

Challenger Tech



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How much are the Centrelink concession cards worth?

By Michael McLean, Technical Services Manager

One benefit of receiving the Age Pension is the Pensioner Concession Card (PCC). But how much value does the PCC provide your client?

To address this question, we compare the benefits of the PCC with other Centrelink cards, including the Low Income Health Care Card (LIHCC) and the Commonwealth Seniors Health Card (CSHC). The detailed eligibility considerations for these three cards are discussed in the article '[Is your retiree client eligible for a concession?](#)', also in this month's Challenger TechNews.

Another consideration on top of the different national Centrelink cards are the state and territory-provided seniors cards. Between each state and territory eligibility for and value provided by concession cards differ widely, so it is important to know the entitlements of each card.

This article explores both the national and state benefits provided by the three Centrelink concession cards and the state or territory seniors cards.

The information in this article is current as of 6 March 2020.

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National benefits

Centrelink concession cards

All three Centrelink cards we discuss in this article (PCC, LIHCC and CSHC) provide the following national benefits:

- **Extended Medicare safety net (EMSN)** – Concession cardholders are entitled to a lower EMSN threshold. Out-of-pocket costs (the difference between doctor charges and the Medicare rebate) are counted towards this cap every calendar year. When concession cardholders hit the lower concession EMSN threshold, they are entitled to be refunded the lower of 80% of their out-of-pocket costs or the EMSN cap for that medical item.

For clarity, the Original Medicare safety net (OMSN) is different and has just one threshold (there is no concessional threshold) that relates to out-of-hospital services (including services such as general practitioner (GP), specialists and many pathology and diagnostic imaging services).

- **Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS)** – Concession cardholders can use the PBS to pay a maximum of \$6.60 (\$41 for non-concession cardholders) for each medicine on the PBS. A client can enquire about a medicine's PBS eligibility at their local pharmacy or on the [PBS website](#).

Once a concession cardholder pays an amount in a calendar year equal to the PBS safety net threshold (\$316.80 for concession cardholders), their medicine will be free for the rest of the year.

Where two or more brands offer the same medicine, they may have different prices and therefore a more expensive brand may charge a premium on top of the PBS prescribed amounts.

- **Bulk-billed doctor visits** – doctors can receive higher payments from Medicare if they treat a concession cardholder, therefore some practices which do not bulk bill for a general patient may bulk bill for a concession cardholder (but are not required to).
- **Australia Post** – discounts for stamps and mail redirection.

It is important to remember as we go through this article that the above benefits are not provided by any of the state or territory seniors cards. Therefore, a client can benefit from holding any of the Centrelink concession cards on top of their seniors card.

The PCC also provides additional national benefits which the LIHCC and CSHC don't, including:

- hearing services – subsidised hearing aids and assistive listening devices. For more information see the Australian government Hearing Services Program Client Information Booklet;
- Telstra – Pensioner discount offered for home customers.

Therefore, a client can benefit from holding the PCC if either of the above apply to them.

Seniors cards

Whilst these benefits are not national per se, they are common across all eight seniors cards:

- public transport concessions; and
- local business discounts across Australia and New Zealand.

Since the Centrelink concession cards do not provide these benefits in all states and territories, a client can gain by holding the seniors cards in their state or territory on top of a Centrelink concession card.

Strategy considerations

As a general rule, the PCC provides the most benefits of the three Centrelink cards, followed by the LIHCC, then CSHC. However, this is not always the case so check each relevant state or territory section.

PCC

Generally clients who are trying to get some Age Pension have an assets test issue. Asset reducing strategies include but are not limited to:

- gifting within allowable limits;
- spending;
- principal home – upgrade or renovations;
- lifetime income stream that meets the declining capital access schedule (60% of purchase price assessed);
- accumulation super for a spouse under Age Pension age;
- funeral bonds up to \$13,250 or prepaid funeral expenses; and
- burial plot.

If your client is not receiving Age Pension due to the income test, read strategies for LIHCC.

LIHCC

The LIHCC has an income test that includes more than just ordinary income. This is discussed in the article '[Is your retiree client eligible for a concession?](#)', also in this month's Challenger TechNews. Strategies to reduce LIHCC assessable income include:

- investment bonds in a trust;
- deferred lifetime annuities (during deferral period);
- spending;
- gifting within allowable limits; and
- term annuities with nil residual capital value (RCV) and CPI indexation – this can help to reduce assessable income initially, and although assessable income will increase over time, the cut-out threshold is higher for maintaining the LIHCC as opposed to gaining the LIHCC.

CSHC

The CSHC income test assesses adjusted taxable income and deemed income from account-based pensions. Strategies to reduce CSHC assessable income include:

- annuities (term or lifetime) purchased with super monies;
- non-super annuities with a deduction amount e.g. term annuities with nil RCV or lifetime annuities;
- investment bonds; and
- gifting.

Key tips

Through this article we add tips which are relevant for each state or territory, however, keep in mind the following themes that apply to all states and territories:

- Websites: Send clients links to their state or territory concession websites, which are provided in each state and territory section below.
- Applications: Clients may need to complete an application or provide their concession card for certain benefits.

Asset reducing strategies include lifetime income streams which meet the declining capital access schedule (60% of purchase price assessed).

Strategies to reduce CSHC assessable income include super annuities (term or lifetime).

For more information regarding these strategies, please contact your [Challenger business development manager](#) or Challenger Tech on 1800 176 486 challengertech@challenger.com.au.

Assumptions

To attempt to assign a value to the various concession cards for each state and territory, assumptions have been made. Please note the footnotes and links provided throughout the article to ensure your client understands the benefits available to them and how to access them. Key assumptions include:

- Age 66+: We only consider clients who are Age Pension age or over.
- Eligible for seniors card: We assume clients are retired and eligible for the seniors card in their state or territory.
- State or territory residency: We assume clients are residents in the relevant state or territory and live there for six months or more each year (some states and territories require local residency to receive certain benefits).
- Centrelink only: Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) cards, e.g. Gold/White/Orange cards, and pensions are not considered.
- Receiving Age Pension: Some states provide benefits for PCC holders who are receiving a payment. For this article, by 'PCC' we mean currently receiving the Age Pension. Some clients who receive a non-means tested PCC (for example, those who lost Age Pension due to the 1 January 2017 assets test changes) or non-Age Pension Centrelink payments, are affected by tougher eligibility for some benefits.
- Couples: The benefit amounts mentioned in the article are generally for one person, for example rates and utilities. However, couples may benefit from public transport, glasses, dental services and car concessions (if they own more than one car) if they both have a concession card.
- Mainstream benefits include:
 - homeowners: assume clients own a house (not a unit), therefore estimates are based on house costs for water, energy and council rates;
 - car owners: assume clients register a standard, petrol, four-cylinder sedan for private use each year and have drivers licence, both renewed every 12 months;
 - dental services: assume general check-up is \$150; and
 - spectacle: assume one pair of glasses is \$100.

We consider the above mainstream benefits to be applicable to most clients, which we use as the basis for comparing the value of each concession card. However, it is important to note that many additional benefits may apply to less clients and/or are applicable on a less-than-annual basis, are available. We have listed some additional benefits for each state or territory, however, we suggest checking the links provided to determine the full extent of the various benefits offered.

New South Wales

NSW seniors card eligibility

- 60 or over
- working 20 hours or less per week
- permanent resident of NSW

Table 1: NSW mainstream concession card benefits p.a.

Benefit type	PCC	LIHCC	CSHC	Seniors
Council rates	Up to \$250	-	-	-
Water	\$690 ⁱ	-	-	-
Energy	Up to \$285	Up to \$285	-	-
Gas	Up to \$110	Up to \$110	-	-
Drivers Licence	\$60	-	-	-
Car registration	\$377 ⁱⁱ	-	-	-
Value	\$1,772	\$395	-	-

i Sydney Water typical charges example for water and wastewater (stormwater not included).

ii Car between 1,155kg – 1,504kg.

Concession cards value

From the mainstream state benefits listed above, the PCC can be worth \$1,377 p.a. more than the LIHCC due to council rates, water and car discounts.

The LIHCC can be worth \$395 p.a. more than the CSHC due to gas and electricity discounts (the PCC therefore can be worth \$1,772 p.a. more than the CSHC).

Additional state benefits

There are other concessions your clients might benefit from, including but not limited to:

- public dental services (PCC, LIHCC and CSHC)
- some free ambulance services (PCC, LIHCC and CSHC)
- medical Energy Rebate (PCC and LIHCC)

Useful links

- [NSW concessions](#)
- [NSW seniors card](#)

Tip

- The PCC has a large value in NSW, so consider strategies to get clients some Age Pension (usually asset reducing strategies – see strategy considerations).

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Victoria

VIC seniors card eligibility

- 60 or over
- working less than 35 hours per week
- permanent resident of Victoria

Table 2: VIC mainstream concession card benefits p.a.

Benefit type	PCC	LIHCC	CSHC	Seniors
Council rates	Up to \$235	-	-	-
Water	Up to \$329	Up to \$329	-	-
Electricity	\$402 ⁱ	\$402 ⁱ	-	-
Gas	\$177 ⁱⁱ	\$177 ⁱⁱ	-	-
Car registration	\$417 ⁱⁱⁱ	\$151 ⁱⁱⁱ	-	-
Value	\$1,560	\$1,059	-	-

i Victorian Health and Human Services department example, \$101 off \$672 quarterly bill.

ii Victorian Health and Human Services department example, \$88 off \$580 quarterly bill (only available from May – October).

iii 3000 postcode, includes Transport Accident Charges (TAC).

Concession cards value

From the mainstream state benefits listed above, the PCC can be worth \$501 p.a. more than the LIHCC due to council rates and TAC discounts.

The LIHCC can be worth \$1,059 p.a. more than the CSHC due to water, gas, electricity and car registration discounts (the PCC therefore can be worth \$1,560 p.a. more than the CSHC).

One large benefit of the PCC, LIHCC and CSHC in Victoria is the one-off Pensioner stamp duty concession. Homes bought for \$330,000 or less receive a full exemption (the maximum concession is \$12,870 for \$330,000 purchases). The concession scales down in value for homes up to \$750,000 where it ceases.

Additional state benefits

There are other less common concessions your clients might benefit from, including but not limited to:

- non-mains water concession (PCC and LIHCC)
- excess electricity concessions (PCC and LIHCC) – if electricity bill greater than \$2,890 p.a.
- excess gas concession (PCC and LIHCC) – if gas bill greater than \$1,588 p.a.

Useful links

- [VIC concessions](#)
- [VIC seniors card](#)
- [VIC pensioner stamp duty exemption](#)

Tips

- Help clients receive at least one Centrelink concession card before downsizing to a home worth less than \$750,000.
- The LIHCC has a significant benefit in Victoria, so consider income reducing strategies for clients who are non-pensioners (see strategy considerations).

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Queensland

QLD seniors card eligibility

- 65 or over, or 60-64 plus holder of PCC or LIHCC
- working less than 35 hours per week
- permanent resident of Queensland

Table 3: QLD mainstream concession card benefits p.a.

Benefit type	PCC	Seniors	LIHCC	CSHC
Council rates	Up to \$200	-	-	-
Water	Up to \$120	-	-	-
Electricity	\$341	\$341	\$341	-
Gas	\$74	\$74	-	-
Car registration	\$164	\$164	-	-
Spectacles	\$50 ⁱ	\$50 ⁱ	\$50 ⁱ	-
Value	\$949	\$629	\$391	-

ⁱ Eligible for one pair every 2 years if held card for at least 6 months.

Concession cards value

The seniors card in Queensland has very generous state governments benefits, unlike most other states, which reduces the value of the Centrelink concession cards in Queensland. However, from the mainstream state benefits listed above, the PCC can still be worth \$320 p.a. more than the Queensland seniors card by itself due to council rates and water discounts.

The LIHCC in Queensland does not have any mainstream state benefits which the seniors card does not provide.

Additional state benefits

There are other concessions your clients might benefit from, including but not limited to:

- boat registration discounts (PCC and QLD seniors card)
- some public dental services (all four cards)
- medical Aids Subsidy Scheme (PCC, LIHCC and QLD seniors card)

Useful links

- [QLD concessions](#)
- [QLD seniors card](#)

Tip

- Even though the Queensland seniors card is worth a lot by itself in Queensland, the PCC does have added benefits, so consider strategies to get clients some Age Pension (usually asset reducing strategies – see strategy considerations).

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Western Australia

WA seniors card eligibility

- 63 or over (increasing to 64 for those born 1 July 1958 to 30 June 1959 and 65 for those born from 1 July 1959)
- working less than 25 hours per week
- permanent resident of Western Australia

Table 4: WA mainstream concession card benefits p.a.

Benefit type	PCC	Seniors + CSHC	LIHCC	Seniors	CSHC
Council rates	Up to \$750	Up to \$750	-	Up to \$100	-
Water	Up to \$600	Up to \$600	-	Up to \$100	-
Energy	\$300	-	\$300	-	-
Drivers licence	\$44	\$44	-	\$29	-
Car registration	\$204 ⁱ	\$204 ⁱ	-	-	-
Dental	\$75	-	\$75	-	-
Spectacles	\$27 ⁱⁱ	\$27 ⁱⁱ	-	\$27 ⁱⁱ	-
Value	\$2,000	\$1,625	\$375	\$256	-

i 50% discount off example from WA department of transport, car weighing 1,650 kg.

ii \$54 every two years.

Concession cards value

A client who holds the WA seniors card, LIHCC and CSHC, can receive the same mainstream benefits as the PCC. However, consider that it may be administratively easier to apply for and hold just the PCC. And, there are other PCC benefits that clients may benefit from, including:

- free or reduced ambulance fees
- country fuel card – worth \$575 (basically available to residents outside Perth)
- dog registration – 50% discount

In WA, the CSHC is worth a significant amount when combined with the seniors card, about \$1,369 p.a. more than for clients who just hold the seniors card, thanks to car registration discounts and better rates, water and drivers licence discounts.

Additional state benefits

WA in particular has various and extensive benefits on top of the regular rates, energy and car discounts, including but not limited to:

- cost of living rebate; \$90 for singles, \$135 for couples – must apply (WA seniors only)
- air conditioning rebate – for households in high areas of heat (WA seniors plus PCC or CSHC)

Useful links

- [WA concessions](#)
- [WA seniors card](#)

Tip

- The CSHC has a high value alongside the seniors card in Western Australia, so consider strategies to reduce adjusted taxable income plus deemed account-based pension income for clients who have no concession cards (see strategy considerations).

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South Australia

SA seniors card eligibility

- 60 or over
- working 20 hours or less per week
- permanent resident of South Australia

Table 5: SA mainstream concession card benefits p.a.

Benefit type	PCC	LIHCC	CSHC	Seniors
Cost of living concession	\$211	\$211	\$105	-
Emergency services levy remission	Up to \$46	Up to \$46	Up to \$46	
Water	Up to \$427	Up to \$427	-	-
Energy	Up to \$227 ⁱ	Up to \$227 ⁱ	Up to \$227 ⁱ	-
Driver's Licence	\$23	-	-	-
Car registration	\$126 ⁱⁱ	-	-	-
Value	\$1,060	\$911	\$378	-

i Must not be living with anyone with more than \$3,000 p.a. income, unless a spouse or receiving a Centrelink allowance.

ii District zone one.

Concession cards value

From the mainstream state benefits listed above, the PCC can be worth \$149 p.a. more than the LIHCC due to annual car discounts. Interestingly, South Australia is the only state or territory to not offer a local council rate discount, however, the cost of living concession is a comparable amount to the council rate concessions offered in other states and territories.

The LIHCC can be worth \$533 p.a. more than the CSHC due to eligibility for water concessions and a larger cost of living concession.

Unlike many other states, the CSHC does provide some state benefits, about \$378 more than clients with just the seniors card.

Additional state benefits

There are other concessions your clients might benefit from, including but not limited to:

- subsidised glasses (full pensioners)
- medical heating and cooling concession (PCC, LIHCC and CSHC)
- personal alert systems rebate – up to \$200 per year plus \$380 for installation (eligible PCC holders 75 or over)

Useful links

- [SA concessions](#)
- [SA seniors card](#)

Tip

- For clients who are not already receiving the PCC, see strategy considerations to help clients become eligible for a more valuable concession card.

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Tasmania

TAS seniors card eligibility

- 60 or over
- working 20 hours or less per week
- permanent resident of Tasmania

Table 6: TAS mainstream concession card benefits p.a.

Benefit type	PCC	LIHCC	CSHC	Seniors
Council rates	Up to \$312 ⁱ	Up to \$312 ⁱ	-	-
Water	Up to \$197	Up to \$197	-	-
Electricity	Up to \$514 ⁱⁱ	Up to \$514 ⁱⁱ	-	-
Car registration	\$111	\$111	-	-
Dental	\$105 ⁱⁱⁱ	\$105 ⁱⁱⁱ	-	-
Spectacles	\$70 ^{iv}	-	-	-
Value	\$1,309	\$1,239	-	-

i If TasWater client, up to \$459 if not.

ii Maximum daily concession multiplied by 365.

iii \$45 payment for subsidised general check-up.

iv 70% discount, assume one pair per year, need to meet additional income and assets test.

Concession cards value

From the mainstream state benefits listed above, LIHCC holders receive the same benefits as PCC holders except for a discount on basic lenses and frames, about \$1,293 more than those who don't hold either card. However, the PCC can still hold an advantage if some less common benefits apply to your client, such as:

- visual aids
- firearm licence and registration fee reductions
- spirit of Tasmania discounts
- bass Strait islands air travel concession

Additional state benefits

There are other less common or one-off concessions your clients might benefit from, including but not limited to:

- will and Enduring Power of Attorney discounts with the Public Trustee (PCC and TAS seniors card)
- wigs for cancer patients (PCC only)
- right to information request fee waiver – \$40.50 (PCC and LIHCC)

Useful links

- [TAS concessions](#)
- [TAS seniors card](#)

Tip

- Whilst the PCC does provide some small benefits which the LIHCC does not, the LIHCC is very attractive in Tasmania, so see strategy considerations for ways to reduce LIHCC assessable income.

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Australian Capital Territory

ACT seniors card eligibility

- 62 or over (changing to 60 or over from 1 July 2020)
- working 20 hours or less per week
- permanent resident of ACT

Table 7: ACT mainstream concession card benefits p.a.

Benefit type	PCC	LIHCC	Seniors	CSHC
Council rates	Up to \$700	-	-	-
Fire and emergency services levy rebate	\$98	-	-	-
Utilities	\$700	\$700	-	-
Drivers Licence	\$40 ⁱ	\$20 ⁱ	-	-
Car registration	\$394 ⁱⁱ	-	\$40 ⁱⁱ	-
Spectacles	\$100 ⁱⁱⁱ	\$100 ⁱⁱⁱ	-	-
Value	\$2,032	\$820	\$40	-

i Pro-rated discount on five-year \$197.50 licence.

ii Car 1,155 kg – 1,504 kg.

iii \$200 subsidy every two years.

Concession cards value

From the mainstream territory benefits listed above, the PCC can be worth \$1,212 p.a. more than the LIHCC due to rates and larger car concessions. This means the PCC is worth about \$1,992 more than the CSHC. Plus, there are a couple of additional, potentially large benefits for PCC holders:

- Pensioner duty concession scheme: a one-off stamp duty concession which can be worth up to \$8,680 for home purchases of \$420,000. The concession scales down until it cuts out at purchases of \$530,000 or more. Importantly, to be eligible, clients must be receiving Age Pension (holding a non-means tested PCC will not help gain eligibility).
- Roof top solar panels: 50% subsidy for supply and installation of up to \$2,500.

The LIHCC still has considerable benefit, about \$820, more than someone just on the seniors card and/or CSHC, thanks largely to the utilities benefit.

Additional territory benefits

There are other less common or one-off concessions your clients might benefit from, including but not limited to:

- free or reduced ambulance fees (PCC and LIHCC)
- green waste concession – save \$50 (PCC and MyWay seniors aged 70 or over)

Useful links

- [ACT concessions](#)
- [ACT seniors card](#)
- [ACT pensioner duty concession scheme](#)

Tips

- The PCC is very attractive in the ACT, so consider strategies to get clients some Age Pension (usually asset reducing strategies – see strategy considerations).
- Consider waiting until clients are receiving the Age Pension before they downsize to a home worth less than \$530,000 and/or install solar panels.

Consider waiting until clients are receiving the Age Pension before they downsize to a home worth less than \$530,000 and/or install solar panels.

Northern Territory

NT seniors card

- 60 years or over
- permanent resident of NT

Table 8: NT mainstream concession card benefits p.a.

Benefit type	PCC	Seniors	LIHCC	CSHC
Council rates	Up to \$200	-	-	-
Garbage	\$46 ⁱ	-	-	-
Water	Up to \$800	\$500 ⁱⁱ	-	-
Electricity	Up to \$1,200	-	-	-
Drivers Licence	\$32	-	-	-
Car registration	\$154	\$55	-	-
Spectacles	\$100 ⁱⁱⁱ	-	-	-
Value	\$2,532	\$555	-	-

i Darwin rate.

ii NT seniors recognition scheme (NTSRS) members receive a \$500 water, electricity or travel benefit (not part of seniors card but NT residents 65+ are eligible).

iii Up to two pairs of glasses every two years.

Concession cards value

The LIHCC and CSHC have little territory concession value in NT, but the PCC can be worth \$1,977 above NT seniors concessions from mainstream benefits alone. Note that whilst the water and electricity concessions from Table 8 are based on 'average usage for a household', the NT government site says "most concession scheme members use less than the average consumption amounts for electricity and water and will not be affected by the capped amounts".

Additional territory benefits

It doesn't appear that the NT concession scheme (NTCS) provides benefits for Centrelink concession cardholders above those in Table 8.

Useful links

- [NTCS](#)
- [NT seniors card](#)
- [NTSRS](#)
- [NT stamp duty concession](#)

Tips

- Receipt of the Age Pension (importantly not the non-means tested PCC) provides many concessions in NT, so consider strategies to get clients some Age Pension (usually asset reducing strategies – see strategy considerations).
- Notify any clients who are 60+ and downsizing to a home worth less than \$750,000 of the senior, pensioner and carer stamp duty concession, worth up to \$10,000.

Receipt of the Age Pension provides many concessions in NT, so consider strategies to get clients some Age Pension.

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