- call International Services.

Tell us if your bank details change

If you receive your Australian payment by direct deposit, remember to tell us about any banking changes. This could include a merger, branch closure or a change in your bank account or International Bank Account Number (IBAN). These changes may result in your payment not being delivered to your account. If in doubt, ask your bank to confirm that your details are still correct.

If you receive your payment by cheque, make sure you cash your cheque as soon as possible. Cheques that are not deposited within six months (in some cases a shorter period) of the date of issue will not be able to be cashed.

The return and reissue of payments can take a long time. Please make sure you let us know as soon as possible of any changes to your bank account. For more information contact International Services.



International Services contact details on page 4.



Rates

Rates shown are valid from 20 March 2013 to 30 June 2013.

Outside Australia				
Pension Rates and Thresholds	SINGLE	COUPLE both eligible	COUPLE one eligible partner	COUPLE separated due to ill health
How much pension^{1,2,3}	Per year	Per year	Per year	Per year each
Maximum basic rate	A\$ 19,076.20	A\$ 28,761.20	A\$ 14,380.60	A\$ 19,076.20
Basic Pension Supplement	A\$ 553.80	A\$ 925.60	A\$ 462.80	A\$ 553.80
Total	A\$ 19,630.00	A\$ 29,686.80	A\$ 14,843.40	A\$ 19,630.00
Allowable Income⁴	Per year	Combined	Combined	Combined
Full pension	up to A\$ 3,952.00	up to A\$ 6,968.00	up to A\$ 6,968.00	up to A\$ 6,968.00
Part pension	less than A\$ 43,212.00	less than A\$ 66,341.60	less than A\$ 66,341.60	less than A\$ 85,488.00
Allowable Assets⁵	Single	Combined	Combined	Combined
Full pension— Home owner	A\$ 192,500.00	A\$ 273,000.00	A\$ 273,000.00	A\$ 273,000.00
Full pension— Non-home owner	A\$ 332,000.00	A\$ 412,500.00	A\$ 412,500.00	A\$ 412,500.00
Part pension— Home owner	less than A\$ 696,000.00	less than A\$ 1,034,500.00	less than A\$ 1,034,500.00	less than A\$ 1,280,000.00
Part pension— Non-home owner	less than A\$ 835,500.00	less than A\$ 1,174,000.00	less than A\$ 1,174,000.00	less than A\$ 1,419,500.00
Deeming Rates and Thresholds	Single	Combined	Combined	Combined
Threshold	A\$ 45,400.00	A\$ 75,600.00	A\$ 75,600.00	A\$ 75,600.00
Rate below threshold	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%
Rate above threshold	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%

These figures are a guide only. Effective 20 March 2013 unless otherwise stated.

These rates apply to customers who are permanently outside Australia or absent from Australia for longer than six weeks.

1. Rate of payment is calculated under both the income and assets tests. The test that results in the lower rate (or nil rate) is the one that is applied. Some assets are deemed to earn income and there are special rules for other types of income. There is no income or assets test for customers who are permanently blind.
2. Some customers may receive a transitional rate of pension (based on the pre-20 September 2009 income test rules and payment rates).
3. Some customers may receive a reduced rate of pension based on how long they were an Australian resident.
4. Each two weeks, the Work Bonus disregards up to A\$250 of employment income earned by eligible pensioners over age pension age (unless you receive Parenting Payment [Single]). If your employment income is less than A\$250, the unused Work Bonus is banked up to a maximum amount of A\$6500. If you are eligible for a transitional rate, we will compare the transitional rate (which has no Work Bonus) to the new rate (which has the Work Bonus). The transitional rate is paid whenever it pays the higher rate. Single and combined couple rates are reduced by A\$1.50 per two weeks for every A\$1000 of additional assets above the allowable assets limit. Certain assets are not included in the assets test.
5. Single and combined couple rates are reduced by A\$1.50 per two weeks for every A\$1000 of additional assets above the allowable assets limit. Certain assets are not included in the assets test.

Information about your payments

You will receive 13 regular four-weekly payments each year.

Your four-weekly pension payments

Your payment will be issued by Centrelink:	Direct deposit customers should receive payment by:	Cheque customers should receive payment by:	Payment covers the period:
16 May 2013	22 May 2013	5 June 2013	18 April to 15 May 2013
13 June 2013	19 June 2013	3 July 2013	16 May to 12 June 2013
11 July 2013	17 July 2013	31 July 2013	13 June to 10 July 2013
8 August 2013	14 August 2013	28 August 2013	11 July to 7 August 2013
5 September 2013	11 September 2013	25 September 2013	8 August to 4 September 2013
3 October 2013	9 October 2013	23 October 2013	5 September to 2 October 2013
31 October 2013	6 November 2013	20 November 2013	3 October to 30 October 2013

Direct deposit payments

If you receive your payment by direct deposit into your bank account it will be available within two to six days after issue. If your payment hasn't arrived within 10 days of being issued, check with your local bank before contacting us.

Cheque payments

Cheque payments are available 14–20 days after issue. They are sent in local currency for most countries, or in US dollars.

Cheques are sent through the international and local mail systems and there are often delays. These delays are beyond our control.

If your cheque has not arrived within 20 days of being issued, contact us and we will cancel your cheque and send you a new one. The new cheque may also take some time to reach you.

After you deposit the cheque into your bank account, you will have to wait for the cheque to clear before you can access the funds. Clearance delays can be around two weeks if the cheque is in local currency, or four weeks for US-dollar cheques.

If a cheque arrives after you have asked us to cancel it, don't cash it, or you may incur penalty bank charges. Contact us if you are unsure which cheque to cash.

In most countries we can pay pensions directly into bank accounts. We encourage this method of payment, as it is safe, quick and reliable. Call us if you would like to discuss changing to direct deposit payments.

International Services closed dates

International Services will be closed for the Queen's Birthday public holiday on:

- Monday, 10 June 2013.



What you must tell us

There can be a variety of changes in your personal circumstances, which might affect how much you can get from us. You need to tell us if there is a change in your or your partner's (if applicable) circumstances within 28 days of the change occurring. These changes may be to your:

- income
- assets
- financial investments and bank accounts
- personal circumstances, including changes to your address, marital status or your school age dependants
- international travel plans, and
- compensation claims.

You must also tell us if you:

- are imprisoned
- make any gifts to family, friends or charities, or
- receive an inheritance.

If you don't tell us about these changes, you may be paid the wrong amount and you will have to pay money back. If there has not been any change in your circumstances, you don't need to contact us.

If you're unsure about whether to tell us about a change in your life that might have an impact on your pension, please contact us to find out. You can find our contact details below.

How to contact us

Visit the Department of Human Services website to find out information about your payment as well as our other payments and services.

Call us Monday to Friday, between 8.00 am–5.00 pm Australian Eastern Standard Time (AEST).

Phone calls from the following countries are Freecall™. Dial the number shown without any international or country codes before it.

Austria	Freecall™ 0800 295 165
Canada	Freecall™ 1888 2557 493
China (North)*	Freecall™ 10 800 6100 427
China (South)*	Freecall™ 10 800 2611 309
Denmark	Freecall™ 8088 3556
Germany	Freecall™ 0800 180 2482
Greece	Freecall™ 0080 0611 26209
India	Freecall™ 000 800 61 01098

Indonesia	Freecall™ 001 803 61 035
Italy	Freecall™ 800 781 977
Korea Republic	Freecall™ 003 081 32326
Netherlands	Freecall™ 0800 0224 364
New Zealand	Freecall™ 0800 441 248
Philippines	Freecall™ 1800 1611 0046
Poland	Freecall™ 00 800 6111 220
Portugal	Freecall™ 800 861 122
Singapore	Freecall™ 800 6167 015
Spain	Freecall™ 900 951 547
Thailand	Freecall™ 001 800 611 4136
Turkey	Freecall™ 00 800 6190 5703
United Arab Emirates	Freecall™ 800 061 04319
United Kingdom	Freecall™ 0800 169 5865
USA	Freecall™ 1866 3433 086

*China (North) includes the provinces of Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei, Shanxi, Inner Mongolia, Heilongjiang, Liaoning, Jilin, Shandong and Henan. All other provinces are considered as China (South) for this purpose.

Note: A Freecall™ may not be available from every location within the country and may not be free from mobile or public phones. If using a pay telephone, you will need to insert coins or a card as for a local call and this may not be refunded at the end of the call.

If you are in a country that is not listed, or if you are not able to use the Freecall™ number listed above, please contact us on **+61 3 6222 3455**.

You can email us at **international.services@humanservices.gov.au** fax us on **+61 3 6222 2799**, or write to us at PO Box 7809, Canberra BC, ACT 2610, Australia.

Please include your name, Centrelink Customer Reference Number, and your telephone number in your query.

Note: email is not a secure communication medium.

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