

Red Tape... ALERT!

THINGS YOU MIGHT WANT TO KNOW...

Centrelink's Restricted Servicing Arrangements (RSA) guidelines

The following guidelines specify options that may be used by Centrelink workers when clients exhibit inappropriate or aggressive behaviour:

"1 - Warning letter (pre-RSA)

Warning letter is sent to the person to advise that their behaviour is inappropriate, any future incidents of displaying inappropriate or aggressive behaviour will result in a RSA Level 3 or above.

2 - 24 hour exclusion period (pre RSA)

Person is directed to leave the location and not attend any location again for at least 24 hours. This can be used in conjunction with RSA Level 3, 4 and 7.

3 - One Main Contact RSA

The person is assigned an appropriate one main contact in a location that provides access to the department's services. The one main contact can be face-to-face and/or over the phone.

4 - Direct to attend nearby location RSA

The person is directed to attend a specific nearby location that offers access to the department's services and not any other location.

5 - Withdrawal of face-to-face services RSA (5 business days)

In the event of a serious incident and police are called, face-to-face services can be withdrawn for up to 5 business days (refer 7.3).

6 - Withdrawal of face-to-face services RSA

The person is

assigned a one main contact over the phone. This arrangement can be varied to limit the number of contact times and duration of each contact, during specific times on specific days if appropriate.

7 - Withdrawal of call services RSA

The person is assigned a one main contact over the phone and/or in a face-to-face location and this arrangement can be varied to limit contact times and durations during the day if appropriate.

8 - Withdrawal of face-to-face and call services (write only) RSA

This is a last resort RSA. The person can only conduct their business via mail, e-mail, fax, Self Service or appointing a third party..."

A full copy of the guidelines is available from SSRV.

Freecall number for Indigenous and Income Management callers

ABSTUDY students, indigenous people and people on Income Management can now contact Centrelink from any landline or Telstra mobile Australia-wide free of charge.

The numbers are:

- ABSTUDY
1800 132 317
- Indigenous Line
1800 136 380
- Income Management Line
1800 132 594

The lines operate from 8am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.

Income Management to be extended

In the space of the same discussion about the none-too-flattering independent evaluation of Income Management, which identified major problems, the Minister for Families, Housing Community Services & Indigenous Affairs Jenny Macklin has announced that compulsory income management will be extended.

From July 2013, young people applying for the independent rate of youth allowance on the basis of “unreasonable to live at home” will be included in the “vulnerable” category of income management.

The “unreasonable to live at home” requirements include young people who experience:

- extreme family breakdown
- serious risk to physical or mental health due to violence, sexual abuse or other unreasonable circumstances, or
- whose parents cannot provide a suitable home because they lack stable accommodation.

In addition they have to not be receiving any other income from neither the State nor Commonwealth Government, nor continuous support from a parent or a guardian.

The second new income management target is newly-released prisoners.

Currently, newly-released prisoners may be eligible for crisis payment, which is not income-managed, and a hardship advance of their ongoing entitlement, which is likely to be income-managed, but will depend on which payment they receive.

The Minister will be required to change the current “instrument”, which lists the types of people who are considered vulnerable, and are referred to income management.

Before placing people on income management, **Centrelink will still be required to consider, as is the case with all vulnerable income management, whether the person is capable of meeting their priority needs, and secondly, whether income management is the most appropriate action to assist people to meet their priority needs.**

Centrelink telephone callback

By using Centrelink’s Place In Queue technology, people enter their Customer Reference Number and PIN, hang up, and receive a call back from a staff member when they reach the head of the queue.

This service is available to most callers and lines when expected answer times exceed ten minutes.

Callers and lines included are:

- Youth and Students using mobiles
- Participation Solutions Team using mobiles for people facing activity test penalties
- Employment Services, Age Pensioners, ABSTUDY, Disability Sickness and Carers, Indigenous Services, Families and Parenting, and Online Service Support - using mobiles and land lines

People need to register for phone self-service to use callback.

The service is available from 8am – 4pm local time.

Centrelink’s operational guidelines online

Under Freedom of Information changes which came into effect last year, Centrelink has been required to place significantly more information online than in the past.

As a result, many of their internal guidelines, called e-Reference guidelines, can be obtained at <http://operational.humanservices.gov.au>