

### What else does the Welfare Rights Centre do?

The Welfare Rights Centre also provides assistance to the community through community education and training and through law reform and lobbying.

### Community education and training

The Centre provides training through its community education program. We can organise seminars and workshops for lawyers, welfare workers, students and groups of interested people.

The Centre produces a range of brochures and Factsheets on different Social Security matters. The Centre also produces a quarterly newsletter "rights review" and the Independent Social Security Handbook—ONLINE, which offers a comprehensive guide to Social Security law and Centrelink practice. See the Centre's website ([www.welfare-rights.org.au](http://www.welfare-rights.org.au)) for more information about the Centre and to access our publications. (Access to the Handbook—ONLINE is available free to community workers and State Government employees in NSW. Go to the Centre's website for further details about this).

### Law Reform

The Centre's law reform work addresses problems with Social Security law, the way Centrelink administers that law, and the many inadequacies and inequities that are part of the system. The Centre writes submissions and runs campaigns and test cases to clarify or reform unfair laws and practices.

### Funding

The Welfare Rights Centre is funded by:

- NSW Department of Community Services
- Commonwealth Attorney General's Department
- Legal Aid Commission of NSW
- some trade unions through the Welfare Rights Trade Union Program, and
- sales of publications and services

**For further information or advice,  
contact the Welfare Rights Centre  
(02) 9211 5300 or 1800 226 028**

**TTY (02) 9211 0238**

**Fax (02) 9211 5268**

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**[www.welfarerights.org.au](http://www.welfarerights.org.au)**

**social security!  
Centrelink!  
need help?**

**Maybe you need  
the Welfare  
Rights Centre**



**Welfare  
Rights  
CENTRE**

## What is the Welfare Rights Centre?

The Welfare Rights Centre is a community legal centre which specialises in Social Security and Family Tax Benefit law, and any problems people may have with Centrelink in obtaining their Social Security entitlements. It provides free advice and representation on these matters and is entirely independent of Centrelink.

Established in 1983, the Welfare Rights Centre, Sydney, was the first of its kind in Australia.

## How can we help?

The Welfare Rights Centre can help by:

- advising you of your rights, entitlements and obligations;
- assisting you to appeal against a Centrelink decision that you disagree with.

Depending on the nature of your case and your wishes, the Centre may contact Centrelink to advocate on your behalf. We may lodge a written appeal with Centrelink or represent you at the Social Security Appeals Tribunal or Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

## Do I need an appointment?

The first step is to telephone the Centre.

Most matters can be handled over the telephone. Occasionally, if your matter is very complicated, or if there are reasons why you cannot discuss your problems over the telephone, a staff member will make an appointment you to visit the Centre for an interview.

## What if my English isn't very good?

You can contact the Centre using the Telephone Interpreter Service. The telephone number is 131 450. Just ring and ask for an interpreter in your language. The Telephone Interpreter Service is free.

## What does it cost to use the Centre?

It will cost you nothing. All advice and any representation is free.

## What are your appeal rights?

Every time Centrelink makes a decision which affects you, you have a right to know why that decision was made. If you disagree with a decision, you have a right to appeal against it. It costs nothing to appeal.

When you appeal you are simply asking for the Centrelink decision to be looked at again because you think a mistake may have been made. You cannot be penalised or get into trouble for appealing.

## Who do I appeal to?

There are four different levels of review and appeal:

- the Original Decision Maker
- the Authorised Review Officer (ARO) (employed by Centrelink)
- the Social Security Appeals Tribunal (SSAT)
- the Administrative Appeals Tribunal

When you ask for an Authorised Review Officer to review a decision, it is Centrelink policy for the matter to be referred to the Original Decision Maker, first. If you are not happy with this review, you should again request that the matter be referred to an ARO. It is best to lodge an appeal in writing.

The ARO is a senior Centrelink officer whose job is to review decisions. The SSAT is entirely independent of Centrelink. The SSAT cannot review a decision unless it has first been reviewed by an ARO. Approximately 35% of appeals are successful. Welfare Rights Centre staff can advise you of your chances of success and assist you with an appeal.

## Do I have the right to see my file?

The Commonwealth **Freedom of Information Act** gives you the right to see your Centrelink file containing copies of forms, correspondence and computer information. It is useful to see your file:

- to check the facts Centrelink has about you;
- to see reports by doctors and Centrelink compliance officers etc; or
- to find out why Centrelink made its decision.

You can apply to see your file at your local office and it is free.