

Centrelink, Same-sex Law Reform and You



From 1st July 2009, Centrelink will be recognising same-sex de-facto couples for the purpose of assessing benefit levels. These reforms were announced on 27 November 2008, and are designed to remove discriminatory practices within government policy.

Essentially, same-sex couples will be assessed in the same way that heterosexual couples have been, when receiving Centrelink benefits.

What does this mean for you?

What do I have to do?

From March 30, you can advise Centrelink if you are currently living with a partner. Reassessments won't actually be done until July 1st.

What can happen to me if I don't register?

Centrelink will have the right to investigate, and prosecute, people who do not disclose their same-sex relationship. After July 1st, any overpayments may have to be paid back to Centrelink.

So who is a partner?

Everybody's relationship is different and as individual as the people in them. A 'partner' is deemed to be someone that you share a home with, own joint assets with (like cars or furniture), share the same group of friends and/or have sex with.

What forms do I have to fill in?

The Living Arrangement Form
The Income and Assets Form

Both can be found by using the FORMS link on the Centrelink website: <http://www.centrelink.gov.au/>

What if I don't agree with the assessment?

You can appeal. You can speak with the Customer Service Office and ask for the Reviews and Appeals Fact Sheet, which can be found on the Centrelink website.

Who can I go?

PD, QPP and QAHC are here to support you. While we cannot advise you about your legal rights or obligations, we are available to support you by talking to you about your concerns and fears, or helping you complete the forms, or use the on-line calculator on the Centrelink website.

Reference: Centrelink
http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/individuals/same_sex.htm#pubs

Where can I go for help?

POSITIVE DIRECTIONS

Ask for the Client Liaison Officer (CLO) in your area.

Brisbane 07 3900 8000

Cairns 07 4051 1028

Gold Coast 07 5576 8366

Sunshine Coast 07 5441 1222

Townsville 07 4721 1384

Outside Brisbane 1800 422 313

www.positivedirections.org.au

QPP

21 Manilla Street

East Brisbane

Ph: 07-3013 5555

Outside Brisbane 1800 636 241

www.qpp.net.au

QAHC

30 Helen Street

New Farm, Brisbane

Ph: 07-3017 1777

Outside Brisbane 1800 177 434

www.qahc.org.au

CENTRELINK

In relation to the Same Sex Law Reform, contact these Centrelink departments:

Centrelink Enquiry Line 13 62 80

Financial Information Line 13 23 00

Social Workers 13 17 94

www.centrelink.gov.au/

You may also find more information in these fact sheets:

(1) Centrelink general fact sheet on the same sex law reform:

http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/individuals/same_sex.htm#pubs

(2) An information sheet prepared by the National Welfare Rights Network:
<http://www.welfarerights.org.au/Factsheets/fsmlr.doc>

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What does this mean for you?

What if I have specific questions about how the law reform will impact me?

For answers to specific questions, you will need to speak with Centrelink directly. To obtain independent advice you can also contact the Welfare Rights Association* (Queensland) at www.wrcqld.org.au/ or phone 07-3847 5532 or 1800 358 511.

Can I call Centrelink anonymously?

Yes you can. You can call the Centrelink Enquiry Line on 13 62 80 to speak with a person anonymously about your circumstances and the impact that this reform may have for you and your partner/s.

When will my DSP or other type of pension be affected?

Unfortunately, we are unable to answer this question as every person's circumstance is individual. This is an example of when you can get SUPPORT from QPP, PD or QAHC, and INFORMATION from Centrelink by contacting them for direction and advice.

Is there an information pack from Centrelink?

Yes. Attached with this fact sheet is the Centrelink pack which contains the following:

- Centrelink recognises same sex relationships fact sheet
- Financial information service fact sheet
- Your right to privacy fact sheet
- Reviews and appeals fact sheet
- Guide to Australian government payments booklet

So what do I do now?

If you are a person living with HIV, you can call Positive Directions and speak to a Client Liaison Officer in your local area for information and support. Alternatively, you might like to call QPP.

IF you are a member of the LGBT community, you can contact QAHC.

Just remember, there is support available.

* The Welfare Rights Association Queensland is part of the National Welfare Rights Network. Advice from the Welfare Rights Association should not be seen as a substitute for legal advice in an individual's case.

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