



This guide is for:

People who have been affected by disasters seeking financial assistance through Centrelink.

This guide addresses:

- Disaster Recovery Payment
- Disaster Recovery Allowance
- Special Circumstances and Out-of-Time Claims

Part A – Disaster Recovery Payment

What is Disaster Recovery Payment?

Disaster Recovery Payment is a one-off lump sum payment for people who have been affected by a major disaster.

How much is Disaster Recovery Payment?

The current rate of Disaster Recovery Payment is:

- \$1000 for each affected adult; and
- \$400 for each child in the care of an affected adult.

The rate of Disaster Recovery Payment may be different for future disasters. You should check the current rate at the time you apply for the payment on the Service Australia website.

Am I eligible for Disaster Recovery Payment?

You may be eligible for Disaster Recovery Payment if the relevant Government Minister has declared in writing that an event you went through is a 'Major Disaster'. The Minister will usually provide conditions for eligibility in that declaration, including:

1. Which areas or locations are affected by the disaster; and
2. Which people have been 'adversely affected' by the disaster.

This information will be on the Services Australia website.

When can I claim Disaster Recovery Payment?

You must claim Disaster Recovery Payment within 6 months of a disaster being declared a 'Major Disaster'.

You may also make a claim after this time if:

- There are special circumstances that justify a late claim; and
- You lodge your claim within a reasonable period of time.

What counts as special circumstances and a reasonable time will depend on the specific situation.

You may wish to seek advice about your own circumstances.

Part B – Disaster Recovery Allowance

What is Disaster Recovery Allowance?

Disaster Recovery Allowance is a fortnightly payment for people who have lost income as a direct result of a disaster. Disaster Recovery Allowance is paid for a maximum of 13 weeks.

How much is Disaster Recovery Allowance?

If you are 22 or older the maximum rate of Disaster Recovery Allowance is the same as your maximum rate of JobSeeker Payment.

If you are under 22, the maximum rate of Disaster Recovery Allowance is the same as your maximum rate of Youth Allowance.

Your income may reduce the amount of Disaster Recovery Allowance you are eligible for.

Am I eligible for Disaster Recovery Allowance?

You may be eligible for Disaster Recovery Allowance if you have lost income as a result of a disaster you went through that the relevant Government Minister has declared in writing is a 'Major Disaster'. The Minister will usually provide conditions for eligibility in that declaration, including:

1. Which areas or locations are affected by the disaster; and
2. Which industries have been affected by the disaster in those areas.

This information will be on the Services Australia website.

When can I claim Disaster Recovery Allowance?

You must claim Disaster Recovery Allowance within 6 months of a disaster being declared a 'Major Disaster'.

You may also make a claim after this time if:

- There are special circumstances that justify a late claim; and
- You lodge your claim in within a reasonable period of time.

What counts as special circumstances and a reasonable time will depend on the specific situation.

You may wish to seek advice about your own circumstances.

Part C – Special Circumstances and Out-of-time Claims

What are special circumstances?

The term 'special circumstances' is not defined in the laws about social security. Generally, special circumstances exist where a situation is unusual, extraordinary, or out of the ordinary.

Disruption caused by the disaster itself is not likely to be considered a special circumstance that justifies a late claim for Disaster Recovery Allowance or Disaster Recovery Payment, as this will likely apply to everyone affected by the disaster.

Are my circumstances special? Can I lodge a claim out of time?

If you have not been able to make a claim in time but believe your circumstances mean you should have more time to do so, you may test your eligibility by contacting Centrelink and asking to lodge a claim.

You should tell Centrelink you are aware your claim is out of time and would like them to process your application anyway as your circumstances are special. You should provide details and evidence that show your case is unusual, exceptional, or out of the ordinary.

You may consider seeking advice about your circumstances from Social Security Rights Victoria or another legal service in your area. We cannot tell you whether Centrelink will accept your claim, but we can discuss your situation and provide information that may help in making a claim and showing you have special circumstances.

How to claim

You can claim Disaster Recovery Payment and Allowance by calling the Centrelink disaster Assist line on 180 22 66 or on the Services Australia website.

Contact Social Security Rights Victoria

Advice Line: 03 9481 0355
Monday to Thursday 9:30 am –12:30 pm
ssrv.org.au

More information

www.disasterlegalhelp.org.au
www.disasterassist.gov.au

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This guide is not legal advice and you may wish to seek advice about your individual circumstances. Social Security Rights Victoria is an independent, state-wide community legal centre that specialises in social security and related law, policy and procedure. We provide free legal advice and information about the social security system.

Eligibility requirements for payments change from time to time. You should check the Services Australia website or seek advice from Social Security Rights Victoria or another legal service about your circumstances.