

# MEDIA RELEASE



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## Centrelink changes will cost carers

Changes to legislation passed by the Senate on 21 March means that carers – who often already wait many weeks or months to have their claims assessed – will no longer be able to have their payments backdated when it is clearly justified.

“This is extremely disappointing,” said CEO of Carers Australia, Ara Cresswell.

“Up until now, if a carer contacted Centrelink and was entitled to receive a Carer Payment, they had up to 30 days to get all of their paperwork in order and would still be paid from the earlier date confirming eligibility. This gave flexibility to new carers whose changes in circumstances made it hard to fully submit their claims immediately, and recognised that people can face significant medical expenses and loss of income when they suddenly become carers.

“The claims process can be very complex, requiring proof of ID and place of residence, financial information and medical evidence. Carers may need to make appointments with specialists to get the documentation required, which can sometimes take weeks or months.

“Carers may need to juggle their own application with many other tasks, such as arranging services, equipment and Centrelink payments for the person they care for. Carers may even have to leave paid work or move house, possibly interstate, to care for an elderly parent diagnosed with a degenerative condition.

“Ideally, people should be able to lodge claims online quickly and easily and there should be little need for backdating. However, even with the most intuitive online system, there will be times where it will be reasonable to backdate payments and for Centrelink to have that discretion.

“Carers Australia is very concerned at the negative impact the passage of the Social Services Reform Bill will have on new carers.”

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