

Can I access my Super?

Prepared by Certainty Financial – advisers to your employer superannuation plan

Superannuation is tightly legislated to control who accesses their super benefits and when. For most super investors this won't be until they meet their legislated 'Preservation' age. However, there are some situations in which super can be accessed earlier.

What are the Preservation Rules?

A quick check of your latest super fund statement will show that your super is divided into three 'Preservation' types:

- **Unrestricted Non-Preserved Benefits**
Can be withdrawn from super at any time.
- **Restricted Non-Preserved Benefits**
This becomes Unrestricted Non-Preserved upon ceasing employment with your current employer and can then be accessed.
- **Preserved**
This can only be accessed when a legislated 'Condition of Release' is met. All compulsory employer contributions, and other contributions made to super after 1 July 1999, are preserved, and so this component will make up the majority of Australians' superannuation benefits.

Most people don't meet a condition of release until they have **Permanently Retired** from the workforce and have reached 'preservation age'. If you were born before 1 July 1960 your preservation age will be 55.

If you were born after 1 July 1964 your preservation age will be 60. If you were born somewhere in between a staggered scale applies to determine your age. Once you have retired after this preservation age you are able to access your super.

Will my super fund release my benefit earlier?

Most super funds will allow members to take their benefits if they were previously a **Lost Member** or **Cease Employment** and have a benefit totalling less than \$200.

Permanently Incapacitated or **Terminally ill** members are usually able to access their benefits if the super funds conditions are met.

Super funds are also authorised by legislation to release benefits under specific **Financial Hardship** terms. In order to be eligible members must provide proof that they have been receiving a Centrelink benefit for 26 consecutive weeks and provide documentary evidence that their living expenses are greater than their income. If these requirements are met the fund may release up to \$10,000 to meet immediate living expenses.

Compassionate Grounds

The Australian Prudential Regulatory Authority (APRA) has the power to authorise super funds to release benefits to members subject to specific criteria under the '**Compassionate Grounds**' rules. Members should apply to APRA directly if necessary for either the member, or a dependant of the member:

- To pay necessary medical expenses;
- To assist with medical transport costs;
- To prevent mortgage foreclosure on the home;
- To pay for modifications to a home or motor vehicle to accommodate a disabled person;
- To assist with funeral expenses of a dependant;
- To meet palliative care costs.

Special Rules for Temporary Residents

Holders of Eligible Temporary Resident Visas may be eligible to claim their super once they have departed Australia and their visa has either expired or been cancelled. This payment is called the **Departing Australia Superannuation Payment**. It is commonly referred to as DASP and can be paid directly by your super fund or through the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). This payment is not available to Australian or New Zealand residents. A list of eligible visa types and further information is available from the ATO website.

More information and resources

If you think you may be eligible for early release of your super you should seek further information from your own super fund or the relevant government body. As this document does not detail applicable taxes which apply upon withdrawal, contact the ATO or Certainty Financial for further tax information.

Australian Taxation Office (ATO)

Ph 13 10 20 www.ato.gov.au/super

Australian Prudential Regulatory Authority (APRA)

Ph 1300 131 060 www.apra.gov.au/superannuation

Certainty Financial Pty Ltd

Ph: 1800 680 141 www.certainty.com.au

References: www.ato.gov.au; www.apra.gov.au

Melbourne Office

ABN 29 006 064 786
Suite 2, 670 Canterbury Road
Surrey Hills Vic 3127
Tel: 03 9890 0222 Fax: 03 9898 2352
Email: corporate@certainty.com.au

Sydney Office

ABN 86 102 225 785
Ground Floor, 221 Miller Street
North Sydney NSW 2060
Tel: 02 8912 5800 Fax: 02 8912 5801
Web: www.certainty.com.au

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