

Factsheet No. 13

Superannuation: Accessing super



This factsheet looks at the policies and procedures around accessing superannuation: in particular when you can access super early.

- Super basics
- When can a person access super?
- When can you access your super early?
- What information and/or documentation is required to access your super?
- How can you find lost super?

What is superannuation?

Superannuation (or "super") is a mandatory system where money is placed in a fund to save for a person's retirement. The money comes from contributions made into the super fund by a person's employer and potentially from:

- that person's own money,
- co-contributions from the government, and/or
- low-income super contribution (which may be instead of employer superannuation payments).

By law, employers must pay 9.5% of a person's salary into a super fund (called the Super Guarantee). Under current legislation, the Super Guarantee rate will increase by 0.5 percentage points on 1 July 2021 and gradually increase to 12% by 1 July 2025.

The objective is for the super fund to grow over the person's working life as the contributions accumulate and as the super fund invests the accumulating pool of money, so that when the person retires that person will be able to access this money to live off of (a nest egg).

Super funds may also offer different types of insurance.

When must an employer pay super?

Generally, an employer must pay super to an employee if the employee is:

- 18 years old or older, and
- paid \$450 or more (before tax) in a month.

If the employee is under 18 years old then the employee must also work more than 30 hours per week to be entitled to super contributions.

In some circumstances an employer is not required to make super contributions, including if the employee is:

- paid to do work of a private or domestic nature for 30 hours or less each week;
- a non-Australian resident and paid to do work outside Australia; or
- an Australian resident paid by a non-resident employer for work done outside Australia.

For further information see the ATO's [website on superannuation eligibility for employees](#).

When can a person access super?

Under the current legislation, your super can normally be accessed:

- when you turn 65 (even if you continue to work); or
- when you reach the "preservation age" and retire; or
- under the "transition to retirement" rules (which enable you to continue to work in certain circumstances).

The "preservation age" for persons born on or after 1 July 1964 is currently 60. However, the preservation age may range to as low as 55, depending on what year you were born in.

Date of birth	Preservation age
Before 1 July 1960	55
1 July 1960 – 30 June 1961	56
1 July 1961 – 30 June 1962	57
1 July 1962 – 30 June 1963	58
1 July 1963 – 30 June 1964	49
From 1 July 1964	60

For further information see [here](#) on the Australian Taxation Office Website.

When can you access your super early?

In certain medical and/or financial circumstances, you may be able to access your super savings early:

- on compassionate grounds;
- due to severe financial hardship;
- due to a terminal medical condition;
- due to a temporary or permanent incapacity; or
- if you have a super balance below \$200.

In particular, compassionate grounds may include:

- paying for medical treatment for you or a dependent;
- making a loan repayment to prevent you from losing your home;
- paying for home modifications for yourself or a dependent because of a severe disability; or
- paying for expenses associated with a death (including funeral or burial).

If you are unsure as to whether you are eligible for early access to your super, visit the [Department of Human Resources website](#) or phone 1300 131 060 (between 9am and 5pm Australian Eastern Standard time Monday to Friday) for more information about each of the circumstances listed above.

What information and/or documentation is required to access your super?

The documentation required to access your super early will depend on which of the above grounds you are relying on. Information on what documentation you need can be accessed on the [Department of Human Services website](#).

Commonly the documentation requires:

- confirmation of your identity; and
- details of your super fund.

Your superannuation fund will also be able to assist you with providing you documentation.

How can you find lost super?

The easiest way to find out if you have lost superannuation is to conduct a "quick search" on the ATO website. The link to the webpage is [here](#). Alternatively, you can call the self-help phone service available 24 hours a day on 13 28 65 (Fast Key Code 1 and 2).

When completing the application you will need to provide your name, date of birth and tax file number.

For more information see the [ATO website](#).

Produced by Redfern Legal Centre in September 2016. This factsheet is no substitute for legal advice. If you have a problem please seek legal advice from your local community legal centre.