Issue 37

# Australian Pension News

## New International Social Security Agreement with India

On 1 January 2016, a new Social Security Agreement between Australia and India commenced.

### If you are in Australia

You can now lodge your claim for an Indian pension in Australia if you have lived in India and contributions have been made to the Indian Employees’ Pension Scheme for at least 10 years, and those contributions have not been
‘cashed out’.

### If you are in India

You can now lodge your claim for an Australian Age Pension in India, if you have:

* been an Australian resident for a period of at least 10 years, and
* lived in Australia for at least 12 months between 16 November 1995 and age
pension age.

For more information, visit
**humanservices.gov.au/issa** or contact us (see page 4).

## Early release of superannuation

Generally, you cannot access your superannuation before you reach your preservation age.

There are limited circumstances where the law allows you to access your superannuation early. The grounds under which you can access your superannuation early are available directly through your superannuation fund. These circumstances include:

* severe financial hardship
* terminal illness
* permanent incapacity
* balances of $200 or less, or
* permanent departure from Australia.

If any of these apply to you, you should contact your superannuation fund.

We can also talk to you about early release of superannuation and how it may affect your payment. Call us between 9.00 am and 5.00 pm Australian Eastern Standard Time, Monday to Friday on **+61 3 6222 2189**,or you can also visit our website **humanservices.gov.au/earlysuper** to check your eligibility and how to apply.

## Rates

Outside Australia pension rates and thresholds are re-assessed in January, March, July and September each year.

### Rates and thresholds

These Australian dollar (A$) figures are a guide only and are effective from 20 March 2016 unless otherwise stated.

| **Outside Australia pension rates and thresholds** | **SINGLE** | **COUPLE both eligible** | **COUPLE one eligible partner** | **COUPLE separated due to ill health** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **How much pension1, 2, 3** | **Per year** | **Per year** | **Per year** | **Per year each** |
| Maximum basic rate | A$ 20,664.80 | A$ 31,153.20  | A$ 15,576.60  | A$ 20,664.80  |
| Basic Pension Supplement | A$ 590.20  | A$ 972.40 | A$ 486.20 | A$ 590.20  |
| **Total** | **A$ 21,255.00**  | **A$ 32,125.60** | **A$ 16,062.80**  | **A$ 21,255.00**  |
| **Allowable Income4** | **Per year** | **Combined** | **Combined** | **Combined** |
| Full pension | up to A$ 4,212.00 | up to A$ 7,488.00  | up to A$ 7,488.00  | up to A$ 7,488.00  |
| Part pension | Less than A$ 46,722.00  | Less than A$ 71,739.20  | Less than A$ 71,739.20  | Less than A$ 92,508.00  |
| **Allowable Assets5** | **Single** | **Combined** | **Combined** | **Combined** |
| Full pension—Homeowner | A$ 205,500.00  | A$ 291,500.00  | A$ 291,500.00  | A$ 291,500.00  |
| Full pension—Non-homeowner | A$ 354,500.00  | A$ 440,500.00  | A$ 440,500 .00 | A$ 440,500.00  |
| Part pension—Homeowner | Less than A$ 750,500.00  | Less than A$ 1,115,500.00  | Less than A$ 1,115,500.00  | Less than A$ 1,381,500.00  |
| Part pension—Non-homeowner | Less than A$ 899,500.00  | Less than A$ 1,264,500.00  | Less than A$ 1,264,500.00  | Less than A$ 1,530,500.00  |
| **Deeming rates and thresholds** | **Single** | **Combined** | **Combined** | **Combined** |
| Threshold | A$ 48,600.00  | A$ 80,600.00 | A$ 80,600.00  | A$ 80,600.00  |
| Rate below threshold | 1.75% | 1.75% | 1.75% | 1.75% |
| Rate above threshold | 3.25% | 3.25% | 3.25% | 3.25% |

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

1. The rate of payment is calculated under both the income and assets tests. The test that results in the lower rate or nil rate 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. Every 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$6,500. If you are eligible for a transitional rate, we will compare the transitional rate that has no Work Bonus to the new rate which has the Work Bonus. The transitional rate is paid whenever it pays the higher rate.
5. Single and combined couple rates are reduced by A$1.50 per two weeks for every A$1,000 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.

**Four-weekly pension payment calendar—May to November 2016**

| Your payment will be **issued** on: | Direct deposit customers should **receive** payment by: | Cheque customers should **receive** payment by: | Payment **covers** the period: |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 12 May 2016 | 18 May 2016 | 1 Jun 2016 | 14 Apr to 11 May 2016 |
| 9 Jun 2016 | 15 Jun 2016 | 29 Jun 2016 | 12 May to 8 Jun 2016 |
| 7 Jul 2016 | 13 Jul 2016 | 27 Jul 2016 | 9 Jun to 6 Jul 2016 |
| 4 Aug 2016 | 10 Aug 2016 | 24 Aug 2016 | 7 Jul to 3 Aug 2016 |
| 1 Sep 2016 | 7 Sep 2016 | 21 Sep 2016 | 4 Aug to 31 Aug 2016 |
| 29 Sep 2016 | 5 Oct 2016 | 19 Oct 2016 | 1 Sep to 28 Sep 2016 |
| 27 Oct 2016 | 2 Nov 2016 | 16 Nov 2016 | 29 Sep to 26 Oct 2016 |
| 24 Nov 2016  | 30 Nov 2016 | 14 Dec 2016 | 27 Oct to 23 Nov 2016 |

Cheques may be delivered later than these dates due to delays in mail delivery.

### Direct deposit payments

In most countries, we pay pensions directly into bank accounts. We encourage this method of payment as it is safe, quick and reliable.

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.

## Keep up to date on the latest pension payment rates and dates

Visit **humanservices.gov.au** and search for ‘Outside Australia Pension Rates’ to get the latest information about pension rates and payment dates outside Australia. Pension rates, and income and asset thresholds are updated on our website whenever there’s a change.

This newsletter is also available on our website at **humanservices.gov.au/customer/publications/int001**

### International Services closure dates

International Services will be closed on:

* Queen’s Birthday—13 June 2016

## What you must tell us

Our lives are always changing and some of these changes affect how much money we give you. It’s important you tell us within 28 days of changes to your personal circumstances.

These changes may be to your or your partner’s:

* income or assets where the change is more than $2000
* 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 or your partner:

* is imprisoned
* makes any gifts to family, friends or charities, or
* receives an inheritance.

If you don’t tell us about these changes, you may be paid the wrong amount and you’ll have to pay the money back.

If you’re unsure about whether to tell us about a change in your life that might affect your pension, please contact us on one of the phone numbers below.

## How to contact us

Visit **humanservices.gov.au** to find out information about your payment as well as our other payments and services.

Call us Monday to Friday, between 8.00 am and 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’ll 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’re in a country that’s not listed, or if you’re not able to use the Freecall™ number listed above, please contact us on **+61 3 6222 3455**.

You can 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.

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