

How to manage SRSS payments and overpayments

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Who is this Infosheet for?

This Infosheet provides a brief guide to managing payments and debts you may have under the Commonwealth Government's **Status Resolution and Support Services (SRSS)** program. It is not intended to be taken as financial or legal advice. If you need help managing your SRSS payments or are trying to pay back an SRSS debt or overpayment, we strongly recommend you obtain legal and financial advice. You can see services that may be able to assist you with your SRSS payments or debts at the end of this Infosheet.

IMPORTANT

- **The SRSS program provides support to people who are moving into the community after being released from immigration detention, or living in the community on a Bridging Visa and have a protection visa application still before the Department or the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) or Immigration Assessment Authority (IAA). (Those seeking court review or ministerial intervention are not generally eligible).**
- **The Government works with SRSS providers (listed below) to provide financial support and free accommodation, as well as access to health care, education, case management and counselling.**
- **The SRSS program is managed by different organisations depending on where you live in Australia. Contact your local SRSS provider to get more information and help to make an application for SRSS.**
- **If you receive financial support through the SRSS, you may accidentally be paid more than you are entitled to. This is known as an overpayment. If you have received an overpayment, you can ask the Government to review their decision, enter into a payment plan to pay back the overpayment over time, or apply to have your debt to the Government be waived.**

What is the SRSS program?

The Status Resolution and Support Services (SRSS) program provides financial support and assistance to people living in Australia including those who are awaiting an outcome on their application for a Protection Visa (PPV, TPV, SHEV etc.) still before the Department or the IAA/AAT and to some of those recently released from immigration detention .

Depending on where you live, there are a number of organisations that manage and provide the SRSS program in each State and Territory. A list of these organisations is below:

State/Territory	SRSS Provider	Contact
Victoria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Adult Multicultural Education Services (AMES) ● Life Without Barriers 	<p>AMES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Website: https://www.ames.net.au/ ● Phone: 13 AMES (13 2637) ● Online Form: https://www.ames.net.au/contact-us <p>Life Without Barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Website: https://www.lwb.org.au/services/refugees-and-asylum-seekers/ ● Phone: 1800 935 483 (or call your local office)
New South Wales/ Australian Capital Territory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Life Without Barriers ● Settlement Services International (SSI) 	<p>SSI:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Website: https://www.ssi.org.au/services/newcomers-refugees-and-migrants/refugee-support-services ● Phone: 02 9057 5673 ● Online Form: https://www.ssi.org.au/contact-us
Queensland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Access Community Services ● Multicultural Australia (formerly Multicultural Development Australia) 	<p>Access Community Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Website: https://www.accesscommunity.org.au/ ● Phone: 07 3412 8222 ● Online Form: https://www.accesscommunity.org.au/contact <p>Multicultural Australia:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Website: https://www.multiculturalaustralia.org.au/ ● Phone: 07 3337 5400 ● Online Form: https://www.multiculturalaustralia.org.au/contact
South Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Migrant Resource Centre of South Australia (Australian Migrant Resource Centre) ● Life Without Barriers 	<p>AMRC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Website: https://amrc.org.au/ ● Phone: (08) 8217 9500 ● Online Form: https://amrc.org.au/contact/

State/Territory	SRSS Provider	Contact
Western Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MercyCare 	MercyCare: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website: https://www.mercycare.com.au/youth-family-and-support/multicultural-support-services/status-resolution-support-services • Phone: (08) 6298 9800
Tasmania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CatholicCare Tasmania 	CatholicCare Tasmania: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website: https://catholiccare.mthreemedia.com.au/programs/status-resolution-support-services • Phone: 1800 819 447, or (03) 6278 1660 • Online Form: same link as above.
Northern Territory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life Without Barriers 	

Depending on your circumstances, **you may be able to access a number of different services from the SRSS program, such as financial, medical and housing assistance. Contact your local SRSS provider to find out your eligibility for support.**

Can I access the SRSS program?

To access the SRSS program, **you will have to be one of the following:**

- You are **unlawful and living in Australia**, waiting for your protection visa application to be decided by the Department or the IAA/AAT); or
- You **arrived by boat** and have lodged a valid TPV or SHEV application which is still before the Department or the IAA/AAT; or
- You did not arrive by boat and have lodged a valid protection visa application which is still before the Department or before the AAT; or
- You currently hold a **Bridging Visa E**; or
- You are **facing significant barriers** that impact on your ability to have your immigration status resolved; or
- You were **recently released from immigration detention**.

You may also have to demonstrate that you are experiencing **financial hardship**. The Department of Home Affairs (DHA) considers you to be experiencing financial hardship if:

- Your income is below a certain amount (less than the amount you would receive from Centrelink if you were eligible); or
- You have no assets or funds in Australia or overseas that you can use to support yourself; or
- You do not have any ongoing and adequate support from family, friends, or other people or organisations in Australia or overseas.

What does it mean to have an SRSS 'overpayment' or 'debt'?

A person may receive an 'overpayment' or 'debt' for a number of reasons. Generally, **most overpayments occur when a person is receiving SRSS payments, then at a later time becomes ineligible to receive SRSS payments, but Centrelink continues to make those payments.** Since you are no longer eligible for SRSS payments and Centrelink has paid you money you are not entitled to receive, **you will have to pay back the overpayment unless you can show that you have not been overpaid, or the amount of the overpayment is incorrect.**

There are a number of reasons why a person may no longer be eligible to receive SRSS payments and therefore may receive an overpayment:

- Their protection visa application was granted or refused by the Department or the IAA or AAT;
- They find employment, or receive money from some other person;
- They send or receive more than \$1000 overseas in a 12-month period;
- They fail to communicate with the Department or Centrelink, or provide false or misleading information to either.

How does having an SRSS overpayment or debt affect my migration case?

If you are unable to repay your overpayment or debt, this will become a debt that you owe to the Australian Government. This debt may affect your application for another visa in the future. Centrelink or the Department may also take legal action to recover the debt.

What can I do if I have been notified of an SRSS overpayment?

If Centrelink has notified you that you owe an SRSS overpayment, you have a number of options available to you.

Seek a review or challenge the SRSS overpayment

If you do not agree that you have been overpaid, or disagree with the amount that Centrelink says you have been overpaid, you can ask for a review of Centrelink's decision. This review will be undertaken by a review officer with Centrelink, who will consider your request and determine whether Centrelink's decision was correct.

You can ask for a review in the following ways:

- In person, at your local Centrelink office. To find your nearest Centrelink office, visit this link: <https://findus.servicessaustralia.gov.au/>.
- By phone, by calling **1800 316 556**.
- Online, through your myGov account. You will have to link your Centrelink details to your myGov account first, or you can download the form directly here: <https://www.servicessaustralia.gov.au/individuals/forms/ss351>.

Enter into a payment plan

If you cannot repay the overpayment in a lump sum, Centrelink may allow you to enter into a payment plan to pay it back over time. If you think a payment plan is right for you, contact Centrelink on **1800 316 556**.

Request that the Department of Finance waive your debt

If repaying the debt would cause you financial hardship (such as not being able to buy food, housing, clothing, or other necessities), you can apply to have Centrelink waive your debt. To do this, you must **complete and lodge the following form:** <https://www.finance.gov.au/individuals/act-grace-payments-waiver-debts-commonwealth-compensation-detriment-caused-defective-administration-cdda/application-process-act-grace-or-waiver-debt>.

Who can help me manage my SRSS or challenge an overpayment?

If you need help managing your SRSS payments or challenging an overpayment, there are a number of organisations that may be able to help you.

Centrelink

Centrelink can help you manage your SRSS payments, and can facilitate a payment plan to let you pay back your debt overtime. You can contact Centrelink by calling on 1800 316 556, visiting your local office, or visiting their website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/centrelink>.

Victoria Legal Aid (VLA)

If you need help challenging an overpayment or managing your SRSS payments, Victoria Legal Aid (VLA) may be able to provide you with free or low-cost legal assistance. You can contact VLA by calling their Legal Help phone line on **1300 792 387**, or visit their website: <https://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/find-legal-answers/migration/debts-owed-under-status-resolution-and-support-services-program>.

Free Legal Help

Depending on your circumstances, you may be able to get help from Victoria Legal Aid, or a Community Legal Centre (CLC). You may want to consider approaching the Social Security Rights Victoria (SSRV), which is a specialist CLC for helping people with Centrelink issues. For more information on finding a CLC, see our **HRLP Infosheet – CLC Referral Sheet (Vic)**.

Disclaimer: This fact sheet provides general information to people seeking asylum in Australia through the onshore protection visa application process according to the law in July 2021. This fact sheet is not legal advice. You should not rely on this fact sheet to make decisions about your immigration matter. We strongly recommend that you get independent advice from a qualified legal practitioner or a registered migration agent. For information please visit: <https://www.mara.gov.au>.

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