Inclusion Australia

What we heard:

Disability Support Pension Roundtable

Contents

About this document 3

What is the Disability Support Pension? 5

About the DSP Roundtable 7

What we heard 9

Understanding the DSP 10

DSP and work 12

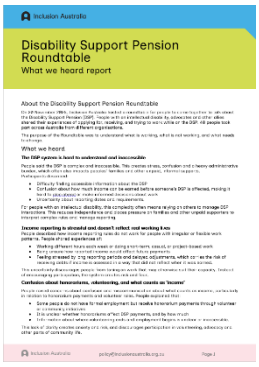
Income reporting 16

Participation requirements 17

What we think 19

About this document

This is an Easy Read version of our What we heard report on the Disability Support Pension Roundtable.


Inclusion Australia

Disability Support Pension Roundtable
What we heard report

About the Disability Support Pension Roundtable

What we heard

The DSP system is hard to understand and inaccessible

Income reporting is stressful and doesn't reflect real working lives

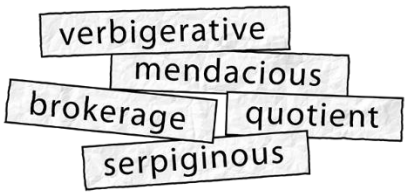
Confusion about honorariums, volunteering, and what counts as 'income'

The report says what people with an intellectual disability told us about the Disability Support Pension.

This document was written by Inclusion Australia.

When it says ‘we’ it means Inclusion Australia.

Inclusion Australia is the national organisation representing people with an intellectual disability and their families.



Hard words are in **bold.**

We explain what they mean.

It is a good idea to read this document with support.

We have also emailed you the big version of the report.

What is the Disability Support Pension?

The Disability Support Pension is a Centrelink payment for people with disability who

- Cannot work

  or
- Need support to work.

The DSP can help you pay for everyday things like

- Rent
- Bills
- Food.

There are rules about who can get the DSP.

For more information about the DSP visit the Services Australia website

https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/disability-support-pension

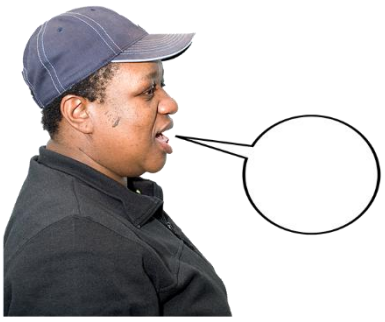
About the DSP Roundtable

In November 2025 Inclusion Australia held a national **roundtable** about the DSP.

A roundtable is where people get together to talk about an issue.

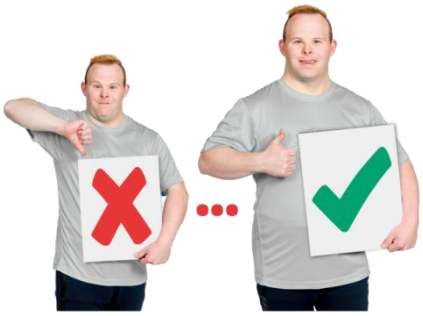
40 people from across Australia took part in the roundtable

- People with an intellectual disability
- Families and support people
- Disability and advocacy organisations.



At the roundtable people shared their stories of

- Applying for the DSP
- Getting the DSP
- Working while on the DSP.



The group talked about

- How the DSP works well
- What does not work well
- What needs to change.

We only put the main issues people told us about in our report.

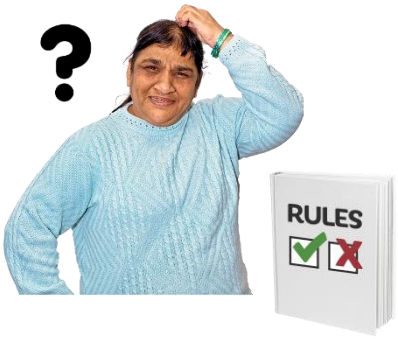
What we heard

The main issues people told us at the Roundtable were that

- The DSP is hard to understand
- Income reporting is stressful and confusing
- They are scared they will lose DSP if they work too many hours
- Work hour rules are confusing
- Participation requirements are confusing.

Understanding the DSP

People told us that the DSP is hard to understand.



People said it can be hard to find clear information about the DSP and its rules.

For example

- How to apply for the DSP
- How much you can earn from work before it affects your DSP

- How to **report your income**

  This means telling Centrelink how much money you got from work.

This means people with an intellectual disability often need family or other support people to help manage their DSP.

DSP and work

People told us that the rules about working while on the DSP are confusing.

Some people on the DSP are allowed to work more hours than others.

Your DSP payment also goes down if you earn more than $218 a fortnight from work.

You lose 50 cents in the dollar for every dollar you earn over $218 a fortnight on the DSP.

This is called the **taper rate.**

People are worried that if they work too many hours or earn too much that they will lose their DSP.

If someone decides to leave the DSP to work more hours they only have 2 years to go back on DSP without applying again.

This makes people scared to work more hours or try new jobs.

People also told us they were confused about the rules on **volunteering** and getting **honorariums** while on the DSP.

Volunteering is when you do work to help a charity or organisation for no pay.

For example helping out at your local church or community group.

An honorarium is when you get paid as a thank you for doing a one-time job.

For example guest speaking at a conference or event.

People said they were unsure if doing volunteer work or getting honorariums would affect their DSP.

This means people with an intellectual disability are missing out on taking part in their community.

People also talked about how it is unfair that they may get less DSP if their partner earns too much money.

This means a person can feel like they

- Have lost their independence because they need their partner for money

- Are stuck in a bad relationship because they do not have enough money to leave.

Income reporting

People told us that reporting income for DSP is confusing and stressful.

People with an intellectual disability often do **casual** work.

This means they may work different hours each week.

Doing casual work can make it hard to know if you are reporting your income properly.

People worried that if they report their income wrong they will get too much DSP and end up owing money to Centrelink.

Participation requirements

DSP has **participation requirements.**

Participation requirements are things some people must do to get or stay on the DSP.

People told us that participation requirements can be stressful and hard to understand.

Some people must do a **Program of Support** for 18 months before they can get DSP.

A Program of Support can include things like doing work experience or training courses.

Many people on a Program of Support are on Jobseeker payment.

centrelink

This means they already have things they must do to get their Jobseeker payment.

For example looking for work or volunteering.

Having to do all these extra things can be very stressful for people with disability.

People told us they were worried that if they missed an appointment they might lose their Jobseeker payment.

What we think

We think the Government must make the rules about working on the DSP

- Easier to understand
- Fairer for everyone.

2 years

10 years

This means

- Changing the time limit for re-applying for the DSP from 2 years to 10 years

- Making the rule on how many hours you can work on the DSP the same for everyone

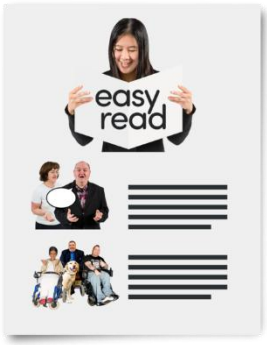
- 30c

- Lowering the DSP taper rate from 50 cents in the dollar to 30 cents.

We think the Government must make income reporting easier.

To do this the Government should

- Talk to people with an intellectual disability and their families to find out how to make income reporting better



- Make accessible information about income reporting

  For example in Easy Read.

We think that the Program of Support does not help people with an intellectual disability.

We think the Government should get rid of Programs of Support for people before they can get the DSP.