



The Hon Stuart Robert MP
Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme
Minister for Government Services

MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday, 28 October 2020

Update on Services Australia debt pause

On 3 April, the Australian Government put in place a temporary nation-wide pause on Services Australia debt raising and recovery to help ease pressure on people's budgets during the coronavirus pandemic.

With coronavirus restrictions easing, Services Australia will gradually commence debt-raising activity from 2 November, except for areas that remain in a state of disaster such as Victoria. Debt recovery activity will recommence in February 2021.

Delaying debt recovery until February 2021 recognises the difficulties many people are still facing. It will provide time for people to consider their circumstances, engage with Services Australia about their options in a transparent way and plan for their future. This could include adjusting the information they are reporting to Services Australia.

As debt activity starts again, Services Australia will work with people to make the process as clear and simple as possible. The agency will explain how debts arose, where to go for more information, how to self-service and offer other support.

During the period between debt raising and recovery, people will be able to commence repayments of their debt voluntarily. People continue to have the option of re-paying any overpayments assessed prior to the debt pause if they choose to and it can be managed within their personal circumstances.

Services Australia has a range of services to help people manage an overpayment including online tools and specialist staff such as social workers who can provide short term counselling, information and referrals to other services for Australians in need.

It is important that people keep Services Australia informed of any changes to their circumstances including their income and activity so that Services Australia can make correct payments. It is also important families receiving Family Tax Benefit or Child Care Subsidy confirm their income by either lodging their tax returns or advising Services Australia they are not required to lodge. If families do not confirm their income their payments could be impacted.

For information about why an overpayment has occurred, customers should contact their regular payment line or go to servicessaustralia.gov.au/phoneus

For information about repaying a Centrelink debt contact the Centrelink debt line on **1800 076 072**.

For information about social work services, go to servicessaustralia.gov.au/socialwork

[ENDS]

Media contact: Minister Robert's Office (02) 6277 7200