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# Retiring and claiming your CSS benefit

## Who should read this factsheet?

Any member who would like information about the retirement process and what they need to do to claim their CSS benefit.

### Financial advice for your needs and goals

To help you achieve the best outcome for your superannuation and financial situation, consider obtaining personal advice for your needs and long-term goals from a qualified professional who understands your government super scheme and individual situation.

To make a personal advice service available to you, your super trustee, Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation, has partnered with experienced financial planners from Industry Fund Services. It is 'fee for service' advice, which means you receive a fixed quote upfront. There are no obligations, commissions or hidden fees.

To book today please call **1300 277 777** during business hours or visit [csc.gov.au/advice](http://csc.gov.au/advice) to learn more.

## What is in this factsheet?

- > What should I know upfront?
- > When should I start preparing for retirement?
- > What about the 54/11 option?
- > How do I prepare for retirement?
- > What financial advice might I need?
- > What investment options do I have?
- > How do I claim my benefit?
- > Where can I get more information?

## What should I know upfront?

Before making any decisions, please read the **CSS Product Disclosure Statement (PDS)** and consider seeking advice from a licensed professional such as a financial planner, accountant or solicitor.

### Your Government Super at Work

Any financial product advice in this document is general advice only and has been prepared without taking account of your personal objectives, financial situation or needs. Before acting on any such general advice, you should consider the appropriateness of the advice, having regard to your own objectives, financial situation or needs. You may wish to consult a licensed financial advisor. You should obtain a copy of the **CSS Product Disclosure Statement (PDS)** and consider its contents before making any decision regarding your super.

Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation (CSC) ABN: 48 882 817 243 AFSL: 238069 RSEL: L0001397  
Trustee of the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme (CSS) ABN: 19 415 776 361 RSE: R1004649  
Industry Fund Services (IFS) ABN 54 007 016 195 AFSL 232514

## When should I start preparing for retirement?

As a CSS member, you should start preparing for retirement well in advance of your planned retirement age.

There are many factors to consider which may influence the amount you receive on retirement, such as:

- > the amount you contribute
- > your salary
- > your length of service
- > your investment choice
- > your age at retirement.

If you would like to find out more about how these factors affect your benefit, you can use the **i-Estimator**, our online calculator. This is available at [css.gov.au](http://css.gov.au)

You'll need an Access Number to use this service. If you don't have one, or you've misplaced it, call us on **1300 000 277** and we can give you one over the phone.

## What about the 54/11 option?

This commonly used term refers to the option of resigning prior to turning 55 (at least two days prior to your 55th birthday), preserving your benefit and claiming a deferred benefit after you reach age 55.

If you choose this option, your deferred benefit will include an indexed pension (paid as your employer component). This pension is calculated based on 2.5 times your accumulated basic contributions, multiplied by a pension factor based on your age at claim. You will also be able to take your member and productivity components as a lump sum or additional non-indexed pension.

If you instead choose to continue working and retire at or after age 55, your indexed pension is calculated using a percentage of your final salary. This percentage is based on your age and years of contributory service.

As the two calculation methods are very different, it is highly recommended you obtain benefit estimates for both scenarios well in advance of your 55th birthday.

## How do I prepare for retirement?

It is important to consider seeking financial advice before making decisions regarding your CSS benefit.

In preparation for your financial planning and decision making you can get information such as:

- > your super details and equity from your most recent annual member statement
- > a benefit estimate from us, if you are within 12 months of your proposed retirement date

You can also access the following information and factsheets on our website:

- > a benefit estimate, using the **i-Estimator**
- > the benefit options you will be entitled to and how they are calculated. Refer to the factsheets relevant to your retirement situation
- > restrictions that may apply to you when you claim your benefit, such as compulsorily preserved amounts
- > how tax affects your benefit. Please refer to the website and the **Tax and your CSS super** document
- > general retirement information from our 'At work for you' workshops
- > factors you should take into account specific to your age.

Doing as much research as you can will ensure you have a better understanding of CSS and the retirement process.

## What financial advice might I need?

There are several important decisions you need to make about when and how you claim your CSS benefit. It is recommended you seek financial advice regarding decisions such as:

- > when you should retire
- > which investment choices you should make
- > which benefit option is best for you when you claim
- > if you take a lump sum, whether you should take it as cash or roll it over to another fund
- > how to claim the best tax concessions for your situation

- > the best way to pay your surcharge debt (if you have a surcharge debt you will have been advised by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO)) and the amount will be reflected on your annual member statement and
- > whether or not to claim the reduced pension option, available in return for a higher spouse's and/or children's pension in the event of your death.

These are just some of the things you will need to consider in order to make the best decisions for your retirement.

## What investment options do I have?

As a CSS member, you are able to invest your money in either the Default Fund or the Cash Investment Option.

In the CSS Default Fund, the key investment objective is to maximise long-term real returns within some risk constraints. For more information on this investment strategy, refer to the **Investments** section on our website.

The Cash Investment Option provides an alternative to the CSS Default Fund investment strategy. It is an opportunity to have more surety of earnings for your funded accumulation (member and productivity) components, in exchange for the possibly higher, but more volatile return of the CSS Default Fund. For more information see the **CSS Cash Investment Option** factsheet.

## How do I claim my benefit?

### Completing the right application form

It is important you complete the benefit application form relevant to your retirement situation. For example, there are different forms for leaving work under age 55, over age 55 and for retrenchment/redundancy. If you complete the incorrect form, it is likely your election will be invalid and you will need to complete another one.

Forms are available from your personnel area, the [css.gov.au](http://css.gov.au) or by calling us on 1300 000 277.

If you are unsure which form to complete, or need help completing the form, you can contact us for help.

## When do I need to submit my benefit form?

There are time restrictions on when you can make an election to claim your CSS benefit.

These differ depending on your exit type and the option you are taking:

If you are electing to preserve your benefit in CSS, you must make that election **within 21 days of ceasing employment**. Most other elections can be made within three months of your cease date. Please refer to your specific benefit application form for further details.

You can also submit your form before your cease date or claim date. Elections to preserve your benefit cannot be made more than one month before you cease employment. All other elections can be made up to three months in advance.

### Where do I send my form?

If you are a contributing member, you need to give your completed form to your personnel section. They will then complete their section of the form and send it to us. It is your employer's responsibility to send the form to us as soon as possible so that we can commence processing your claim. You may wish to contact them to ensure they have forwarded your form.

If you already have a deferred benefit, please send your form directly to us at the address provided on the form.

Remember to include all required documentation when submitting your form. These requirements are listed on each form. If you don't provide everything we need, your payment may be delayed.

### What happens once I have submitted my form?

Once we receive your form, we will check that it's complete and correct and will contact you if there are any issues. If you would like to confirm we have received your form, call the benefit payments team on 1300 000 277.

If your payment requires a standard calculation, it will take approximately ten working days from the date we receive your benefit application form (or your claim date, whichever is the later) for your benefit to be processed. If it requires a more complex calculation, it will take longer. If you would like to know in advance which category your payment is in, please call us on the above number.

Once your benefit has been processed, we will send you a letter with the details of your entitlement. Lump sum payments to bank accounts usually take 2-3 working days to become available after we process your claim and pension payments commence on the next applicable pension payday. If you are rolling over money to another fund, we will send your rollover electronically to that fund. Rollovers are paid electronically. You will be notified of this in your letter.

### What if I change my mind after completing the form?

If you have submitted your form and need to make amendments, call the benefit payments team on **1300 000 277** as soon as possible.

CSS legislation does not allow you to change your claim date or withdraw your claim for a deferred benefit after you have made a valid election to do so.

Most other decisions may be changed before we process your application, such as your bank account details. If this is the case, you will need to provide your new instructions in writing.

After we have processed your benefit, it is unlikely we can make changes except in certain circumstances. It is therefore very important to carefully consider your choices when completing your form.

Retirement is an exciting and important time for you. We look forward to helping you make the most of your superannuation.

## Where can I get more information?

**EMAIL** [members@css.gov.au](mailto:members@css.gov.au)

**PHONE** 1300 000 277

**FAX** 02 6272 9612

**MAIL** CSS  
GPO Box 2252  
Canberra ACT 2601

**WEB** [css.gov.au](http://css.gov.au)

 **EMAIL**  
[members@css.gov.au](mailto:members@css.gov.au)

 **WEB**  
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 **PHONE**  
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