# A guide to the Disability Support Pension (Blind)

IMAGE

## About this guide

This guide will help you understand the Disability Support Pension (DSP) (Blind). It will outline:

* Your responsibilities,
* What you are required to do to obtain the DSP (Blind),
* What evidence you will need to provide during your application or review, and
* How to address obstacles in the application process.

With this information, you’ll be better prepared to navigate the process and help to ensure that everything is in place for a successful pension application.

## 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 Services Australia 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 a part of Services Australia. The phone numbers and links throughout this document that relate to Centrelink will reach Services Australia.

A General Overview

To be eligible for the DSP (Blind), you must be assessed as permanently blind and aged between 16 and the Age Pension age.

To meet the DSP (Blind) permanent blindness medical rules, you must have one of the following:

* visual acuity on the Snellen Scale, after correction with suitable prescription lenses, must be less than 6/60 in both eyes,
* constriction of the visual field to within 10 degrees of fixation in the better eye, regardless of corrected visual acuity, or
* a combination of vision conditions that result in the same degree of vision loss as the two above.

The qualifying age for the Age Pension is currently 67 years old. You will need to confirm with Centrelink whether you meet the required age, as eligibility may also depend on your year of birth.

If you are already receiving the Disability Support Pension and would like to be assessed for permanent blindness you will need your ophthalmologist or optometrist to complete the SA013 form.

If you are applying for the DSP (Blind), you will need to complete the application form, [Claim for Disability Support Pension (SA466).](https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/sa466) Make sure to select ‘Yes’ at the question asking ‘Are you claiming the Disability Support Pension (Blind) because you are permanently blind?’ Ensure you lodge the SA013 form with the new DSP claim.

Once the application has been accepted, be careful to check the final amount you will be paid. If you are a member of a couple, you will receive the couple rate.

For more details about the DSP (Blind), please contact Centrelink [or visit their website.](https://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/disability-support-pension)

Assessment of the DSP (Blind)

A person whose medical evidence clearly indicates that they have permanent blindness is accepted as being eligible for the DSP (Blind). Being low vision will not allow you to qualify.

A report from your ophthalmologist or optometrist with the supporting ophthalmologist's details is enough medical evidence to support your application.

By law, if you are deemed “manifestly eligible” for permanent blindness, meaning your vision cannot be corrected to better than 6/60 in both eyes on the Snellen Scale or if you have 10% or less of your field of vision, you won’t need to undergo further medical checks or assessments. Non-medical checks or assessements may still be required.

## 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.servicesaustralia.gov.au/sa013) to provide sufficient evidence of permanent blindness and your visual acuity.

You can also ask your optometrist to fill out the SA-013 form instead. However, they will need to provide details of your treating or formerly treating ophthalmologist and clearly indicate the last referral they were provided.

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

## Income and assets testing

DSP (Blind) payments are tax-exempt if you are under the Age Pension age. Once you reach Age Pension age, these payments become assessable income.

The payment is not income and asset tested unless you:

* Are also claiming Rent Assistance,
* Received a compensation payment, or
* Are being paid under an International Agreement and receiving a foreign pension.

If you have a partner, their income and assets won't impact your payment rate unless they are receiving an income support payment from Centrelink.

You must provide your income and asset information if your partner:

* Is claiming or receiving an income support payment,
* Are not permanently blind, or
* Are permanently blind and receiving Rent Assistance.

This information is used to determine your partner’s payment rate. Always consult a tax professional when preparing your tax return to ensure it is completed correctly based on your individual circumstances and the current rules.

If your relationship status changes to being married or in a couple, you must inform Centrelink to avoid overpayments and potential debt. If you are currently receiving the full single rate of the DSP (Blind), your payment will be adjusted to the married rate.

## Job Capacity Assessment

If you are on or applying for the DSP (Blind), you do not need to meet the Continuing Inability to Work (CITW) criteria. This means you are not required to participate in job-seeking activities or undergo a Job Capacity Assessment (JCA).

If you receive the DSP (Blind), are employed under the Supported Wage System or in an Australian Disability Enterprise you also do not need to attend job participation interviews.

However, if you are using employment services to help you find work, you may need to undergo a JCA. As a Vision Australia client, our employment services team can support you through this process.

To request a referral, please call 1300 847 466.

## Indefinite portability

If you receive the DSP (Blind), you can apply for indefinite portability if you are “manifestly eligible,” meaning your payments continue even if you travel overseas.

Permanent blindness under the DSP (Blind) qualifies you for indefinite portability if you are an Australian resident, but this will not be done automatically. You will need to apply by calling Centrelink on 132 717.

Applications for indefinite portability are assessed individually and may involve a portability assessment as additional rules may apply. If you were granted DSP (Blind) before 2012, you may still qualify as manifestly eligible, but your record may be under an older code, which could require updated details. In this case, providing a [report from your ophthalmologist](https://www.humanservices.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/sa013-1403en.pdf) may be sufficient.

Once you are granted indefinite portability, request written confirmation. Always notify Services Australia International Services of your travel plans and once you have returned home to ensure uninterrupted payments.

Reporting overseas travel is required even if you have been granted indefinite portability.

Note that you cannot apply for indefinite portability while outside Australia, as legislation requires that the determination of eligibility must be made inside Australia.

## Problem solving

### What if I am on the DSP (Blind) and am asked to undergo a Job Capacity Assessment?

If you are permanently blind, you should not need to undergo a Job Capacity Assessment (JCA) since you are considered “manifestly eligible” for the DSP (Blind) and are exempt from JCA requirements. A supporting [report from your ophthalmologist](https://www.humanservices.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/sa013-1403en.pdf)

is enough to confirm your eligibility and inability to work.

If you were granted the DSP (Blind) before 2012 and your eligibility is being reviewed, or if you are applying for indefinite portability, you may need to confirm your permanent blindness. This is because your record may be under an older code, and Centrelink may not have enough detail to verify your condition. In this case, you only need to provide an updated report from your ophthalmologist.

If you are asked to undergo a JCA, explain that you are permanently blind and qualify as manifestly eligible. Request that the support officer confirm your exemption.

### What if I am under 35 and am receiving the DSP (Blind)?

If you receive the DSP (Blind), are permanently blind, and are under 35 years of age, the same rules apply as for those over 35.

If you are asked to take part in job-seeking activities or a support program, explain that you are permanently blind and qualify as manifestly eligible. Request that the support officer confirm your exemption from these requirements.

### The Disability Support (Blind) Pension and Income Tax

DSP (Blind) payments are tax-exempt if you are under the age pension age. Once you reach age pension age, the DSP (Blind) becomes assessable income.

Always consult a tax professional when preparing your tax return to ensure it is completed correctly based on your individual circumstances and current rules.

## For more information

For any questions around the information presented in this guide, or to obtain this guide in another format, call Vision Australia’s Advocacy team on 1300 847 466 or email them at advocacy@visionaustralia.org

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