## About this guide

This guide helps you understand the Age Pension (Blind) and outlines:

* your responsibilities
* what you are required to do to obtain the Age Pension (Blind)
* what evidence to provide during your application or review, and
* how to address obstacles in the application process.

## Disclaimer

Every effort has been made to ensure the information in this guide is accurate at the time of release. However, it is not an official Centrelink document, and does not provide information which will always be applicable to individual circumstances. For information related to your individual circumstances, you will need to call Centrelink on 132 717.

At the time of review of this Document, Centrelink now operates as Services Australia. Thus, telephone numbers and links related to Centrelink will reach Services Australia.

## A General Overview

If you are of Age Pension age, there are two different supports available to you: the Age Pension and the Age Pension (Blind). This document is to help you understand the Age Pension (Blind). If you are under the Age Pension age, then you would apply for the Disability Support Pension (Blind). If you are already receiving this payment and thinking about transferring to the Age Pension (Blind) when you reach the Age Pension age, please see ‘A Guide to Transitioning to the Age Pension (Blind).

The Age Pension (Blind) provides financial support for people who are permanently blind and over the retirement age – make sure that you explain you are applying for this when you speak to Centrelink staff, and that the information they give you is for the correct support.

To be eligible for Age Pension (Blind) you must be at the retirement age, and be assessed as permanently blind. Permanent blindness is a visual acuity after correction by suitable lenses is less than 6/60 in both eyes on the Snellen Scale, or 10% or less field of vision. Alternatively, you may qualify if there are any other visual defects present, and their combined effect results in the same degree of visual impairment as either of the above.

From 1 July 2017, the qualifying age for Age Pension will increase from 65 years to 65 years and 6 months. The qualifying age then increases by 6 months every 2 years, reaching 67 years by 1 July 2023. You will need to check with Centrelink whether you are under age pension age as it also depends on your year of birth.

If you are applying for Age Pension (Blind), you need to complete the application form, ‘Claim for Age Pension and Pension Bonus (SA002).

Make sure to choose ‘Yes’ (as applicable) at the questions on the application asking ‘are you claiming Disability Support Pension because you are permanently blind?’, and whether your partner is permanently blind.

Be very careful to check the amount that you will be paid. A couple (whether married or not) both receiving the Age Pension (Blind) will receive the couple rate. A person who receives the Age Pension (Blind), who marries or is married to (or is in or enters into a couple relationship with) a sighted person, will only receive half the couple rate, rather than the full single rate.

For other general details about the Age Pension (Blind), please contact Centrelink [or visit their website here](https://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/age-pension).

## Assessment for Age Pension (Blind)

A person whose medical evidence clearly indicates that they have permanent blindness is accepted as being manifestly eligible for the Age Pension (Blind). The report from your ophthalmologist or optometrist (with the supporting ophthalmologist’s details, see below) is sufficient medical evidence to support your application. Under law, if you are considered manifestly eligible due to permanent blindness you are not required to take part in any other assessments. Under the Age Pension (Blind) other than qualifying as permanently blind, you will have no medical eligibility requirements, and no medical reviews.

##  Supporting medical evidence

You need your ophthalmologist to complete a report that includes information about the diagnosis, treatment, symptoms, functional impact and prognosis of your vision. Your ophthalmologist needs to fill out [form SA-013](https://www.humanservices.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/sa013-1403en.pdf) to provide evidence of permanent blindness.

You can ask your optometrist to fill out this form instead. However, they need to provide details of your treating or formerly treating ophthalmologist, and clearly indicate the last referral they provided.

You do not need to provide any other medical evidence to satisfy the criteria for permanent blindness.

## Income and Assets test

If you are claiming Age Pension (Blind), you do not need to fill out the separate Income and Assets form, as you are not income and assets tested. However, if you are also claiming Rent Assistance, you will need to fill out this form, as Rent Assistance is income tested.

If you have a partner, their income or assets do not affect your payment rates, unless they are claiming an income support payment from Centrelink. If your partner is also permanently blind, they do not need to declare income and assets unless they are also claiming Rent Assistance.

If you are single and receiving the full single rate of the Age Pension (Blind) and you enter a de facto relationship or marriage, your payments change and you will receive half of the married rate. If this occurs you have an obligation to inform Centrelink, or you may be overpaid and have a repayment debt to Centrelink.

## Portability

Portability is the length of time you can leave Australia and still receive your payments. Under the Age Pension (Blind), basic portability is six weeks in a rolling twelve month period. Each 12 month period begins from your first day overseas. You must notify Centrelink International Services on 131 673 of your intention to travel, and when you return to Australia, in order to guarantee no interruption to your payments. If you have a need to travel for more than six weeks, discuss your situation with Centrelink international services as they can assess whether you are able to continue to receive some payments in your individual circumstances.

## The Age Pension (Blind) and Income Tax

Unlike the DSP (blind) which is tax-exempt income under Age Pension age, the Age Pension (Blind) is assessable income for tax purposes.

## My Aged Care

My Aged Care subsidises services to support you to remain in your home. You may be eligible for these in-home supports. Vision Australia is a registered provider with My Aged Care, and our staff can help you understand and navigate the referral process. Please call Vision Australia on 1300 84 74 66 for support or call My Aged Care directly on 1800 200 422.

Eligibility for supports through My Aged Care is not related to the Age Pension (Blind) or any other income support payments. However, some My Aged Care programs require an income assessment. So, if you receive Age Pension (Blind) and/or receive other income you may be required to undergo an income assessment to determine the level of subsidy you may receive.

## For further information

For any clarification of information in this guide or to obtain this guide in another format, call Vision Australia’s’ advocacy team on 1300 847 466 or send an email to advocacy@visionaustralia.org

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