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## Australian Government Services Australia

### Treatment of a partnered person as single under Section 24 new determinations 106-07120080

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#### Background

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. See [Freedom of Information – Information Publication Scheme](#).

This document outlines when a partnered person may be treated as single under Section 24 of the Social Security Act 1991.

#### Purpose of Section 24

Section 24 of the Social Security Act 1991 enables Services Australia to apply a decision that there is a 'special reason' not to treat a partnered person as a member of a couple.

If the agency applies Section 24 of the Social Security Act 1991, the customer is:

- treated as single for all purposes of the Social Security Act and Family Assistance Act, and
- paid the single rate of payment. Only their individual income and assets are included in the assessment of the rate of payment

Staff can only conduct a Section 24 assessments once the customer is linked to their partner on the Marital Status (MS) and Link Person (LP) screens. For information on which forms are required for customers claiming or receiving an income support payment, see [Change in relationship status from single to partnered](#).

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#### Identity requirements for partners

Only specific payments require a person's partner to confirm their identity. If a customer has a partner, the customer **must** provide identity documents for themselves and **their partner** when they claim:

- Parenting Payment Partnered (PPP)

- Low Income Health Care Card (LIC)
- Farm Household Allowance (FHA)

If the partner's identity has been confirmed previously, further identity documents will not be needed.

If the partner has not provided identity documents in person, they will have a status of 'No Linkage'. See [Identity Confirmation](#) for more information.

A Partner Details (MOD P) or Partner details (AUS174) (where the customer is receiving an Australian income support payment while living overseas) form is needed if the customer is not already linked to their partner. Confirmation from the customer's partner may be needed before linking can occur. See [Confirming a partnered relationship](#).

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### When to apply Section 24

Section 24 is intended to be the **option of last resort**. It must only be applied when all other reasonable means of support have been explored and exhausted. It is not possible to predict all the situations where Section 24 can be applied as the circumstances of each particular situation must be considered on a case by case basis.

The discretion to treat a customer as not being a member of a couple should be exercised only where full consideration of all the circumstances relevant to the individual's case would make it unjust or unreasonable not to do so.

### Responsibility for Section 24 assessments

A customer may not ask for an assessment under Section 24 provisions, as they may not be aware of its availability. When the agency has information about a customer's circumstances that would indicate a Section 24 assessment may be warranted, as a duty of care the customer should be offered to test whether they have an entitlement under Section 24 provisions to be treated as single.

When a customer is requesting an initial Section 24 assessment, including where a new claim is being processed, it is to be undertaken at first contact where possible. If the Service Officer does not have the required skill set to undertake the Section 24 assessments, a referral may be needed.

**Note:** Service Officers processing JobSeeker Payment or Youth Allowance (job seeker) new claims must complete the Section 24 assessment when the customer is residing in Australia.

If the Section 24 assessment is for a customer who **resides overseas**, the assessment is conducted by International Services (CIS).

### When Section 24 is not appropriate

Staff must not apply Section 24 (S24) provisions to customers who are:

- single
- [separated due to illness](#)
- [separated due to respite care](#)
- [separated under one roof](#)

If rejecting a claim the Section 24 relationship qualifier code is not to be recorded on the **MS** screen. The application of Section 24 provisions will be reconsidered if the claim is re-assessed.

**Note:** if a customer is receiving Family Assistance payments only, Section 24 provisions are **not** to be used as a work around when the partner is unable to supply their tax file number.

Section 24 provisions may be applied in **limited circumstances** to customers:

- whose partners [are in prison](#) (including overseas detention). Separate provisions of the Social Security Act provide for higher levels of payment in situations where the partner is in prison but the S24 may be applied in special circumstances. See **Partner in prison** section below
- who are partnered and the partner is subject to the [Newly Arrived Resident's Waiting Period \(NARWP\)](#) and has an [Assurance of Support \(AoS\)](#) in place. See **Partner serving Newly Arrived Resident's Waiting Period (NARWP) and subject to Assurance of Support (AoS)** section below

### Circumstances to consider

The following questions must be considered as part of the assessment while looking at the full circumstances of the case:

- is there a special reason to be considered in the couple's circumstance?
- is there a lack of being able to [pool resources](#) for the couple as a result of the circumstances?
- is there financial difficulty as a result of the couple's circumstances?

There must be some degree to which circumstances are outside the couple's or individual's control and cannot be changed. A couple's circumstances must be compared to a couple in similar circumstances but for whom the special reason to apply Section 24 does not exist. Each determination made must be based on the merits of each case after careful consideration of all the facts.

It may be appropriate to apply Section 24 in circumstances including, but not limited to when the:

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- customer has **limited access to their partner's income/assets**. For example:
  - if the income of a person is not available for the use or benefit of their partner, or
  - the person is mentally infirm and a guardian has been appointed to manage their affairs, or
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- **partner is overseas or goes overseas**, in which case the primary consideration is whether the customer in Australia is deprived of the income support of the partner overseas. For example:
  - there are legal restrictions on the transfer of funds from overseas
  - the overseas partner does not have sufficient excess funds to send to Australia
  - the situation has arisen beyond the control of either partner, or as an unintended consequence of the partner's actions
  - does either party have power to alter the situation and, if so, are they taking reasonable steps to do so?
  - in general, the circumstances must be unusual, uncommon, abnormal or exceptional, which would support their description as 'special'
- partner is **not residentially qualified** for an income support payment (see exception to the rule below), or
- partner is in an **Immigration Detention Centre** awaiting deportation

If either partner has knowingly contributed to their situation, there would be considerably less justification for exercising the discretion. This may be the case if one partner goes overseas and leaves the other partner in Australia with insufficient funds, despite having the means to support their partner.

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### Assessing financial difficulty

The customer's overall financial situation must be considered when making a Section 24 determination. Financial difficulty has been described as not being able to provide for accommodation and the basic necessities of life or to be without adequate means of support. Decisions from the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) and Federal Court indicate ineligibility for a Centrelink payment, in itself, is very unlikely to constitute a 'special reason' for a determination under Section 24 provisions.

Financial difficulty can be determined by comparing readily available funds to necessary expenditure. For example, taking into account all income and readily available funds from all sources for both members of a couple. This includes (but is not limited to):

- wages
- income support payments
- foreign pension
- foreign income and assets
- Family Tax Benefit

- investments, and
- any in-kind assistance they might receive such as the value of free rent

If the total of these funds is insufficient to provide for accommodation and the basic necessities of life, then the couple could be considered to be in [financial difficulty](#). An example of this is when a couple are living on the one partnered rate of payment as one partner is not eligible for any assistance and has neither employment nor investment income.

When assessing a customer's circumstances, it is important to look at the **overall** financial situation. For example, a customer has \$80,000 in a savings account, but the deemed fortnightly income is considerably less. The **total amount** of the balance of the bank account is taken into account when considering Section 24, not just the fortnightly deemed amount.

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### **Customers living permanently together overseas**

If a customer is partnered with a person and living overseas and the partner did not have any income or assets prior to entering into the relationship, this does not necessarily constitute special circumstances or an inability to [pool resources](#).

In some countries the Australian Age Pension is several times the average wage per annum in the country the couple are living together in. This must be considered when making a Section 24 determination, it is not appropriate to consider a couple to be in hardship in these cases.

For customers living overseas consideration must also be given to the cost of living expenses of the country the customer is living in. This is consistent with the requirement to assess financial difficulty and an inability to provide for accommodation and the basic necessities of life.

Customers living together overseas permanently who request Section 24 are assessed and reviewed by International Services (CIS).

The [Resources](#) page has examples of whether it may or may not be appropriate to apply Section 24.

### **Partner serving Newly Arrived Resident's Waiting Period (NARWP) and subject to Assurance of Support (AoS)**

The discretion to apply Section 24 may be applied in cases if the customer's partner is not residentially qualified for an income support payment or is subject to a NARWP or similar Qualifying Residence Period.

The [Assurance of Support \(AoS\)](#) scheme allows certain visa holders to migrate to Australia, even though there is a high risk they may not be able to support themselves. The intent is that an assurer can provide financial support to the assuree so they do not have to rely on the social security system.

Generally, Section 24 **should not be applied** to a customer:

- if their partner (or assuree) is serving a NARWP and has an AoS in place, and
- the assuree has a valid and legal means of obtaining support from the assurer and/or,
- has access to a social security benefit which has not been exercised

When an AoS is in place and the assurer is a third party, and the assuree does not receive regular income or in-kind support from the assurer, then the assuree must be encouraged to draw on the AoS or apply for Special Benefit (SpB) if they are eligible. If the assuree is eligible for and makes a claim for SpB, the assuree must prove they have made every effort to get adequate support from the assurer prior to making the claim. Any assistance received by the assuree is taken into account as income for SpB.

If there has been a substantial change of circumstances for the assurer (for example illness or job loss) which means they are no longer able or willing to fulfil the obligations under the AoS, Service Officers must

- closely examine the assurer's financial circumstances and
- confirm no other forms of assistance can be provided prior to determining if a Section 24 assessment is appropriate.

If the assuree is to serve a NARWP for all payments, including SpB, any assistance provided by the assurer is taken into account when looking at financial difficulty. Certain types or classes of visas have available funds conditions placed upon them. That is, the person needed to have a certain amount of funds available to support themselves while in Australia, before they are eligible for the visa. Visa conditions must be explored when determining whether the couple are in financial difficulty.

**Note:** SpB customers are generally subject to a long term available funds test if they are likely to be on payment for more than 13 weeks. The long-term available funds test precludes payment to the customers if the couple have more than \$5,000 in available funds. If a non-residentially qualified partner fails the long-term available funds test when claiming SpB, then it may not be appropriate for Section 24 to be considered.

For further information about NARWP and SpB, see [Eligibility and new claim procedures for Special Benefit \(SpB\)](#).

### **Partner in prison**

If a person has a partner in prison, this alone is not sufficient to warrant the application of Section 24. The higher 'partner in gaol' rate of payment is available to customers in this situation in recognition that they are less able to pool resources while their partner is in prison. Section 24, however, may be applied if there is a 'special reason' in that particular case (that is, not just the partner being in prison), which warrants not treating the person as a member of a couple. For example, the customer's partner is in prison awaiting trial on fraud charges and the partner's assets and accounts have been frozen by the courts.

### **Partner in Immigration Detention**

If a customer's partner is being detained in an Immigration Detention Centre, the customer is not eligible for the 'Partner in Gaol' rate. However, consider if:

- a 'special reason' exists, **and**
- Section 24 can be applied in these situations

### **Partner visas and section 24**

[Partner visas \(309/100 or 820/801\)](#) allow a person to travel to, live, or stay temporarily in Australia. One of the conditions for these visas to be granted is for the person to have a sponsor. In most cases the sponsor will be the person's partner.

The sponsor's obligation is to agree to support the visa holder and their children who are granted the visa for the first 2 years after the Department of Home Affairs grant the visa by providing accommodation and financial assistance.

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### Multiple relationships

The social security system does not recognise the existence of multiple relationships, regardless of whether they were formed within Australia or overseas. The policy was updated to include changes relating to assessments under Section 24 provision, which decision makers can take into consideration for when the customer does not form part of the [central couple](#).

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If a Service Officer has determined the customer should not be considered as single under Section 24 and is to be paid at the partnered rate, the customer must be coded as single and paid a **manual partnered rate**, as the system does not allow for a customer to be linked to more than one partner. **Note:** additional partners who qualify for Parenting Payment (PP) will be paid Parenting Payment Single (PPS) at the manual partnered rate. It is important to calculate

the **manual** partnered rate by applying the Parenting Payment Partnered (PPP) income test, not the PPS income test.

### Customers in hardship

When a Section 24 assessment cannot be undertaken at first point of contact and if the customer meets the financial hardship criteria to have the Section 24 assessment [processed urgently](#), a referral may be sent for urgent processing.

See the [Process](#) page for more information on how to create a Section 24 assessment financial hardship referral (this includes assessments as part of a new claim).

### Making retrospective decisions

If a customer has failed to advise within 14 days ([28 days for customers living together overseas](#)) they have become partnered, it may be necessary to consider any Section 24 assessment as being in 2 parts. The first part (Decision 1) being from the consideration day. The second part (Decision 2) may be needed for any period prior to the consideration day.

**Decision 1** - A current assessment to apply Section 24 to treat a partnered person as a single person.

**Decision 2** - When a person is already receiving the single rate of payment and fails to advise they have become partnered (for example, married or entered a registered or de facto relationship), and their circumstances may have warranted exercise of discretion to apply Section 24 had they advised correctly.

It would also be appropriate to consider Section 24 when investigating if a debt exists and the amount of any debt. For example:

- if after consideration it is determined Section 24 would have applied to the customer based on their circumstances, then it is possible no debt exists, or
- if after consideration it is determined Section 24 would **not** have been applied to the customer based on their circumstances, then a debt can only be raised for the difference between what they were paid (single rate) and what they were entitled to receive (partnered rate, taking into account the full effect of the partnered income/assets test being applied)

Service Officers undertaking the Section 24 assessment need to determine whether Section 24 may have been applicable retrospectively in order to work out if a debt exists. This includes where a customer retrospectively discloses they were partnered but paid the single rate, however their partner has passed away and the surviving member of a couple requests to be assessed under Section 4 provisions for the retrospective period. Obtaining a co-signed MOD P will not be possible, however accepting the customer's signed form would be sufficient in these circumstances to assess the need to recover payments the customer was not entitled to.

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### Reviews of Section 24



It is important for cases where a Section 24 assessment is applied to be kept under close review, especially if there is a risk of incorrect payments due to a change of circumstances, which would warrant the termination of the Section 24 assessment. A manual review must be conducted **every 13 weeks**, or earlier if warranted. However, for customers whose circumstances are unlikely to change, or where there is a very low risk of incorrect payment, reviews may only need to be conducted annually. If discretion is used to extend the review period beyond 13 weeks, this must be documented on the customer's record and supported by facts.

Whenever a customer leaves Australia to visit their partner overseas, a review must be conducted prior to departure to determine if Section 24 should continue to be applied whilst they are away. Generally Section 24 does not apply if the couple are living together overseas.

See [Member of a couple reviews - Section 24](#) for more information.

### **Maintenance action for customers assessed as single under Section 24**

If the customer's children are from the current relationship no maintenance action is needed, even though the customer is now treated as single. This is because the customer could not be expected to seek maintenance from their own partner. If they could, they would generally not be in a position where Section 24 would be considered in the first place. An exemption from taking maintenance action must be coded to avoid issues with the customer's ongoing Family Tax Benefit entitlements.

If the children are from a previous relationship (or if the customer later separates from their partner), then normal maintenance action would be needed.

### **Customers assessed as single under Section 24 and claiming Family Tax Benefit (FTB) for their partner's child**

If the customer is claiming FTB for their partner's child and has been assessed as single under Section 24 of the Social Security Act 1991, the customer cannot receive FTB in respect to their partner's child (from a previous relationship). The child cannot be considered an FTB child of the customer. The customer's partner however, can test eligibility for FTB for their child from a previous relationship. See [Eligibility for Family Tax Benefit \(FTB\)](#).

### **Child Care Subsidy (CCS) entitlement for customers assessed as partnered and partner lives overseas**

For customers assessed as partnered but receiving CCS only, the CCS entitlement will be based on the [combined family income](#) (that is, includes any income earned by the partner overseas), and the member with the lowest Activity Test result. Partners living or working overseas will have an automatic Activity Test result of 100 hours, meaning the number of subsidised hours the customer will be entitled to receive will be based on their level of activity. For more information, see [Activity Test for Child Care Subsidy \(CCS\)](#).

The [Resources](#) page has a link to the Section 24 Decision Support Tool (DST), links to Partner Details (Mod P/AUS174), forms and examples of situations where Section 24 of the Social Security Act 1991 would or would not apply.

### **Related links**

[Member of a Couple \(MoC\) and Separated under one roof \(SUOR\) assessments](#)

[Member of a couple reviews - Section 24](#)

[Assessment of circumstances for a couple separated due to illness](#)

[Assessment of circumstances for customers with partner in prison](#)

[Eligibility for Special Benefit \(SpB\)](#)

[Residence assessment for customers claiming Special Benefit \(SpB\)](#)

[The Assurance of Support \(AoS\) scheme](#)

[Income Test for partnered allowance customers](#)

[Income Test for partnered pension customers](#)

[28 day rule for Centrelink International Services \(CIS\) customers](#)

## Process

Customers receiving an income support payment whose **partner has had their visa cancelled** may apply for assessment under Section 24 provisions.

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## On this page:

[Section 24 determinations](#)

[Assessment of Section 24](#)

[Unfavourable Section 24 decision](#)

[Favourable Section 24 assessment](#)

## Section 24 determinations

Table 1

Step	Action
1	<p><b>Customer's current circumstances</b> + Read more ...</p> <p>Action may be needed to review the customer's relationship status due to a range of circumstances.</p> <p>If a Service Officer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>receives a Section 24 assessment required work item, go to <a href="#">Table 2, Step 1</a></li> <li>has a review activity for supporting documents due, go to <a href="#">Table 2, Step 4</a></li> </ul>

	<p>If the customer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has a Section 24 assessment in progress and the customer is now seeking an <b>urgent assessment</b> due to financial hardship, <a href="#">go to Step 5</a></li> <li>• has <b>returned requested supporting documents</b> for a Section 24 assessment, go to <a href="#">Table 2, Step 4</a></li> <li>• is partnered (including where they have failed to advise of becoming partnered within their notification period) and an assessment to treat them as single under <b>Section 24</b> (for both new claims and change of circumstances) is needed, <a href="#">go to Step 3</a></li> <li>• is in a <b>multiple relationship</b>, <a href="#">go to Step 2</a></li> <li>• is currently receiving payments under Section 24 and <b>advises of a change in circumstances</b> for themselves or their partner. For example, but not limited to - income or assets, intend to travel overseas, partner arrives in Australia, see <a href="#">Member of a couple reviews - Section 24</a>. Procedure ends here</li> <li>• is currently receiving payments under Section 24 and a <b>Section 24 review activity falls due</b>, see <a href="#">Member of a couple reviews - Section 24</a>. Procedure ends here</li> <li>• is <b>separated due to illness</b>, see <a href="#">Assessment of circumstances for a couple separated due to illness</a>. Procedure ends here</li> <li>• is <b>separated under one roof</b>, see <a href="#">Member of a Couple (MoC) and Separated under one roof (SUOR) assessments</a>. Procedure ends here</li> <li>• is partnered and their <b>partner is in prison</b> (including overseas detention), see <a href="#">Assessment of circumstances for customers with partner in prison</a>. Procedure ends here</li> </ul>
2	<p><b>Determine if the customer is part of the central couple</b> + Read more ...</p> <p>The Australian social security system does not recognise the existence of multiple relationships, regardless of whether they were formed within Australia or overseas.</p> <p>s47E(d)</p> <p>s47E(d)</p>

3	<p><b>Check the record to determine if the customer is linked to their partner</b> + Read more ...</p> <p>Section 24 assessments for customers not in a multiple relationship can only be conducted once the customer is linked to their partner on the Marital Status (<b>MS</b>) and Link Partner (<b>LP</b>) screens. <b>Note:</b> a formal MoC assessment <b>is not</b> needed if the customer is not linked to their partner.</p> <p>s47E(d)</p> <p>Is the customer already linked to their partner?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Yes,</b> <a href="#">go to Step 4</a></li> <li>• <b>No,</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ action will depend on whether the partner is present or not. For information on action needed, see <a href="#">Change in relationship status from single to partnered</a>. This includes where family and domestic violence is present and it is decided the records should still be linked (contact a Social Worker to discuss if needed). If all information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- is available to link the customer and their partner (including confirmation of the relationship by both the customer and partner), complete the link and then <a href="#">go to Step 4</a></li> <li>- is not available, procedure ends here until the relationship forms (MOD P/AUS174) are returned</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ if there is family and domestic violence issues present and it is decided the records will <b>not</b> be linked, contact a Social Worker to discuss if needed, <a href="#">go to Step 4</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>When the MOD P or AUS174 is returned, Service Officers must process the form, finalise the new claim and link the customer to their partner. See <a href="#">Table 2 in Change in relationship status from single to partnered</a> prior to undertaking or referring to the appropriate region code for Section 24 assessment. <b>Note:</b> for retrospective assessments where the partner has passed away, a signed form from the customer only may be accepted.</p> <p>For <b>new claims</b> - partner details will generally be gathered or relationship forms will be issued as part of the claim process.</p>
4	<p><b>Determining who will undertake the Section 24 assessment</b> + Read more ...</p> <p>The Section 24 assessment and coding action will depend on whether the customer is residing in Australia or overseas.</p> <p>If the customer <b>resides:</b></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>overseas</b>, the Section 24 assessment is conducted by International Services (CIS), <a href="#">go to Step 5</a></li> <li>• <b>in Australia</b> (regardless of whether their partner resides in Australia or overseas), it is expected this will be undertaken at first point of contact where a Service Officer has been trained in Section 24 assessments.</li> </ul> <p><b>A referral for the Section 24 assessment is only appropriate where:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the assessment request is received in a Service Centre and there is no Service Officer onsite who has been trained to undertake the assessment, or</li> <li>• the request is received by a Service Officer who is scheduled for inbound telephony, or</li> <li>• a processing Service Officer, including new claims, has not been trained in Section 24 assessments. <b>Note:</b> JobSeeker Payment and Youth Allowance (job seeker) new claim processing staff must complete Section 24 assessments.</li> </ul> <p><b>Do any of the above circumstances apply?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Yes</b>, <a href="#">go to Step 5</a></li> <li>• <b>No</b>, go to <a href="#">Step 1 in Table 2</a></li> </ul>
5	<p><b>Consider eligibility for urgent assessment due to financial hardship + Read more ...</b></p> <p>A customer may request an urgent assessment due to being in <a href="#">financial hardship</a>.</p> <p>Is the customer in genuine financial hardship?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Yes</b>, <a href="#">go to Step 6</a></li> <li>• <b>No</b>, <a href="#">go to Step 7</a></li> </ul>
6	<p><b>Genuine financial hardship - refer for urgent assessment of Section 24 + Read more ...</b></p> <p>If an open <b>S24 assessment required DOC</b> already exists, close the <b>DOC</b> and add a new <b>DOC</b> using the template below, depending on the customer's circumstances.</p> <p><b>For customers residing in Australia</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scan all supporting documents to the customer's record</li> <li>• <b>s47E(d)</b></li> <li>• <b>Do not</b> complete the <b>Fast Note DOC</b></li> </ul> <p><b>For customers residing overseas</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scan all supporting documents to the customer's record</li> <li>• <b>s47E(d)</b></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Do not</b> complete the <b>Fast Note DOC</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the <b>DOC</b> must include any information that has been provided (for example, bank statements)</li> <li>• relevant keywords <b>s47E(d)</b> ) are automatically attached to the above <b>Fast Note</b> to make sure the work item is mapped and categorised correctly. There is no requirement to add any keywords to the <b>Fast Note</b> or change the office code on the <b>AL</b> screen</li> </ul> <p>Procedure ends here.</p>
7	<p><b>No genuine financial hardship – refer for assessment of Section 24 + Read more ...</b></p> <p><b>For customers residing in Australia</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scan all supporting documents to the customer's record</li> <li>• Create an <b>open</b> work item using the <a href="#">Fast Note</a>. Select <b>s47E(d)</b></li> <li>• <b>Do not</b> complete the <b>Fast Note DOC</b></li> </ul> <p><b>For customers residing overseas</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scan all supporting documents to the customer's record</li> <li>• Create an <b>open</b> work item using <a href="#">Fast Note</a>. Select <b>s47E(d)</b></li> <li>• <b>Do not</b> complete the <b>Fast Note DOC</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the <b>DOC</b> must include any information that has been provided (for example, bank statements)</li> <li>• relevant keywords are automatically attached to the above <b>Fast Note</b> to make sure the work item is mapped and categorised correctly. There is no requirement to add any keywords to the <b>Fast Note</b> or change the office code on the <b>AL</b> screen</li> </ul> <p>Procedure ends here.</p>

## Assessment of Section 24

Table 2

Step	Action
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1	<p><b>Skilled staff receive a WLM work item or Section 24 assessment is required + Read more ...</b></p> <p>Check the customer's record to make sure there is sufficient information or documents detailing the customer's and partner's current circumstances and financial situation to make an assessment. Refer to the <b>Circumstances to consider</b> section on the Background page.</p> <p><b>Note:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The MOD P/AUS174 should not be used as sufficient information <b>unless</b> it is accompanied by attached supporting evidence</li> <li>• If the form has evidence attached, this can be assessed to decide if there is enough information to make a decision</li> <li>• s47E(d)</li> </ul> <p><b>Is there sufficient information to undertake a Section 24 assessment?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Yes</b>, <a href="#">go to Step 6</a></li> <li>• <b>No</b>, and written evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Is not needed, <a href="#">go to Step 2</a></li> <li>○ Is needed (for example, bank statements), <a href="#">go to Step 3</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
2	<p><b>Written evidence is not needed - contact customer + Read more ...</b></p> <p>Make at least 1 <a href="#">attempt to contact the customer by phone</a> to obtain the relevant required information for the assessment under Section 24.</p> <p><b>Was the outbound contact to the customer successful?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Yes</b>, obtain the relevant information then <a href="#">go to Step 4</a></li> <li>• <b>No</b>, <a href="#">go to Step 3</a></li> </ul>
3	<p><b>Written evidence is needed - issue QSS32 Online Advice + Read more ...</b></p> <p>It may also be appropriate at this time to request/gather information for a retrospective period (that is, where a customer receiving the single rate of payment fails to notify the agency that they were partnered). Service Officers need to determine whether section 24 may have been applicable retrospectively in order to work out if a debt exists. This includes where one partner has passed away.</p> <p>To obtain written evidence:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Issue QSS32 Online Advice</a> to request supporting information (for example, bank statements, list of expenditures). See the <a href="#">Resources</a> page for approved QSS32 letter text</li> <li>• If an open <b>S24 assessment required DOC</b> already exists, record details of the request by annotating the <b>DOC</b></li> <li>• If there is no open <b>S24 assessment required DOC</b>, create the <b>open</b> work item using <a href="#">Fast Note</a>. Select <b>Auto Text</b> use <b>s47E(d)</b> (for customers residing in Australia) or <b>Overseas resident S24 assessment req</b> (for customers residing overseas) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Include details of what has been requested from the customer</li> <li>○ <b>Do not</b> complete the <b>Fast Note DOC</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Place the open <b>S24 assessment required DOC</b> on hold for the <a href="#">allowed time to respond</a> to follow up the return of supporting information  <b>Note:</b> if the customer has requested an urgent assessment due to financial hardship (for example, there is already an open <b>Urgent S24 assessment required DOC</b>), remove the keyword <b>s47E(d)</b> from the <a href="#">Fast Note</a> when placing the open <b>DOC</b> on hold</li> </ul> <p>Procedure ends here.</p>
4	<p><b>Supporting documents returned or due to be returned</b> + Read more ...</p> <p>When a review activity falls due for the return of supporting documents, check the customer's record to confirm all requested/needed supporting documents have been returned.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> the MOD P or AUS174 should not be used as sufficient information <b>unless</b> it is accompanied by attached supporting evidence. The supporting evidence should detail the customer's and partner's current circumstances and financial situation. Refer to the <b>Circumstances to consider</b> section on the Background page.</p> <p>Gather information required to make Section 24 assessment.</p> <p><b>Has the customer returned sufficient information to assess if Section 24 should apply?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Yes</b>, <a href="#">go to Step 6</a></li> <li>• <b>No</b>, <a href="#">go to Step 5</a></li> </ul>
5	<p><b>Customer to be treated as partnered</b> + Read more ...</p> <p>As the customer has not returned the required supporting documents within the <a href="#">allowed time to respond</a>, they must be treated as partnered.</p> <p>See <a href="#">Step 1 in Table 3</a>.</p>



6	<p><b>The Section 24 determination</b> + Read more ...</p> <p>Once all supporting forms and information has been received, use the Section 24 Decision Support Tool on the <a href="#">Resources</a> page to assist in determining whether it is appropriate to consider payment under Section 24 provisions.</p> <p>Consider the customer's circumstances. As part of the assessment, consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a special reason to be considered in the couple's circumstances?</li> <li>• Is there a lack of being able to <a href="#">pool resources</a> for the couple as a result of the circumstances?</li> <li>• Is there financial difficulty as a result of the couple's circumstances?</li> </ul> <p>In <b>all</b> cases there must be unusual, uncommon, abnormal or exceptional circumstances. <b>s47E(d)</b></p> <p>Examples of some Section 24 cases are included on the <a href="#">Resources</a> page.</p> <p><b>Does the customer and partner have a 'special reason' to be considered single under Section 24 provisions?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Yes</b>, see <a href="#">Step 1 in Table 4</a></li> <li>• <b>No</b>, see <a href="#">Step 1 in Table 3</a></li> </ul>
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#### Unfavourable Section 24 decision

Table 3

Step	Action
1	<p><b>Contact customer</b> + Read more ...</p> <p><a href="#">When making an unfavourable decision, speak to the customer:</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explain the decision</li> <li>• give them a chance to provide more information, and</li> <li>• tell them of their review and appeal rights</li> </ul> <p>Make 2 <a href="#">genuine attempts to contact</a> the customer before issuing an advice. If the customer is overseas, two contact attempts must be made over a 48 hour period. For more information, see <a href="#">Calling a customer or returning a customer's call</a>.</p> <p>Was the first contact attempt with the customer successful?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Yes</b>, and the s24 assessment is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>in relation</b> to a multiple relationship, <a href="#">go to Step 3</a></li> <li>○ <b>not in relation</b> to a multiple relationship, <a href="#">go to Step 4</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>No</b>, <a href="#">go to Step 2</a></li> </ul>
2	<p><b>Contact attempts</b> + Read more ...</p> <p><b>First contact attempt unsuccessful</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annotate the open <b>S24 assessment required DOC</b> where one is present, or create the following <b>open</b> work item using <a href="#">Fast Note</a>. Select <b>s47 E(d)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Do not</b> complete the <b>Fast Note DOC</b></li> <li>○ Detail the date and time of the attempted contact. The <b>DOC</b> must have sufficient information to inform any other Service Officer of the reasons for the adverse decision in the event they may have to make the second contact attempt</li> <li>○ Place the open <b>S24 assessment required DOC</b> on hold until the next business day</li> <li>○ If another Service Officer makes the second contact attempt then they become the Decision Maker in this case and must record the decision</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Second contact attempt</b></p> <p>If the second contact attempt is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>successful</b>, tell the customer of the decision, the notification rules and their review and appeal rights. If the section 24 assessment is:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>in relation to</b> a multiple relationship, <a href="#">go to Step 3</a></li> <li>○ <b>not in relation to</b> a multiple relationship <a href="#">go to Step 4</a></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>not successful</b>, update the <b>S24 assessment required</b> or <b>Section 24 Progress DOC</b> to detail the customer has not been notified of the decision by phone as the second attempt was unsuccessful and the date and time of the attempted contact. For customers:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ in a multiple relationship, <a href="#">go to Step 3</a></li> <li>○ not in a multiple relationship, <a href="#">go to Step 4</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
3	<p><b>Customer is in a multiple relationship - Section 24 assessment unfavourable decision</b> + Read more ...</p> <p>The system will not allow a customer to be linked to more than one partner. The customer must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• coded as single on the system, and</li> <li>• paid a <b>manual partnered rate</b></li> </ul>

[illegible]

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ is a PPS customer, as the customer is assessed as partnered, they are no longer eligible for PPS and may wish to transfer to PPP or test their eligibility for another payment. See <a href="#">Transfer from Parenting Payment (PPS) to Parenting Payment (PPP)</a>, then <a href="#">go to Step 6</a></li> <li>○ is on a payment other than PPS, <a href="#">go to Step 5</a></li> </ul> <p><b>New claims</b> - linking the customer to their partner will be done as part of the new claim activity.</p>
5	<p><b>Update MS screen + Read more ...</b></p> <p>If the partner does not have a record, <b>do not</b> create one now. A record will be created and updates to the partner's details will be completed as part of the linking process.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> both customer and partner's record must be in the same 'Environment' to link records. See <a href="#">Inter-environment change of address (ICoA) transfer of a customer record</a>.</p> <p>To link the customer to their partner, in the customer's record, go to the <b>s47E(d)</b></p> <p>See <a href="#">Adding a customer to the system</a>.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> if the partner does not have a <b>Confirmed</b> Identity Confirmation (ICI), they <b>may</b> need to provide documents that establish Commencement of Identity (CoI) and use of identity in the community (Primary Use in the Community (PUiC) and Secondary Use in the Community (SUiC)). The link between the identity and the individual will then be established through a photographic identity document. For more information see <a href="#">Identity Confirmation</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update any changes from the Customer Detail Task Selector (<b>CDTS</b>) screen (for example Change of address). For more detail, see <a href="#">Changing Address (CLK)</a></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An auto link of 2 customers (<b>LNK</b>) code will show in <b>Rent Verification:</b> field on the <b>AC</b> screen when linking records. This will need to be updated or Rent Assistance (if applicable) will stop. Review and update the couples' accommodation details. See <a href="#">Completing the Accommodation Details (AC) screen and assessing Rent Assistance (RA)</a></li> <li><a href="#">Update income and assets</a> if not already updated</li> <li>Obtain a new estimate of income for Family Tax Benefit (FTB) if applicable. See <a href="#">Estimating income for family assistance and Paid Parental Leave scheme payments</a></li> <li>Update partner's Foreign Income/Assets/ Pension Summary (<b>FIPS</b>) screen (for comparative foreign payment). For information on coding see <a href="#">Foreign income</a></li> </ul>
6	<p><b>Record the decision + Read more ...</b></p> <p><b>Is the customer in a multiple relationship?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Yes,</b> <a href="#">go to Step 7</a></li> <li><b>No,</b> staff must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>create a closed <b>DOC</b> on the customer's record only (that is, the customer who was assessed under Section 24 provisions):</li> <li>record a <b>DOC</b> using <a href="#">Fast Note</a>. Select <b>s47E(d)</b></li> <li><a href="#">Go to Step 8</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
7	<p><b>Record the decision for customer is in a multiple relationship + Read more ...</b></p> <p>Staff must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>create a closed <b>Display on Access (DOA) DOC on all customer records.</b> <b>s47E(d)</b></li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">This DOA DOC <b>must not have an expiry date</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>record a <b>DOA DOC</b> on the <b>customer's record</b> using <a href="#">Fast Note</a>. Select <b>s47E(d)</b></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Complete DOC as appropriate</li> <li>• record a <b>DOC</b> on the <b>s47E(d)</b></li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Complete DOC as appropriate</li> <li>• <a href="#">Go to Step 8</a></li> </ul>
8	<p><b>Issue a decision letter</b> + Read more ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalise all associated activities and <b>DOCs</b> on <b>AL</b> screen</li> <li>• <a href="#">Issue a manual Q888 letter</a>, detailing the decision not to apply Section 24 to the customers' circumstances. See the <a href="#">Resources</a> page for links to approved rejection Q888 letter text</li> </ul>

### Favourable Section 24 assessment

Table 4

Step	Action
1	<p><b>Update the customer's Marital Status (MS) screen</b> + Read more ...</p> <p>The customer is considered as single under Section 24 and is to be paid at the single rate.</p> <p>Is the s24 assessment in relation to a multiple relationship?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, <a href="#">go to Step 2</a></li> <li>• No, <a href="#">go to Step 3</a></li> </ul>
2	<p><b>Customer is in a multiple relationship - Section 24 assessment unfavourable decision – update record</b> + Read more ...</p> <p>The customer is in a multiple relationship and the decision maker has determined that the customer can be treated as single under Section 24.</p> <p>The customer is considered as single under Section 24 and is to be paid at the single rate. <b>s47E(d)</b></p>

	s47E(d)
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3	<p><b>Customer is not in a multiple relationship - Section 24 assessment unfavourable decision – update record + Read more ...</b></p> <p>Updating the customer's <b>MS</b> screen from a 'partnered' to a 'singular' status will automatically update the partner's marital status and unlink the records. The Section 24 (S24) relationship qualifier code will not replicate on the partner's record and must be manually updated where the partner is a current Centrelink customer. If the partner is not a current Centrelink customer, the S24 relationship qualifier code is not required to be recorded on their record.</p> <p>s47E(d)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ New claims - the date of event will generally be the start date of the payment</li> <li>○ Non-new claim - the date of event will generally be the date of the change or the date the assessor determines the customer qualifies under Section 24, see <a href="#">Notification Handler</a> for date of effect rules</li> <li>○ A retrospective decision may be needed when single customers fail to advise they become partnered within 14 days (28 days for customer living together overseas) noting the presence of any family and domestic violence must be factored into the decision</li> <li>○ If a Section 24 is not applied retrospectively based on the customers circumstances, raise a debt. The debt will be for the difference between what the customer was paid (single rate) and what they were entitled to receive (partnered rate). The full effect of the partnered income/assets test is to be taken into account</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Marital Status:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>New claim</b> and customer and partner <b>were not already linked</b>, s47E(d) <p style="margin-left: 40px;"><b>Do not</b> select S24 relationship qualifier if customer's claim is to be rejected</p> </li> <li>○ <b>New claim</b> and customer and partner <b>were already linked</b>, s47E(d) <p style="margin-left: 40px;">. If customer and partner were already linked with the same date as the date of the claim, select s47E(d) <p style="margin-left: 40px;">. <b>Do not</b> select S24 relationship qualifier if customer's claim is to be rejected</p> </p> </li> <li>○ <b>Non-new claim</b>, and customer and partner <b>were not already linked</b>, and decision to apply S24 is the same as the date they became partnered, s47E(d)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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	<p>s47E(d)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Non-new claim</b>, and customer and partner <b>were already linked</b>, update s47E(d)             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. If customer and partner were already linked with the same date of when S24 is to be applied, select s47E(d)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• s47E(d)</li> </ul> <p>s47E(d)</p>          <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• repeat the above coding on the partner's record</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> if the customer is a Parenting Payment Partnered (PPP) customer, the <b>MS</b> screen and coding the S24 relationship qualifier code will be updated in a benefit transfer (BTR) activity, see <a href="#">Transfer from Parenting Payment Partnered (PPP) to Parenting Payment Single (PPS)</a> to apply the section 24 decision.</p> <p><a href="#">Go to Step 4.</a></p>
4	<p><b>Code a Manual Review + Read more ...</b></p> <p><b>Is the Section 24 assessment in relation to a multiple relationship?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, <a href="#">go to Step 5</a></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No, staff must <a href="#">code a new manual review</a> on both <b>the customer's and partner's record</b> to review their circumstances again in the future. The purpose of the review will be to identify whether it is appropriate to continue to apply Section 24 provisions at that time</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Go to Step 6.</a></p>
5	<p><b>Coding a review for customer is in a multiple relationship + Read more ...</b></p> <p>Staff must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>record the review on the <b>customers record only</b>. This is because the person whom they have declared as their partner is already partnered, and not assessed under Section 24 provisions.</li> <li>use the s47E(d)</li> </ul>          <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Go to Step 6</a></li> </ul>
6	<p><b>Record the decision + Read more ...</b></p> <p><b>Is the Section 24 assessment in relation to a multiple relationship?</b></p> <p><b>Yes,</b> <a href="#">go to Step 6</a></p> <p><b>No,</b> staff must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>create a closed Display on Access (<b>DOA</b>) <b>DOC</b> on <b>both</b> the customer and partner records, regardless if the partner is receiving an income support or family assistance payment. This <b>DOA DOC</b> must not have an expiry date</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>record a <b>DOA DOC</b> using <a href="#">Fast Note</a>. Select <b>s47E(d)</b></li> <li><a href="#">Go to Step 7</a></li> </ul>
6	<p><b>Record customer in a multiple relationship</b> + Read more ...</p> <p>Staff must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>create a closed Display on Access (DOA) <b>DOC</b> on all customer records that form part of the multiple relationship (that is, the central couple as well as the customer who was assessed under Section 24 provisions). This <b>DOA DOC</b> must not have an expiry date</li> <li>record a <b>DOA DOC</b> on the <b>customers' record</b> using <a href="#">Fast Note</a>. Select <b>s47E(d)</b></li> <li>record a <b>DOC</b> on both records of the <b>central couple</b> using Fast Note. Select <b>s47E(d)</b></li> <li><a href="#">Go to Step 7</a></li> </ul>
7	<p><b>Issue a decision letter</b> + Read more ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finalise all associated activities and <b>DOCs</b> on <b>AL</b> screen</li> <li><a href="#">Issue a manual Q888 letter</a> detailing the decision to apply Section 24 to the customer's circumstances. See <a href="#">Resources</a> for links to approved favourable Q888 letter text</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Go to Step 8</a></li> </ul>
8	<p><b>Follow up FTB payments</b> + Read more ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Income estimate:</b> Check if this has to be updated for FTB and Child Care Subsidy (CCS). See <a href="#">Updating income estimates for the current financial year</a></li> <li>• <b>Maintenance action</b> is not needed for children of the current relationship when customers are paid under Section 24. Assessment by a social worker is also not needed. Code maintenance action as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>s47E(d)</b> . See <a href="#">Maintenance Action Test (MAT) codes</a></li> <li>○ If there is a later breakdown in the relationship, normal maintenance action is needed</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> if a customer is claiming FTB for their partner's child and has been assessed as not a member of a couple under Section 24 of the Social Security Act, the customer cannot receive FTB in respect of their partner's child (from a previous relationship). The child cannot be considered an FTB child of the customer. The customer's partner however, can test eligibility for FTB in relation to their child from a previous relationship. See <a href="#">Eligibility for Family Tax Benefit (FTB)</a>.</p>

## References

## Policy

[Social Security Guide, 3.1.1.10, Residence Requirements](#)

[Social Security Guide, 2.2.5.50, Discretion to Treat a Person as Not Being a Member of a Couple for a Special Reason](#)

[Social Security Guide, 1.1.R.200, Residence](#)

[Social Security Guide, 1.1.R.210, Residence requirements](#)

[Family Assistance Guide, 1.1.M.50, Member of a couple](#)

## Legislation

Links to the Federal Register of Legislation site go to a 'Series' page. Select the 'Latest' version.

[Social Security Act 1991](#)

- section 4, Family relationships definitions-couple
  - subsection 2 'Member of a couple-General'
- section 7, Australian residence definitions

- subsection 2 'An Australian resident is a person who'
- section 24, Person may be treated as not being a member of a couple

[A New Tax System \(Family Assistance\) Act 1999, section 3\(1\), Member of a couple](#)

## Resources

### Section 24 decisions

Section 24 is a discretionary decision and each case must be based on its own merit. Before making a determination to apply Section 24, Service Officers must take into account all the available funds and assistance the customer has access to, including in kind support from a family member or an assurer (if the customer is subject to an Assurance of Support).

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**However**, this determination is a process of **weighing all the facts** and each case **must** be decided on its own facts and merits.

## Forms

[Partner Details form \(MOD P\)](#)

[Partner details form \(AUS174\) – where the customer is claiming an Australian payment while living overseas](#)

## Examples of treating a partnered person as single for Section 24

Table 1

Item	Scenario
1	<p><b>May be appropriate to apply - customer on temporary non-working visa, partner unemployed</b></p> <p>Customer on temporary non-working visa, partner unemployed. Bob and Dianne have had to move interstate for family reasons, Bob is looking for work.</p>

	<p>Dianne is not able to work due to being in Australia on a temporary non-working visa. As Dianne is not residentially qualified to claim an income support payment, only Bob has some support in the form of Parenting Payment Partnered (PPP).</p> <p>Bob and Dianne are in <a href="#">financial difficulty</a>, and have a special reason for considering Section 24, and treating Bob as single, and paying Parenting Payment Single (PPS).</p>
2	<p><b>May be appropriate to apply - prison release, parole requirements specify living arrangements</b></p> <p>John has recently been released from prison. Parole requirements specify John must live in a hostel for 12 months.</p> <p>John's partner Jane is currently receiving JobSeeker Payment (JSP).</p> <p>John is required to pay for personal accommodation and food charges while living at the hostel from JSP payments. Jane already has a place and cannot live at the hostel with John.</p> <p>Customers cannot reasonably be expected to benefit from the <a href="#">pooling of resources</a> as they must reside in separate accommodation and pay their own living expenses</p>
3	<p><b>May be appropriate to apply - customer resides overseas with partner periodically, but does not benefit from the pooling of resources</b></p> <p>Pete is currently receiving the Age Pension under Section 24 and spends time overseas to reside with partner, Maria, for 6 monthly periods. Maria has no income and has never contributed any money to support Pete. Pete does not benefit from a pooling of resources while residing with Maria overseas as Maria has nothing to contribute to the pool.</p> <p>It may be appropriate to continue to pay Age Pension to Pete under Section 24 provisions for the periods of the overseas trips, after the circumstances are verified (taking into account the social security system that applies to the country of residence).</p>
4	<p><b>May be appropriate to apply – partner is on a spouse visa and the customer is the sponsor</b></p> <p>Rebecca is partnered to Dylan, who has been granted a Partner visa (Temporary)(subclass 820). This means that Dylan can stay in Australia temporarily while the Department of Home Affairs process Dylan's permanent Partner visa (subclass 801) application. Rebecca is Dylan's sponsor and has agreed to support Dylan for the first 2 years after the visa was granted by providing accommodation and financial assistance.</p> <p>Rebecca has recently been involved in an accident and as a result exhausted the funds available to Rebecca due to medical expenses. As a situation has arisen beyond Rebecca's control it may be appropriate to grant payments under Section 24 provisions.</p>

5	<p><b>Not appropriate to apply - customer has access to joint bank account while partner working overseas</b></p> <p>Jenny is an Australian resident. Jenny's partner, Danielle (also a resident), is working overseas but does not have enough money left from wages after expenses to send any back to help support Jenny.</p> <p>Jenny has no support from Danielle, and so has a special reason for being considered under Section 24. However, Jenny has access to a joint bank account in Australia, with a balance of \$15,000. Jenny and Danielle can still benefit from pooling their resources, and they have not explored and exhausted all reasonable sources of financial support.</p> <p>It would not be appropriate to grant Jenny Parenting Payment Single (PPS) under Section 24.</p>
6	<p><b>Not appropriate to apply - customer has access to funds while partner working overseas</b></p> <p>Erica, an Australian resident, is partnered to Hans who is currently working overseas.</p> <p>Hans is not able to save enough from salary payments to support Erica by sending regular money.</p> <p>Erica has part-time work but this is not enough to survive on alone, and no Parenting Payment Partnered (PPP) is payable, due to Hans' gross wages.</p> <p>Hans visits Erica and their children every 6 months or so, and during the most recent visit left Erica \$5,000 to help buy food, clothes, and pay general expenses. This arrangement means Erica and Hans can benefit from the pooling of their resources, and Section 24 is not appropriate in this scenario.</p>
7	<p><b>Not appropriate to apply - customer has current Section 24 applied but goes overseas to live with partner</b></p> <p>James is currently receiving Parenting Payment Single (PPS), and is being treated as single under Section 24 due to partner Carly being overseas. Carly is not residentially qualified for any income support payments in Australia and is living in an Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) country and receiving income support. There are restrictions on the transfer of Carly's income out of the country.</p> <p>James has gone overseas temporarily to visit Carly and assist in the necessary preparations for Carly's emigration to Australia.</p> <p>James can no longer be paid PPS under Section 24 due to living together overseas with Carly, and they can now benefit from pooling their resources which was previously not possible.</p>
8	<p><b>Not appropriate to apply - customer has a visa requirement to have access to their owns funds in order to reside in Australia</b></p>



	<p>Sammie has recently arrived in Australia on a student visa and is partnered to Ryan, an Australian resident currently receiving Disability Support Pension (DSP).</p> <p>One of the requirements of Sammie's student visa is having access to \$18,000 per year to meet living cost requirements.</p> <p>As it is a requirement of Sammie's visa to be able to be self-supporting whilst studying in Australia, it would not be appropriate for Section 24 to be considered.</p>
9	<p><b>Not appropriate to apply - funds needed by a person who arrives in Australia on a student visa</b></p> <p>A person who arrives in Australia on a student visa is required to have access to the following funds to meet the living cost requirement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$18,610 per year for the main student</li> <li>• \$6,515 per year for the student's partner</li> <li>• \$3,720 per year for the student's first child</li> <li>• \$2,790 per year for every other child</li> </ul> <p>In this situation, it would <b>not</b> be appropriate for Section 24 to be considered, as it is a requirement of the student's visa to support themselves on the above available funds.</p>
10	<p><b>Not appropriate to apply – customer and partner live overseas and customer is able to provide the basic necessities of life</b></p> <p>Clive (an Australian Age Pension customer) is living overseas in the Philippines. Clive marries Alice. Alice does not work and has no income or assets.</p> <p>Clive has a savings account in the amount of \$10 000, and also has a small overseas pension.</p> <p>Due to the cost of living in the Philippines, Clive's Australian Age Pension is several times the annual equivalent to the basic wage in that country. Clive is able to provide the basic necessities of life for both of them and therefore it would not be appropriate for Section 24 to be applied as financial difficulty cannot be established.</p>
11	<p><b>May be appropriate to apply - customer and partner live overseas and unable to pool resources</b></p> <p>Alice lives in China with Lee. Alice receives the Australian Age Pension, Lee works part time.</p> <p>Lee has an accident and due to the injuries is not able to return to work. Lee is not entitled to any income support or any payments in China.</p> <p>As Lee is no longer able to work, Lee and Alice are no longer able to pool resources, therefore it may be appropriate to apply Section 24.</p>

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**Approved text for requesting information, confirmation and rejection letters**

Table 2

Step	Action
1	<p><b>Questionnaire or S24 decision letter to be issued</b></p> <p>If a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>QSS32</b> Questionnaire is to be issued, <a href="#">go to Step 2</a></li> <li>• <b>Q888 S24</b> letter is to be issued for a customer, see s47E(d), noting there are different versions depending on the customer's payment type. The following letters are available: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ favourable decision for Family Tax Benefit (FTB) only recipients</li> <li>○ favourable decision for Income Support and FTB recipients</li> <li>○ rejection decision for FTB only recipients</li> <li>○ rejection decision for Income Support and FTB recipients</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
2	<p><b>QSS32 Questionnaire</b></p> <p>A QSS32 Questionnaire may be manually issued if further information is required from the customer to assist in making a decision about an initial assessment or continuation of payment at the single rate under Section 24 of the Social Security Act 1991.</p> <p>The text for the Free Text Paragraphs below is approved and <b>must not</b> be modified. Only questions that are relevant to the customer's and their partner's circumstances should</p>

be included. For example, if the partner is **not an Australian resident and not present in Australia**, make sure Free Text Questions I and J are included.

[Issue a QSS32](#). Complete all letter fields by entering the corresponding numbers for the required selection:

- s47E(d)

:

We are currently assessing your entitlement to be paid under Section 24 of the Social Security Act 1991. Section 24 states that under some circumstances a person may be treated as a single person even though they have a partner.

- s47E(d)

Select Free Text fields as required. **Note:** only insert questions that are applicable to the customer's circumstances.

**FREE TEXT QUESTION A**

Are you still in a relationship with

<p>{PARTNER'S FULLNAME}?</p> <p>If no, go to Question 2. If yes, go to Question 3.</p> <p><b>FREE TEXT QUESTION B</b></p> <p>What date did you separate from your ex-partner? Do not answer any more questions. If you have not already provided separation details, go to <a href="https://servicesaustralia.gov.au/moc">servicesaustralia.gov.au/moc</a> for information about what you must do.</p> <p><b>FREE TEXT QUESTION C</b></p> <p>Please supply bank statements for all bank accounts you and your partner have in your names. Include managed investments held in and outside of Australia for the period &lt;START DATE&gt; to &lt;END DATE&gt;.</p> <p><b>FREE TEXT QUESTION D</b></p> <p>Provide a list of your weekly costs for example, electricity, gas, telephone, rates, rent, groceries, transport and minimum loan repayments.</p> <p><b>FREE TEXT QUESTION E</b></p> <p>What steps have you and your partner taken to reduce financial difficulty, such as looking for work, studying, applying for a permanent visa etc.?</p> <p><b>FREE TEXT QUESTION F</b></p> <p>Have you or your partner been paid for any work since &lt;DATE&gt;?</p> <p>If yes, please provide a copy of all the payslips.</p> <p><b>FREE TEXT QUESTION G</b></p> <p>Have you or your partner had any changes to your income or assets that you have not told us about? If yes, please provide details.</p> <p><b>FREE TEXT QUESTION H</b></p> <p>Is there anything else we need to know about your current circumstances to support the review?</p> <p>Free text questions I and J are only required if the partner is <b>not an Australia resident and not present in Australia</b>, otherwise these questions are not required.</p> <p><b>FREE TEXT QUESTION I</b></p> <p>As your partner is currently living overseas, how are they being financially supported?</p>
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	<p><b>FREE TEXT QUESTION J</b></p> <p>Do you plan to lodge an application for a permanent residence visa for your partner whilst they are in Australia?</p> <p><b>Review the letter to make sure the content is correct.</b></p> <p>Finalise and print the letter</p>
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## Training & Support

Add the course number to the **Search** field in the [Learning Portal](#) (LMS) in ESSentials:

- **CLK01101** - Section 24: Introduction
- **CLK01102** - Section 24: Decision making & processing
- **CLK01388** - Section 24: Refresher

s22



## Australian Government Services Australia

### Member of a couple reviews - Section 24 110-19111307

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#### Background

s22

. See [Freedom of Information – Information Publication Scheme](#).

This document outlines the process for conducting member of a couple reviews for customers receiving a payment under Section 24 provisions.

#### Initial assessment of a couple

[Assessment under Section 24](#) enables a delegate to decide there is a special reason not to treat a customer as a member of a couple. This only applies in limited situations. Generally, if either member of the couple does not, or cannot reasonably expect to benefit from the pooling of resources that usually occurs in a member of a couple relationship.

Exercising the discretion to continue treating a customer as **not** being a member of a couple occurs only after the completion of a review. The customer's current circumstances at this time must be assessed and a determination made to either continue payment under Section 24 provisions or not.

The intention of Section 24 is for it to be the **option of last resort**. Apply Section 24 provisions only when all other reasonable means of support have been explored and exhausted.

#### Reviews of Section 24 determinations

It is important to keep all cases with a Section 24 assessment applied under close review. Especially if there is a risk of incorrect payments due to a change of circumstances that would warrant ending the Section 24 assessment. Conduct manual reviews on a regular basis. A review must occur **every 13 weeks** or earlier if warranted. Customers with circumstances unlikely to change or a very low risk of incorrect payment may have an annual review. If using discretion to extend the review period beyond 13 weeks, document this on the customer's record supported by facts.

The purpose of the review is to identify the appropriateness of continuing to apply a Section 24 assessment. It is also to identify whether the customer's circumstances have changed and if it is no longer appropriate. Changes that may affect the ongoing assessment of a customer as single under Section 24 include:

- income and assets
- living arrangements

- changes to the partner's residence/visa status or overseas absences, i.e. cancellation of partner's visa

There may be circumstances where the application of a Section 24 assessment is no longer applicable. Entitlements under Section 24 provisions may no longer be appropriate if:

- a customer receiving payments under Section 24 advises they have separated from their partner
- a customer receiving payments under Section 24 while in a multiple relationship, advises they are no longer in a multiple relationship
- a customer is no longer in receipt of Centrelink payments or services and the payment has been cancelled for 13 weeks or longer
- the partner is now on a Centrelink payment

The review process must include reviewing the circumstances at the time of the original decision to apply Section 24 together with their current circumstances, and the following:

- Have the circumstances changed?
- Are the circumstances still beyond the control of the customer?
- Has the customer taken reasonable steps to change the circumstances within their control?

The review should consider if the customer has taken reasonable steps to access funds from assets and/or income previously not readily accessible.

The [Process](#) page has details on the assessment process.

#### **Current Section 24 customer and exemption from the NARWP for family member of refugees and former refugees**

If the customer is partnered to a person living overseas, the arrival of the partner (newly arrived resident) in Australia is a change in circumstances. Therefore, a review of the Section 24 decision must occur.

The partner may wish to claim their own income support payment upon arrival. As a newly arrived resident, they may access an exemption to the Newly Arrived Resident's Waiting Period (NARWP). However, they must be the **family member** of:

- the refugee or former refugee when the **refugee arrived in Australia**, and
- that person **on the date they lodge a claim** for an income support payment (unless the refugee or former refugee has died)

As the customer and their partner are treated as single under Section 24, this decision impacts on the definition of a **family member** for the purposes of the NARWP exemption. Therefore, the Section 24 review needs to be finalised before considering whether the partner is eligible for the NARWP exemption.

The [Resources](#) page has links to forms, letter templates, Office Locator, Section 24 Decision Support Tool, questions for member of a couple interviews and approved text for Section 24 Questionnaire, confirmation and rejection letters.

**Related links**[Treatment of a partnered person as single under Section 24 new determinations](#)[Assessment of relationship status - processes, roles and responsibilities](#)[Assessment of circumstances for customers with partner in prison](#)[Eligibility for Special Benefit \(SpB\)](#)[The Assurance of Support \(AoS\) scheme](#)**Process**[Undertaking a Section 24 review](#)[Finalising Section 24 reviews](#)**Undertaking a Section 24 review**

Table 1

s47E(d)

Step	Action
1	<p><b>Determine action required for Section 24 customer</b> + Read more ...</p> <p>If a customer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has <b>returned supporting documents</b> for a Section 24 review or a review for supporting documents falls due, <a href="#">go to Step 8</a></li> <li>is currently receiving payments under Section 24 <b>advises of a change in circumstances</b> (for example, but not limited to - income or assets, intend to travel overseas, partner arrives in Australia, FTB claim lodged indicating they are partnered or cancellation of partner's visa) has occurred, <a href="#">go to Step 2</a></li> <li>is receiving payments under Section 24 advises they have <b>separated from their partner</b>, see <a href="#">Change in relationship from partnered to single</a></li> <li>is <b>not currently receiving an income support payment</b> and lodges a <b>new claim</b> for an income support payment or Family Tax Benefit (FTB) and has a current Section 24 Relationship Qualifier code on Marital Status (<b>MS</b>) screen, <a href="#">go to Step 11</a></li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>advises a change of circumstances that immediately indicates they are <b>no longer eligible for a Section 24 assessment</b>, for customers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>in a multiple relationship, <a href="#">go to Step 9</a></li> <li>not in a multiple relationship, see <a href="#">Step 4 in Table 2</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>If a Service Officer receives a <b>Section 24 review work item</b> and none of the above circumstances apply, <a href="#">go to Step 4</a>.</p>
2	<p><b>Change of circumstances - receiving payments under Section 24 + Read more ...</b></p> <p>Customers currently receiving payments under Section 24 provisions who advise of a change in circumstances (including overseas travel) must have their circumstances reviewed to determine if a Section 24 assessment is still appropriate. The assessment and coding action will depend on whether the customer is residing in Australia (and whether the contact is face to face or via phone) or overseas.</p> <p>If the customer <b>resides overseas</b>, the Section 24 review is conducted by International Services (CIS), <a href="#">go to Step 3</a>.</p> <p>If the customer <b>resides in Australia</b> (irrespective of whether their partner resides in Australia or overseas) and a change of circumstances which requires a review of a current Section 24 assessment has been identified via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Phone contact</b> - complete a referral, <a href="#">go to Step 3</a></li> <li><b>Face to face contact</b> - the review must be undertaken at the point of first contact where possible. If at the service centre: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>there is <b>no</b> Service Officer with the required skill set to undertake the Section 24 review, a referral must be completed, <a href="#">go to Step 3</a></li> <li>there is <b>a</b> Service Officer with the required skill set to undertake Section 24 review, <a href="#">go to Step 5</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
3	<p><b>Refer for review of Section 24</b></p> <p><b>Customers residing in Australia: + Read more ...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>scan all supporting documents to the customer's record</li> <li>record a <b>DOC</b> using <a href="#">Fast Note</a>. Select <b>s47E(d)</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Customers residing overseas: + Read more ...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>scan all supporting documents to the customer's record</li> <li>record a <b>DOC</b> using <a href="#">Fast Note</a>. Select <b>s47E(d)</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> the <b>DOC</b> must include any information that has been provided (for example, Section 24 customer requires a review due to declaring earnings).</p>

	Procedure ends here.
4	<p><b>Check if customer and partner are in receipt of payments</b> + Read more ...</p> <p>Check the Payment Summary (<b>PS</b>); DS List (<b>XBS</b>); and <b>Customer Summary</b> screens on the customer and partner's (if they have one) record.</p> <p>Section 24 is no longer applicable where <b>neither</b> the customer <b>nor</b> partner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are in receipt of a payment due to cancellation for a non-restorable reason, or</li> <li>• has not been in receipt of payment for more than 13 weeks</li> </ul> <p>Is the customer or their partner still in receipt of an income support payment or family assistance?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Yes</b>, <a href="#">go to Step 5</a></li> <li>• <b>No</b>, and the payment cancelled: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Less than 13 weeks ago for a restorable reason, <a href="#">go to Step 5</a></li> <li>○ More than 13 weeks ago and/or for a non-restorable reason Remove the Section 24 Relationship qualifier code from the <b>MS</b> screen on both records if this has not yet been completed Cancel any existing and future Section 24 reviews, or other activities related to the Section 24 circumstance Annotate and expire the existing <b>Section 24 DOA DOC</b> to advise the circumstance is no longer applicable. Procedure ends here</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
5	<p><b>Section 24 review: change of circumstances, skilled staff receive a WLM work item or a review is due</b> + Read more ...</p> <p>A review must be undertaken to determine if it is appropriate to continue the Section 24 assessment. As part of the review process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• check the customer's record to determine reasons for the original decision to apply Section 24</li> <li>• interview the customer by phone or in person</li> <li>• consider the customer's current circumstances, including any recent correspondence the customer has provided which relates to their section 24 assessment</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> a customer may have already had a review started but was required to provide further evidence. Check if there is a current <b>Section 24 Progress DOC</b>.</p> <p>Is there sufficient information to undertake an assessment under Section 24?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Yes</b>, see <a href="#">Step 1 in Table 2</a></li> <li>• <b>No</b>, and written evidence:</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ is not required, <a href="#">go to Step 6</a></li> <li>○ is required (for example, bank statements), <a href="#">go to Step 7</a></li> </ul>
6	<p><b>Written evidence is not required - contact customer</b> + Read more ...</p> <p>Make at least 1 <a href="#">attempt to contact the customer by phone</a> to obtain the relevant required information for the assessment under Section 24.</p> <p>Was the outbound contact to the customer successful?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Yes</b>, obtain the relevant information then, see <a href="#">Step 1 in Table 2</a></li> <li>• <b>No</b>, <a href="#">go to Step 7</a></li> </ul>
7	<p><b>Written evidence is required - issue QSS32 Online Advice</b> + Read more ...</p> <p>To obtain written evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issue QSS32 Online Advice to request supporting information. See the <a href="#">Resources</a> page for instructions on how to issue the QSS32 and approved text</li> <li>• If an open <b>S24 CoC review required DOC</b> already exists, record details of the request by annotating the <b>DOC</b></li> <li>• If there is no open S24 CoC review required <b>DOC</b>, record a <b>DOC</b> using <a href="#">Fast Note</a>. Select <b>s47E(d)</b></li> <li>• Place the open <b>S24 CoC review required DOC</b> on hold. <a href="#">Allow extra time for mail delivery</a></li> </ul> <p>Procedure ends here.</p>
8	<p><b>Supporting documents returned or due to be returned</b> + Read more ...</p> <p>When a current Section 24 customer has returned supporting documents or a Section 24 review activity has matured again after being resubmitted pending further evidence, check the customer's record to confirm all requested/required supporting documents have been returned. <b>Note:</b> refer to the <b>Section 24 Progress DOC</b> for information about the progress of a review previously started.</p> <p>Has the customer returned the requested information to assess if Section 24 should continue to apply?</p> <p><b>Yes</b>, <a href="#">restore the customer's payment</a> if suspended <b>FRC</b> for failing to respond to the S24 review information request. If the Service Officer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>is skilled</b> to undertake the review, see <a href="#">Step 1 in Table 2</a></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>is not skilled</b> to undertake the review, check the record for outstanding S24 review activity open on Activity List (<b>AL</b>) or Future Activity List (<b>FAL</b>) screen. If a review activity: s47E(d)</li> </ul> <p><b>No</b>, as a request to provide information was issued and the <a href="#">allowable time</a> has passed, the customer must be treated as partnered or their income support payment suspended if the review is about the customer being in a multiple relationship. For customers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• not in a multiple relationship, see <a href="#">Step 4 in Table 2</a></li> <li>• in a multiple relationship, <a href="#">suspend the customer's income support payment</a> for the reason of failing to reply to correspondence (<b>FRC</b>). Record details on a <b>DOC</b>. Procedure ends here</li> </ul>
9	<p><b>Customer in a multiple relationship advises a change of circumstances</b> + Read more ... s47E(d)</p> <p>This is because multiple relationships are not recognised under social security law.</p> <p>If such a customer contacts to advise they are no longer in a multiple relationship, their record must be updated to remove the S24 relationship qualifier code.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> the customer's income support payment may be SUS/FRC due to not responding to a previous request for information/QSS32 if they were due for a review.</p> <p>When the customer contacts, confirmation on their multiple relationship status is required.</p> <p>Is the customer still in a multiple relationship?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Yes</b>, see <a href="#">Step 1 in Table 2</a></li> <li>• <b>No</b>, and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ they are now in a relationship with just one person, see <a href="#">Step 4 in Table 2</a></li> <li>○ they are not in a relationship with any person, <a href="#">go to Step 10</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
10	<p><b>Customer is no longer in a relationship with any person</b> + Read more ...</p> <p>If a S24 customer is no longer in a multiple relationship and not in a relationship with any other person, separation is not necessary as the customer is not linked to their partner.</p>

## Finalising Section 24 reviews

Table 2

Step	Action
1	<p><b>Section 24 review determination</b> + Read more ...</p> <p>When sufficient information is available, review the details to determine if it is appropriate to continue the Section 24 assessment. Use <a href="#">the Section 24 Decision Support Tool</a> to help with the decision.</p> <p>These reviews should include reviewing the customer's circumstances at the time of the original decision to apply a Section 24 assessment.</p> <p>Considering their current circumstances, and assessing the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have the circumstances changed? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Examine all circumstances associated with the case before deciding whether it is reasonable to continue to exercise the discretion to apply Section 24</li> <li>○ Discretion can only continue to be exercised 'for a special reason in the particular case'. In general, circumstances must be unusual, uncommon, abnormal or exceptional</li> <li>○ Can the customer and their partner now benefit from the pooling of resources?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Are the circumstances still beyond the control of the customer? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Has the customer or partner contributed to the current circumstances? If either has knowingly contributed to the situation, there would be considerably less basis for continuing to exercise the discretion</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Have reasonable steps been taken to change the circumstances within the customer's control? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Consider whether reasonable steps have been taken to access funds from assets or income previously not readily accessible</li> <li>○ Consider whether other reasonable options have been explored to help in alleviating the circumstances</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>If the customer is leaving Australia and planning to visit their partner overseas, the review should be conducted to determine if Section 24 can still be applied. Generally, Section 24 would not continue to apply if the couple are living together overseas.</p> <p>Is a determination made that Section 24 should continue to apply and the customer to continue to be treated as not being a member of a couple?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Yes</b>, <a href="#">go to Step 2</a></li> <li>• <b>No</b>, for customers:</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ in a multiple relationship, <a href="#">go to Step 5</a></li> <li>○ not in a multiple relationship, <a href="#">go to Step 4</a></li> </ul>
2	<p><b>Section 24 still applicable</b> + Read more ...</p> <p>Continue to assess the customer as <b>not</b> being a member of a couple and pay them at the single rate.</p> <p>s47E(d)</p> <p>s47E(d)</p> <p><b>Note:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>DOA DOC</b> does not replicate from the customer's record to the partner's record</li> <li>• If the partner <b>is</b> a current Centrelink customer, the <b>DOA DOC</b> is to be manually recorded on their record separately</li> <li>• If the partner <b>is not</b> a current Centrelink customer, the <b>DOA DOC</b> is not required to be recorded on their record</li> </ul> <p><b>Display on Access (DOA) DOC is not already recorded - customer is a multiple relationship</b> + Read more ...</p> <p>If a <b>DOA DOC</b> is not already recorded, for customers in a <b>multiple relationship</b>, a closed <b>DOA DOC</b> must be created on all customer records that form part of the multiple</p>

	<p>relationship (that is, the <a href="#">central couple</a> as well as the customer who was assessed under Section 24 provisions). This <b>DOA DOC</b> must not have an expiry date.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Record a <b>DOA DOC</b> on the customer's record using <a href="#">Fast Note</a>. Select <b>s47 E(d)</b></li> <li>Record a <b>DOC</b> on the central couple's records using <a href="#">Fast Note</a>. Select <b>s47 E(d)</b> (No expiry date to be inserted)</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Issue a manual Q888 letter</a> confirming the customer is continuing to be paid under Section 24 provisions. <b>Note:</b> Customer First must be used when a letter is created inside a Customer First activity. There are different versions of the letter depending on the customer's payment type. See:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Section 24 decision - favourable, Income Support Payment</a>, or</li> <li><a href="#">Section 24 decision - favourable, Family Assistance only</a></li> </ul>
3	<p><b>Code next manual review</b> + Read more ...</p> <p><a href="#">Code a new manual review</a> on the customer's record to review their circumstances again in the future. The purpose of the review will be to identify whether it is appropriate to continue to apply Section 24 provisions at that time.</p> <p><b>Note:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The relationship qualifier code does not replicate from the customer's record to the partner's record</li> <li>If the partner <b>is</b> a current Centrelink customer, the S24 relationship qualifier code is to be manually recorded on their record separately</li> <li>If the partner <b>is not</b> a current Centrelink customer, the S24 relationship qualifier code is not required to be recorded on their record</li> </ul> <p>On the Review Registration (<b>RVR</b>) screen code these fields:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>s47E(d)</b></li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Note:</b> if creating a review because of the Service Officer identifying a review does not exist on a customer's record, upon receipt of supporting evidence/QSS32 Online Advice, set the date to the following day (tomorrow)</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• s47E(d)</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repeat the above coding on the partner's record if they are a current Centrelink customer</li> </ul> <p>Procedure ends here.</p>
4	<p><b>Customer is not in a multiple relationship - Section 24 no longer applicable + Read more ...</b></p> <p>Treat the customer as partnered.</p> <p>The date of effect will be dependent upon each individual customer's circumstances, Service Officers must determine the appropriate date. To determine the date of effect, see 'Unfavourable decisions' in the Background tab of <a href="#">Notification Handler (NOHL)</a>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the customer is not present, make 2 <a href="#">genuine attempts to contact</a> the customer by phone to <a href="#">advise the adverse decision</a></li> <li>• Update the customer's record and link the partner as per <a href="#">Table 2 in Change in relationship status from single to partnered</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If a Benefit Transfer (<b>BTR</b>) activity exists, linking must be done within a benefit transfer activity</li> </ul> </li> <li>• If the customer or partner receives Family Tax Benefit (FTB) or Child Care Subsidy (CCS) entitlements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ and the customer has been successfully contacted, while updating their relationship status to the partnered rate, a new combined income estimate is required</li> <li>○ check child support action for each child of the current relationship is set to '<b>CUR</b>' (exempt - current relationship)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Record a <b>DOC</b> on both the customer and partner records using <a href="#">Fast Note</a>. Select s47E(d)</li> <li>• Include in the <b>DOC</b> the reason treatment as single under Section 24 has stopped. For example the comparison of income and readily available funds against necessary expenditure, shows 'financial difficulty' no longer exists, or a</li> </ul>

	<p>'special reason' no longer exists due to the partner being granted a change in visa type</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expire the <b>DOA DOC</b></li> <li>• If the customer is no longer eligible for payment, discuss other payment/service options if appropriate</li> <li>• <a href="#">Issue a manual Q888 letter</a> confirming the customer is paid at the partnered rate from the date of effect (include the appeal paragraph). There are different versions of the letter depending on the customer's payment type. See: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <a href="#">Section 24 decision - unfavourable, Income Support Payment</a>, or</li> <li>○ <a href="#">Section 24 decision - unfavourable, Family Assistance only</a></li> <li>○ If the customer or partner is <b>in receipt of FTB or CCS entitlements</b> (whether or not they also receive income support), and a new combined income estimate was not provided during the outbound contact at the time of linking the partner activity, advise the customer in the S24 decision/Q888 letter that they are required to provide a new combined income estimate</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>If the customer <b>is in receipt of PPS</b> and they are to be treated as partnered. They will no longer be eligible for PPS, and may wish to transfer to Parenting Payment Partnered (PPP), or test their eligibility for another payment. See <a href="#">Transfer from Parenting Payment Single (PPS) to Parenting Payment Partnered (PPP)</a>.</p> <p>Procedure ends here.</p>
5	<p><b>Customer is in a multiple relationship - Section 24 is no longer applicable</b> + Read more ...</p> <p>This step is for customers who are in a multiple relationship, however, the decision maker has reviewed the decision and determined that the customer is no longer eligible for payments under Section 24 provisions.</p> <p>The system will not allow a customer to be linked to more than 1 partner. The customer will therefore be coded as single on the system but will need to be paid a <b>manual partnered rate</b>. Their rate of payment must be coded manually to the equivalent of the <a href="#">partnered rate</a>.</p> <p>If the customer is in receipt of PPS and qualifies for PPP, they will be paid PPS at the manual partnered rate. It is important to calculate the <b>manual</b> partnered rate by applying the PPP income test, not the PPS income test.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintenance action is not required for children of current relationships in a multiple relationship. The system will not let the extra partner's records be linked to the central partner. Assessment by a social worker is also not needed. Code maintenance action as:</li> </ul>

- 'CRR' - (Child Support refused registration), in a group type of 'ENT', for the relevant children for FTB customers
- If there is a later breakdown in the relationship, normal maintenance action is required

s47E(d)

- Family assistance reconciliation - Manual intervention into family assistance reconciliation will need to be undertaken for the manual rate paid to additional partners (only) in multiple relationship cases. Customers in the primary relationship (partnered status on the Marital Status (**MS**) screen) will not need to be sent to MIV team. For more information, see [Manual intervention into family assistance reconciliation](#)

**Record the decision**

A closed Display on Access (DOA) **DOC** must be created on all customer records that form part of the multiple relationship (that is, the [central couple](#) as well as the customer who was assessed under Section 24 provisions). This **DOA DOC** must not have an expiry date.

- Record a **DOA DOC** on the customer's record using [Fast Note](#). s47E(d)
- Record a **DOC** on the central couple's records using [Fast Note](#). s47E(d)

**Issue a decision letter**

[Issue a manual Q888 letter](#), detailing the decision not to apply Section 24 to the customer's circumstances. **Note:** Customer First must be used when a letter is created inside a Customer First activity There are different versions of the letter depending on the customer's payment type. See:

- [Section 24 decision - unfavourable, Income Support Payment](#)
- [Section 24 decision - unfavourable, Family Assistance only](#)

	Finalise all associated activities and <b>DOCs</b> on <b>AL</b> screen.
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## References

### Policy

[Social Security Guide, 1.1.M.120, Member of a couple](#)

[Social Security Guide, 2.2.5.10, Determining a De Facto Relationship](#)

[Social Security Guide, 2.2.5.50, Discretion to Treat a Person as Not Being a Member of a Couple for a Special Reason](#)

[Social Security Guide, 3.1.1.10, Residence Requirements](#)

[Social Security Guide, 1.1.R.200, Residence](#)

[Social Security Guide, 1.1.R.210, Residence requirements](#)

### Legislation

Links to the Federal Register of Legislation site go to a 'Series' page. Select the 'Latest' version.

[Social Security Act 1991](#)

- section 4, Family relationships definitions-couple
- subsection 2, Member of a couple-General
- section 7, Australian residence definitions
- subsection 2, An Australian resident is a person who
- section 24, Person may be treated as not being a member of a couple (subsection 4(2))

## Resources

### Forms

[Partner details - if you live overseas \(AUS174\)](#)

[Partner details - if you live in Australia \(MOD P\)](#)

### Section 24 decision letter templates

The letter templates available via these links are endorsed for use by Services Australia and are the latest version. Staff should not be using locally produced letters.

[Section 24 decision - favourable, Income Support Payment](#)

[Section 24 decision - favourable, Family Assistance only](#)

[Section 24 decision - unfavourable, Income Support Payment](#)

[Section 24 decision - unfavourable, Family Assistance only](#)

**Intranet links**

[Office Locator](#)

**User Guide**

s47E(d)

s47E(d)

s47E(d)

s47E(d)

**Approved text for QSS32 Section 24 review questionnaire**

Step	Action
1	<p><b>Section 24 Review - QSS32 Questionnaire template</b></p> <p>A QSS32 Questionnaire may be manually issued if further information is required from the customer to help in making a decision about initial assessment or continuation of payment at the single rate under Section 24 of the Social Security Act 1991.</p> <p>The text for the Free Text Paragraphs below is approved and <b>must not</b> be modified.</p> <p>Create a QSS32, see <a href="#">Creating an Online Advice (OLA), including within an existing activity</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• s47E(d)</li></ul> <p>Complete all letter fields by entering the corresponding numbers for the required selection :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• s47E(d)</li></ul>

s47E(d)

Select Free Text fields as required. **Note:** only insert questions that are applicable to the customer's circumstances.

**FREE TEXT QUESTION A**

Are you still in a relationship with

{PARTNER'S FULLNAME}?

If no, go to Question 2. If yes, go to Question 3

**FREE TEXT QUESTION B**

What date did you separate from your ex-partner? Do not answer any more questions. If you have not already provided separation details, go to [servicesaustralia.gov.au/moc](https://servicesaustralia.gov.au/moc) for information about what you must do.

**FREE TEXT QUESTION C**

Please supply bank statements for all bank accounts you and your partner have in your names. Include managed investments held in and outside of Australia for the period <START DATE> to <END DATE>.

**FREE TEXT QUESTION D**

	<p>Provide a list of your weekly costs for example, electricity, gas, telephone, rates, rent, groceries, transport and minimum loan repayments.</p> <p><b>FREE TEXT QUESTION E</b></p> <p>What steps have you and your partner taken to reduce financial difficulty, such as looking for work, studying, applying for a permanent visa etc.?</p> <p><b>FREE TEXT QUESTION F</b></p> <p>Have you or your partner been paid for any work since &lt;DATE&gt;?</p> <p>If yes, please provide a copy of all the payslips.</p> <p><b>FREE TEXT QUESTION G</b></p> <p>Have you or your partner had any changes to your income or assets that you have not told us about? If yes, please provide details.</p> <p><b>FREE TEXT QUESTION H</b></p> <p>Is there anything else we need to know about your current circumstances to support the review?</p> <p><b>FREE TEXT QUESTION I</b></p> <p>As your partner is currently living overseas, how are they being financially supported?</p> <p><b>FREE TEXT QUESTION J</b></p> <p>Do you plan to lodge an application for a permanent residence visa for your partner whilst they are in Australia?</p> <p><b>Review the letter to make sure the content is correct</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Finalise and print the letter</a>. <b>Note:</b> letter will be printed centrally</li> </ul>
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## Training & Support

Add the course number to the **Search** field in the [Learning Portal](#) (LMS) in ESSentials:

- **CLK01101** - Section 24: Introduction
- **CLK01102** - Section 24: Decision making & processing
- **CLK01388** - Section 24: Refresher