

# Domestic Purposes and Widow's Benefits

For sole parents,  
some women living alone  
and caregivers



**Work and Income**  
Te Hiranga Tangata

*A service of the Ministry of Social Development*

## Can I get the Domestic Purposes Benefit?

We can grant you financial assistance from the date you first contact us, if you complete your application within 20 working days of that date.

To get the Domestic Purposes Benefit you'll need to be a sole parent, or a caregiver of someone sick or infirm, or a woman alone who is aged 50 years or older.

You need to be:

- a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident who normally lives here *and*
- you'll usually need to have been here for at least two years at any one time since becoming a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident.

### If you are a sole parent

You may be able to get the Domestic Purposes Benefit for sole parents, if you:

- are the parent of a child aged under 18 years who is dependent on you *and*
- are not living with the other parent or a partner *and*
- have lost the support of, or are not being adequately maintained by a partner *and*
- are aged 18 years or over (or 16-17 years if you are legally married or in a civil union).

In some circumstances you may also be able to get the Domestic Purposes Benefit for sole parents if you are caring for a child not your own.

Please note that usually only one parent can get the Domestic Purposes Benefit and we'll ask you to apply for child support from the other parent. If you share the care of your children, or you can't name and legally identify the other parent, it could affect your payments. Please ask us about this. There is also more about child support on page 7.

### If you are caring for someone sick or infirm

You may be able to get the Domestic Purposes Benefit for caregivers, if you are:

- aged over 16 years *and*
- caring full-time for someone (but not your spouse or partner) who would otherwise require hospital care, rest home care, extended care provided for severely disabled children and young people, or care of a similar kind.

If you are aged 16-17 years we need to look at your family situation before you can get this benefit. We will talk to you about this.

### If you are a woman alone aged 50 years or over

You may be able to get the Domestic Purposes Benefit for women alone, if you:

- don't have a partner or dependent children *and*
- have, after the age of 50, stopped:
  - caring for a child or children that you have cared for for at least 15 years *or*

- caring full-time for a sick relative, that you have cared for, for at least 5 years *or*
- being supported by your partner of at least 5 years (but one of you must have lived in New Zealand for some years).

## Can I get the Widow's Benefit?

You may be able to get the Widow's Benefit, if you:

- are a woman whose partner has died *and*
- have one or more dependent children *or*
- were married or in a civil union or de facto relationship for at least 15 years, and had children *or*
- had dependent children for at least 15 years while married or in a civil union or de facto relationship or widowed *or*
- are a woman who is aged 50 years and your partner has died and you:
  - were married or in a civil union or de facto relationship for at least 5 years and became a widow after you turned 50 years *or*
  - were married or in a civil union or de facto relationship for at least a total of 10 years, got married or entered a civil union or de facto relationship (for the first time) not less than 15 years ago and became a widow after you turned 40 years.

If you were married or in a civil union or de facto relationship more than once, we count the total number of years you were married or in a civil union or de facto relationship.

You can only get this benefit if you have never remarried or found a new partner.

## Your obligations

You'll need to take part in a planning process to help you set goals for your future, including:

- coming to planning meetings with us *and*
- preparing a personal development and employment plan that covers your goals for the future and the things you will do to reach those goals.

You'll also need to show us that you are committed to reaching your goals.

Most people on the Domestic Purposes Benefit or the Widow's Benefit will have to take part in the planning process to keep a benefit. If you don't take part your benefit could go down. So if there's a good reason why you can't or don't want to take part, please talk with us straight away.

If you are deaf or find it hard to communicate by phone, you can send a message to our Deaf Link free-fax **0800 621 621**.

## Payments

The Domestic Purposes Benefit and the Widow's Benefit are paid weekly. How much you get depends on your situation – this guide shows you what the different payments are:

| If you are...  | Weekly payments (after tax) |
|--|-----------------------------|
| <b>Domestic Purposes Benefit</b>   |                             |
| Women alone (single adult)   | \$198.31                    |
| Sole parent  | \$272.70                    |
| Caregivers   |                             |
| • Single 16-17   | \$192.58                    |
| • Single 18 or over  | \$237.97                    |
| • Sole parent  | \$312.62                    |
| • Living with a partner  | \$198.31                    |
| <b>Widow's Benefit</b>   |                             |
| Women alone (single adult)   | \$198.31                    |
| Sole parent  | \$272.70                    |
| <b>Emergency Maintenance Allowance</b>   |                             |
| • 16-17 living away from home  | \$272.70                    |
| • 16-17 living at home   | \$126.92                    |
| • sole parent 18 or over   | \$272.70                    |
| <i>You may get less if you have other income. If you have children you may also be able to get family tax credit or extra allowances as well. Tax deducted is at the M rate.</i> |                             |

Rates at 1 April 2009

Payments usually start 2-3 weeks after you apply. You may have to wait longer if you have been working, and:

- got holiday pay or another payment at the end of your job.

We don't count any income your former spouse or partner may have been earning – so this won't affect how long you have to wait.

## Child support

When you are a sole parent, any child support the other parent pays goes to the Government to help cover what you get from us. You can find out how much they pay and ask for a review if you think it's not enough. It's a good idea to do this now because, once your benefit stops, the child support goes directly to you. To find out more, contact Inland Revenue child support on **0800 221 221** or visit [www.ird.govt.nz/childsupport](http://www.ird.govt.nz/childsupport)

## What happens if I work?

### Receiving a benefit and working

You may earn other income, including income from part-time, temporary or seasonal work.

You can earn up to \$80 a week or \$4160 a year (before tax) before your benefit is affected.

Please note that any income you have may affect any extra allowances you get from us, even if it's under the \$80 limit. How this income affects your allowances can vary, so please ask us for more details about this.

Remember you must tell us straight away if you start any type of work.

You can call us for an estimate to find out how working affects your payments. The guide below shows you what the deductions to your benefit are.

| If your yearly income before tax is... | The deduction rate is          |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Up to \$4,160                          | No change to your benefit      |
| \$4,161-\$9,360                        | 30c off for each \$1 of income |
| \$9,361 or more                        | 70c off for each \$1 of income |

You may be able to earn up to \$20 a week more than these thresholds if you need to pay for childcare because you are working.

Talk to us about your options if you take on part-time, full-time or seasonal work. Even if your benefit stops, you may still be able to get help with things like accommodation and childcare.

Remember, if you have other income you need to talk to Inland Revenue as well to make sure you are using the right tax codes. Other income can also affect Working for Families Tax Credits, Student Loan repayments, and child support.

### In-work tax credit

If you're working and your benefit is suspended or cancelled, you may be able to receive the in-work tax credit from Inland Revenue.

It pays up to \$60 a week per family with 3 children, and up to an extra \$15 a week for each additional child. As a sole parent, you must work at least 20 hours a week.

When your benefit is suspended or cancelled we'll tell Inland Revenue so you don't have to, and they'll keep in touch.



If you have any questions,  
you can call us free on  
**0800 559 009.**

## Other Help

When you get the Domestic Purposes Benefit or the Widow's Benefit, you'll get the **Community Services Card** to help with the costs of visiting your doctor and getting prescriptions.

If you have dependent children aged 18 years or younger, you can also get **family tax credit** while on a benefit.

You may be able to get the **Training Incentive Allowance** if you are doing a work-related course to improve your work skills. Talk to your case manager if you are interested.

If you don't think you qualify for a benefit and you are in an emergency or hardship situation, or alone with children or pregnant, or you're caring for a sick relative or you are a refugee, please talk to us as soon as possible. We may be able to help with the **Emergency Maintenance Allowance** (for sole parents), or one of our other types of income assistance.

If you are in hardship or an emergency situation, please talk to us as soon as possible. For instance, if you are a refugee, or alone and pregnant, or caring for someone who can't work, or dependent on someone who is on strike – we may be able to help.

There may also be other ways we can help, so please talk to us or ask us for our *How can we help you?* and *Need extra help with costs?* brochures.

## Important

**It is important you tell us about any changes that may affect your benefit.** See our *How can we help you?* brochure for a list of the kinds of things we need to know about.

When you apply for income support, you agree to two very important conditions. All the information you give us must be true, with nothing left out – and you must tell us straight away about any changes in your circumstances that could affect your payments. If you don't meet these conditions, you are breaking the law and can be prosecuted.

**You can't get the Domestic Purposes Benefit or the Widow's Benefit if you remarry or start to live with a partner or enter a civil union** (unless you are getting the Domestic Purposes Benefit for Caregivers – please ask us about this). The best thing to do if you start a relationship is to talk with us early on – it can save problems later.

## What to bring

**Make sure you bring everything you need to your meeting.** There is a list of all the basic things you need to bring in our *How can we help you?* brochure. If you are a caregiver of a sick or infirm person, their doctor must fill in part of the application form for you to bring with you. If you are a widow or widower, we will need to see your partner's death certificate. If you don't have one please call us.

**If you have any questions,**  
call us on **0800 559 009** from  
7am to 6pm Monday to Friday  
and Saturday 8am to 1pm or  
contact your Case Manager at  
your nearest Service Centre.

**If you are deaf or find it hard to  
communicate by phone,** you can  
send a message to our Deaf Link  
free-fax on **0800 621 621** or email  
**MSD\_Deaf\_Services@msd.govt.nz**

**For more information visit:**  
Work and Income website  
**[www.workandincome.govt.nz](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz)**