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Austin Tourist Park,  
581 Armidale Road Tamworth

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# *Discussion Paper Responses*

# Centrepay Reform





Thursday 27th June 2024

## To Whom It May Concern,

We write as a small family-owned and operated caravan park, and welcome the opportunity to share our perspectives on the Centrepay system. Our first encounter with Centrepay was in early 2016 when a new resident requested it as a payment method for her site fees. After researching and consulting with other parks that used it, we signed up for the service. Centrepay has since become one of five payment methods we offer for paying site fees (the other four are EFTPOS, Funds Transfer, BPay, and Cash). Currently, we have five residents that use Centrepay, and all get us to alter their deductions. From our perspective, the ease of collecting site fees via this method is worth every cent of the 99 cents we pay.

In the following pages, we address those questions we feel are relevant to our situation, and we hope you will find our answers useful to your reform objectives.

If you require any further information, please contact either of us on [REDACTED]

Yours Sincerely,

[REDACTED]  
Frank Edwards  
Owner

Alison Edwards  
Manager

**Do the critical areas for reform outlined above reflect the evolving needs of customers and stakeholders? (p. 5)**

**What does meaningful consultation and engagement look like to you with respect to reforming the Centrepay service? (p. 13)**

While we agree with the proposed policy reforms, we are wary of adding more regulatory and administrative burdens on our small team of two staff members who handle Centrepay. Currently, our biggest challenge with the system is updating the site fee rates annually, which can take up to ten minutes per change in the system. Although this is not a significant burden throughout the year, it often coincides with our busiest period – the end of the financial year. Currently, we cannot input payment increases more than three payments in advance. Expediting this process to allow fee increases to be inputted in April, when our notices are issued, for implementation in July would be highly beneficial.

Meaningful consultation should consider the majority of Centrepay businesses, not just the largest companies like AGL or Origin or those with the most issues. It is crucial to ensure that small businesses can continue to use the service without facing excessive regulatory hurdles.

**Does the current list of authorised goods and services include what should be available through Centrepay? (p. 6)**

We find that the use of Centrepay has ensured that our residents are able to keep their site fees in order, and often it has them one or two weeks ahead. In fact, when we offered the option to our residents, many were supportive of the idea, and it also increased the number of residents using funds transfer, as they could see the benefits of paying when their wages or another payment arrived in their bank account.

**Are the current Centrepay deduction types sufficient and provide the appropriate flexibility to support customers in managing their own finances? (p. 7)**

**Should businesses retain the ability to establish Centrepay deduction arrangements on behalf of customers? (p. 7)**

**Should certain businesses have conditions imposed limiting the access they have to manage deductions on behalf of customers? (p. 7)**

**What are the further conditions that should be applied to deduction arrangements to further strengthen customer protections? (p. 7)**

We believe that the ability to increase deductions, with resident approval, is a great idea, for three reasons - it saves the resident time being in a Centrelink office, it saves your staff time inputting checking data, and we are aware of when the first increased payment is made. We use a template form (see Appendix 1) that we print and give to our residents. Once we process the increased deduction, we print two copies of the submitted form from Centrepay – one is attached to the form and filed, the second we highlight pertinent information and put in the residents mailbox.

There is, however, one issue with deductions. Our regulations for residents stipulate that we must issue a rent increase notification at least 60 days prior to any increase. We notify our residents in writing in mid-April every year, and often we need to wait until mid-May or early-June to enter the increased deduction into the Centrepay system. This can mean that any resident who is in advance of their site fees at the time of increase may have to catch up the extra payment amount later. That catching up can take a few weeks to sort out.

If there were any conditions applied to deduction arrangements, we would hope that they would be applied as part of any compliance regime.

**What improvements could be made to the complaints management process for Centrepay customers? (p. 8)**

We are proud to report no complaints regarding Centrepay, and the system has worked efficiently for both our residents and ourselves. Any improvements to the complaints management process should be targeted and measured, focusing on the specific complaint and considering the business's previous record and financial health.

**What should a business be monitored against to remain registered as a Centrepay business? (p 11)**

**What information should be made available, to Centrepay customers and the public, regarding any compliance action taken by Services Australia against a Centrepay registered business? (p 11)**

The criteria listed on page 11 appear comprehensive. However, considering concerns about unreported complaints due to customer apprehensions (as noted on page 8), including customer feedback in the assessment criteria could enhance compliance. Any compliance measures should be targeted and measured to ensure they address specific issues effectively without imposing undue burdens on compliant businesses.



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<b>Name</b>	
<b>Centrelink Reference Number</b>	
<b>Date of Birth</b>	
<b>Centrelink Payment</b>	

I would like Austin Tourist Park (reference number 555 118 205X) to amend the deduction for my site fees from the above-mentioned pension by the sum of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to \$\_\_\_\_\_.

I authorise the Australian Government Department of Human Services to make the nominated deduction and pay the amount to the service provider (or as they direct). I give permission for:

- the information provided on this form to be given by Austin Tourist Park to Centrepay.
- the service provider I have nominated on this form to provide my correct account or billing number to Human Services if required.

I understand that:

- if I have a current Centrepay deduction and I lodge a new claim, that the existing deduction(s) will not be carried over to the new payment.
- if I have a current Centrepay deduction and I transfer to another eligible Centrelink payment in the future that my deductions will continue.
- it is my choice to have this amount deducted from my Centrelink payments, and I can change my Centrepay deduction at any time.
- if I stop using the service provider but do not stop my Centrepay deduction, the service provider may instruct Human Services to stop the deduction.
- if I change service providers, I may also need to advise Human Services to stop my previous deduction.
- when a payment has been made to a service provider after my deduction authority has been cancelled or suspended, Human Services may be able to assist me to recover the Centrepay deduction.

Signed	
Dated	