# A guide to the Age Pension (Blind)

IMAGE

## About this guide

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

* 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.

By reviewing the information provided, you’ll have a clearer understanding of what to expect and how to make the process of obtaining the pension as smooth as possible.

## 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 a part of Services Australia. The phone numbers and links related to Centrelink will reach Services Australia.

## A General Overview

The Age Pension (Blind) offers financial support for people who are permanently blind and over the retirement age. When speaking with Centrelink staff, be sure to specify that you are applying for the Age Pension (Blind) to receive accurate information and the right kind of support.

To meet the 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. For people born on after 1 July 1952 the pension age progressively increased by 6 months every 2 years until it reached 67 on 1 July 2021. You may need to confirm with Centrelink whether you meet the required age.

If you are applying for the Age Pension (Blind), you will need to complete the application form, ‘[Claim for Age Pension and Pension Bonus (SA002](https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/sa002)).

When applicable on the form, make sure to select ‘Yes’ to the application questions that ask if you are claiming the Age Pension (Blind) because you or your partner are permanently blind.

Be careful to check the final amount you will be paid. A couple who both receive the Age Pension (Blind) will receive the couple rate.

Someone receiving the Age Pension (Blind) who is in a relationship with a sighted person will receive the couple rate.

If you need help to complete your claim, you can visit a service centre online at <https://findus.servicesaustralia.gov.au/>, or you can call the older Australians line on 132 300.

## Assessment for the Age Pension (Blind)

The 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 assessments.

## 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 and your visual acuity.

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 were provided.

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

## Income and Assets testing

When claiming the Age Pension (Blind), you don’t need to complete the separate Income and Assets form since this pension isn’t income or asset tested. However, if you are applying for Rent Assistance, you will need to complete the form.

If you have a partner, their income and assets won’t impact your payment rate. If they are receiving an income support payment from Centrelink, the income and assets test will only apply to their payment.

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 Age Pension (Blind), your payment will be adjusted to the couple rate.

## Portability

Portability is the length of time you can leave Australia and continue to receive your payments. Under the Age Pension (Blind), basic portability is six weeks in a rolling 12-month period, which begins from your first day overseas.

You must notify Services Australia International Services on 131 673 of your intention to travel and when you plan to return home. This guarantees no interruption to your payments.

If you plan to travel for more than six weeks, talk to the team so they can assess if you’re eligible to continue receiving payments based on your personal circumstances.

## The Age Pension (Blind) and Income Tax

The Age Pension (Blind) is classified as taxable income. Remember to factor the pension into your yearly financial planning to make sure you understand any potential tax impacts you may face.

## My Aged Care

My Aged Care provides subsidies for services to help you stay in your home for longer.

Eligibility for My Aged Care supports is separate from the Age Pension (Blind) or other income support payments, though some programs do require an income assessment.

If you receive a pension or other income, you may need to complete an income assessment to determine your subsidy level.

Vision Australia is a registered provider with My Aged Care, and our staff can assist you in understanding and navigating the referral process if you’re eligible.

To learn more, call Vision Australia on 1300 84 74 88 or My Aged Care on 1800 200 552.

## 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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