

Guide to real-time superannuation payments

Guide to real-time super payments

Foreword	3
Part 1 Australia's payments future	4
Part 2 The modernisation of superannuation payments	5
Part 3 NPP product and solutions	9
Part 4 Next steps in moving to modern superannuation payments	15
About Australian Payments Plus (AP+)	17



Foreword

Superannuation is one of Australia's most significant payment flows, moving billions of dollars each year to support the retirement outcomes of millions of Australians.

As payments expectations evolve, real-time payments offer benefits that go well beyond speed. In the context of superannuation, they enable more timely and accurate reconciliation, reduce errors, and support greater automation across back-office processes. For employers, this can mean simpler compliance and stronger integration with payroll systems. For clearing houses and super funds, it supports more efficient processing and faster allocation of contributions – improving outcomes for members.

Momentum towards more efficient superannuation payments is accelerating, reinforced by the introduction of payday super from July 2026. Under the reform, employers will be required to pay superannuation contributions each payday, with contributions needing to reach an employee's super fund within seven business days. This marks a fundamental shift in how contributions are made and processed, placing new demands on payment infrastructure, data quality, and operational readiness across the superannuation ecosystem.

This guide to real-time superannuation payments outlines how real-time payments can support that transition. It begins with an overview of the NPP, Australia's real-time payments infrastructure, and explores how NPP capabilities can help employers, clearing houses and super funds manage more frequent contributions within tighter timeframes.



Australia's payments future

Real-time payments are revolutionising the way money flows throughout the world. Driven by evolving consumer and business expectations, regulatory change and new technologies, these near-instant, always-on, data-rich transactions are solving real challenges – from enabling emergency payments outside business hours, to delivering same-day insurance claims and accelerating supplier payments.

Australia is well positioned for this shift. Our nation's fast payments infrastructure, the NPP, provides the foundation for real-time, data-rich payments. Purpose-built to support productivity, innovation and efficiency, it plays a central role in enabling broader payments modernisation.

While consumers in Australia have quickly embraced real-time payments, many business payments, including superannuation, remain tied to legacy processes and systems, creating unnecessary friction, hindering reconciliation, delaying settlements, and limiting the ability to meet the needs of our evolving digital economy.

In 2023, the Australian Government released its Strategic Plan for Australia's Payments System, highlighting the potential to boost competition, lift productivity and drive innovation by upgrading the country's payments infrastructure.

Aligning with this plan, all types of consumer, government and business payments in Australia are increasingly moving to the NPP. For the superannuation industry, this shift represents a transformational change and opportunity.

What is the NPP?

The NPP is Australia's payments infrastructure that enables consumers, businesses and governments to make and receive real-time payments, anytime, every day of the year.

While the NPP itself may not be a household name, most people are familiar with the consumer-facing brands that bring it to life, such as Osko®, PayID®, and more recently, PayTo®. The NPP already connects over 120 banks, financial institutions and fintechs, and facilitating billions of dollars of secure payments every day.

Today, the NPP facilitates most payments between individuals and certain types of business and government payments. Soon, more complex business government payments – such as superannuation, payroll, recurring bills and taxes – will follow suit.



While physical infrastructure like transport networks continue to shape our cities and economies today, it's increasingly digital infrastructure and growth in the digital economy that underpin how people live, work and transact.

RBA Governor Michele Bullock
Bradfield Oration, October 2025



The modernisation of superannuation payments

Payday super

From 1 July 2026, employers will be required to pay superannuation contributions at the same time as salary and wages, marking a fundamental shift from the current model. Additionally, contributions must reach employees' super funds within seven business days of payday¹.

This change is designed to reduce the incidence of unpaid superannuation, improve transparency and ensure workers receive their entitlements more consistently and promptly.

To make this policy work in practice, payments infrastructure must support fast, safe, and reliable transactions. That's where real-time superannuation payments via the NPP come in.

The NPP enables real-time payments, 24/7, including on weekends and public holidays. It also provides instant confirmation when a payment is completed, giving employers and clearing houses reassurance that funds have been received, and allows for enabling more efficient exception and returns payment processing. Collectively, these features will help employers meet the new requirement for contributions to reach employees' super accounts within seven business days of payday.



¹Payday Super is now law | Australian Taxation office



Employer obligations

Current obligations	Obligations from 1 July 2026
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers need to make super guarantee contributions to an employee's super fund at least quarterly. The payment needs to be received and able to be allocated by a super fund within 28 days after the end of the quarter as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quarter 1 (July–September) – due 28 October Quarter 2 (October–December) – due 28 January Quarter 3 (January–March) – due 28 April Quarter 4 (April–June) – due 28 July If the obligation is not met, the employer is liable to pay a penalty. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers must make super guarantee contributions to an employee's super fund for each pay period, on the payroll pay day or "qualifying earnings day". The contribution must be received and able to be allocated by the super fund within 7 business days after the payroll pay day to the employee's account. If the obligation is not met, the employer is liable to pay a penalty.
<p>Important notes on new obligations</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The 7 business-day period covers the entire payment process, including time for any intermediaries (such as a clearing house) to process the payment, and for the super fund to either allocate or refund the contribution if it can't be applied to an employee's account. The 7-business day requirement is extended to 20 business days where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An employer makes the first contribution for a new employee. An employer makes the first contribution to a new fund for an existing employee. Other exemptions to the 7-business day timeframe apply where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Irregular or out-of-cycle payments are made (e.g. bonuses) then the contribution tied to those payments should be paid by the next regular "Qualifying Earnings (QE) day" (i.e. next ordinary payday) instead. If the ATO can determine that a class of employers are affected by an exceptional circumstance and the period for which the employers are impacted. If an extension of one due date overlaps with the next due date, in which case the deadline for the later contribution is due on the extended due date for the earlier contribution. <p>For further details refer to: Payment deadlines for Payday Super Australian Taxation Office</p>	

Updates to SuperStream standards

SuperStream is the Australian Government's standardised, electronic system for sending and receiving superannuation data and payments between employers, super funds and the Australian Tax Office (ATO).

The SuperStream data and payment standards specify payment methods allowed in relation to SuperStream payments such as employer contributions and rollovers between super funds. The approved payment methods are direct credit, direct debit and BPAY (via BECS), as well as real-time payments via NPP.

From 1 July 2026 all super funds including Self-Managed Super Funds (SMSFs) must be able to accept super payments via the NPP. Before 1 July 2026, super funds may opt in to receive payments via the NPP, or they may already have existing arrangements to receive super payments from certain payers, such as clearing houses.

To support early adoption, the ATO has also established a register for super funds to opt-in early to receive NPP payments².

²Updated guidance on SuperStream standard and FVS | Australian Taxation Office



Super fund obligations

From 1 July 2026, the time a super fund has to refund a contribution to an employer if they are unable to allocate it will be reduced from 20 to 3 business days after date of receipt³.

In addition, with the NPP being added as an approved payment method under the SuperStream Standard, the ATO has advised that all super funds must be able to receive NPP payments by 1 July 2026.

Current obligations	Obligations from 1 July 2026
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Super funds must refund a super guarantee contribution payment to the clearing house/ employer if they aren't able to allocate the funds to the employee's super fund account no later than 20 business days after receiving the contribution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Super funds must refund a super guarantee contribution payment to the clearing house/ employer if they aren't able to allocate the funds to an employee's super fund account no later than 3 business days after receiving the contribution. • For example, if a contribution has been received for a member, but the member doesn't have a super account at the fund. This change aims to ensure that employers and employees can resolve contribution issues more quickly and still meet the 7-day payment window.



³Treasury Laws Amendment (Payday Superannuation) Act 2025 – Federal Register of Legislation

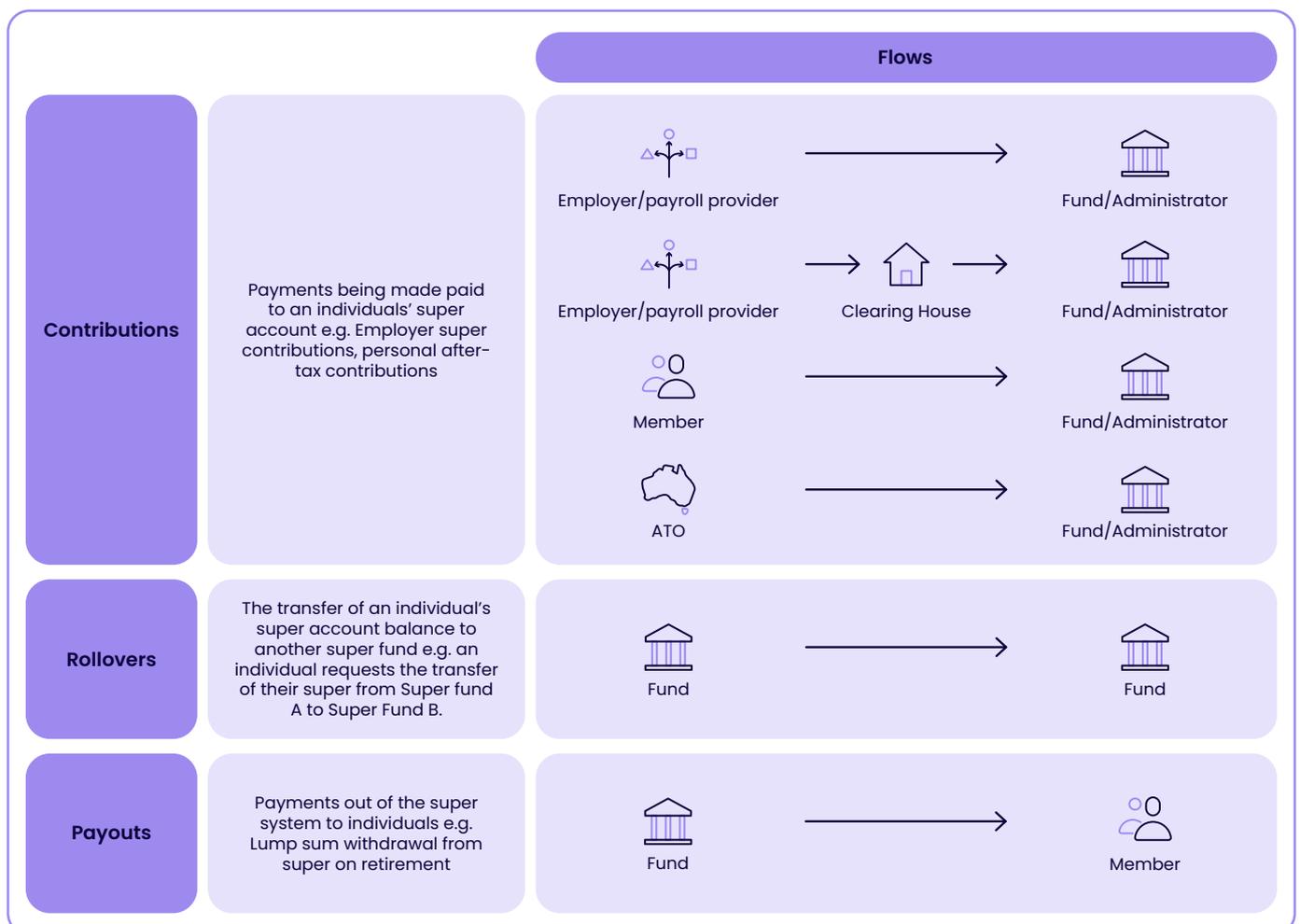


How real-time payments via the NPP supports superannuation

The NPP can accommodate all types of superannuation payments, including contributions, rollovers and payouts. For the superannuation industry, the NPP offers a range of benefits and opportunities:

- **Fast, always available payments** – the NPP facilitates 24/7 real-time payments with no cut-offs, including on weekends and public holidays.
- **Enhanced data capabilities** – NPP payments can carry detailed payment information, offering a description field with 280 characters and a separate reference field. This means payers can provide more detail about the payment (such as payroll date and Unique Super Identifier), facilitating easier reconciliation.
- **Real-time verification** – real-time payment options via the NPP provide the ability to verify the payer details prior to payment, ensuring the payments are going to the right place and reducing the administrative burden for resolving such issues.
- **Payment status confirmation** – payments made via the NPP enable the sender to receive immediate notification when a payment cannot be processed, for example when an account is closed. In the context of super, this supports fast resolution of payment issues. By contrast, on legacy payment infrastructure, dishonour notifications can take up to three days to appear.

Real-time payments via the NPP support all types of super payments



NPP product and solution overview

A range of NPP products and services are available to support superannuation payments, a high-level overview of these options is provided below. To learn more about how these solutions could be implemented in your business, talk to your bank or payment service provider.

Osko

Osko  Osko enables fast payments between Australian banks, allowing individuals and businesses to send and receive funds in under a minute, 24/7, every day of the year. Osko is the consumer-facing brand of the NPP, typically processing payments when 'pay anyone' is selected in a customer's online banking, whether to a BSB and account number, or a PayID.

For businesses, Osko payments can be initiated securely through APIs, file-based channels, or online banking platforms. While the NPP is designed to process payments individually, some financial institutions can provide functionality that allow businesses to submit bulk payment instructions, which are then debulked and processed as individual transactions.

In the context of superannuation, an employer could use an Osko payment to transfer superannuation contributions to a clearing house, using the clearing house's bank account details or PayID, and receive immediate confirmation once the payment has been successfully received. Similarly, a clearing house could use Osko to transfer funds to a super fund.



Osko with a Category Purpose Code

Osko  Osko payments can be enhanced with a Category Purpose Code to support specific types of payments. This enables additional data to meet the needs of particular industries or sectors, such as categorising transactions for payroll, superannuation, or tax payments.

Currently, superannuation payments can be identified with the Category Purpose Code identifier of 'PENS'. PENS is the ISO 20022 Category Purpose Code that identifies a payment as a pension-related transaction.

This categorisation ensures that the required additional data is included with each payment and made available to the recipient (e.g. the super fund). It also enables financial institutions to prioritise payments, apply appropriate privacy controls, and tailor financial crime monitoring in line with their risk management frameworks.

Superannuation payments that are made in accordance with the SuperStream Superannuation Data and Payment Standards must include the Payment Reference Number (PRN) that links the payment to the corresponding SuperStream contribution data message.

Inclusion of the PRN in the payment message ensures that receiving super funds and their administrators can automatically reconcile contributions and rollovers against the SuperStream data messages, consistent with legislative obligations. This data field is **mandatory** for Category Purpose Code Payments.

The additional data fields that can be included with each Category Purpose Code are:

Category Purpose Code payment type	Salary	Tax	Superannuation
Category Purpose Code	SALA	TAXS	PENS
Description	Salary payments made to individuals	Tax payments made to the ATO, state, territory or local government body	Super payments relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SuperStream reporting • Personal contributions • Rollovers (between super funds)
Data requirements	Employee reference	A payment reference number (PRN) or reference number provided by the ATO or relevant taxation body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payment Reference Number (PRN) - Mandatory • Unique Superannuation Identifier (USI) • Payroll payment date • Identification of a super refund



PayID

PayID A PayID is a simple identifier such as a mobile number, email address, ABN or organisation ID that can be linked to a bank account to receive fast, secure payments. Payments sent to a PayID are received in under a minute through Osko.

PayID can also help protect against fraud and scams, as payers are able to confirm the recipient's name before they make a payment.

Some financial institutions and payment service providers offer PayID solutions for business customers, allowing organisations to create static or dynamic PayIDs on behalf of a super fund or other businesses. These PayIDs can be used to identify inbound payments, helping to clearly associate each payment with the payer and/or the reason for the payment.

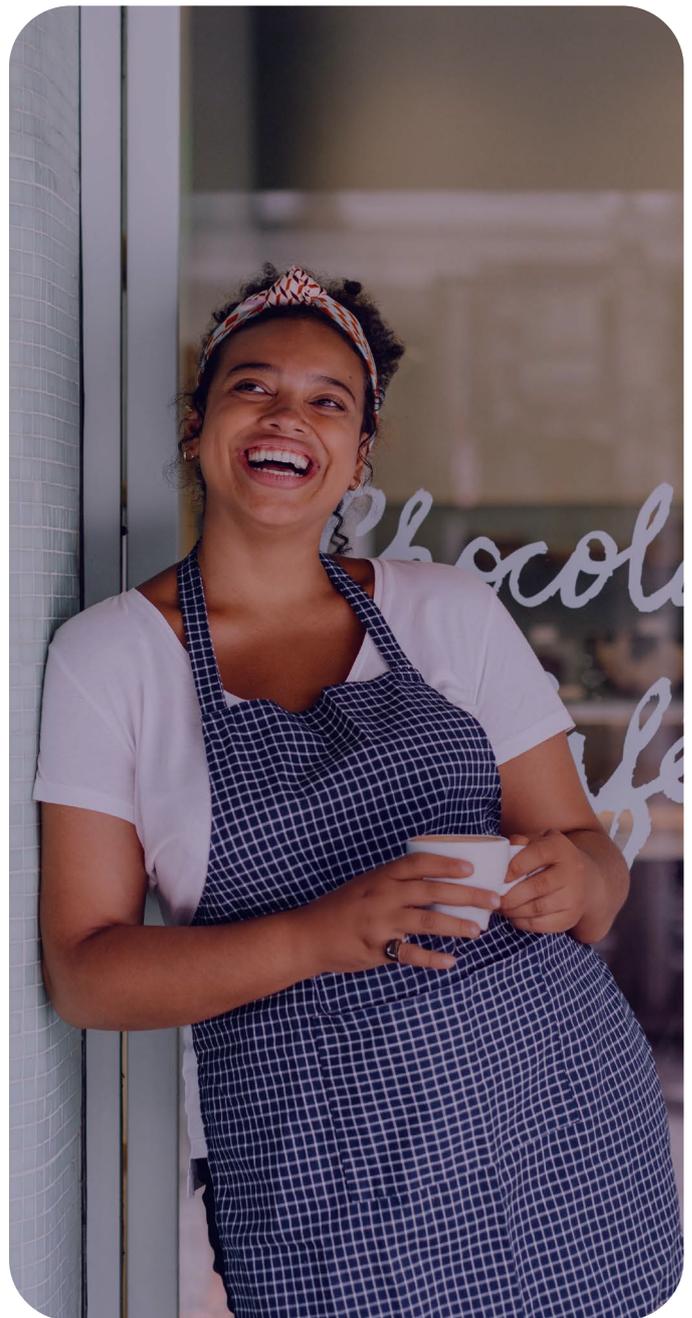
Employer contributions

PayID has been approved by the ATO as an accepted method for directing employer superannuation contributions. This applies to both payments to super funds and refunds from super funds to employers, clearing houses or other payers. In addition, it can be used to address rollover payments between superannuation funds:

- **Self-managed super funds:** It is recommended that SMSFs use a Registered Business Number (ABN) PayID format
- **APRA-regulated superannuation funds:** These funds can register either an ABN or an email address PayID, in line with the guidelines set out in the ATO Fund Validation Service (FVS) User Guide⁶.

Other contribution types

For other types of contributions such as personal contributions, super funds could offer an additional payment option using a unique email PayID created specifically for each member for example, "john.smith123456_PC@abcsuper.com.au". When John Smith makes a payment to this PayID, the super fund will be able to automatically reconcile the payment as a personal contribution to his super account. Super funds already use BPAY reference numbers in a similar way.



⁶Fund Validation Service User Guide at Contribution standard v3.0 | ATO Software Developers



PayTo

Pay to PayTo is a fast, simple and secure payment method for businesses and other organisations to receive one-off, ad hoc, or regular payments directly from a customer's bank account.

In the context of superannuation, PayTo can seamlessly facilitate real-time payments between an employer, clearing house and super fund, debiting employers' accounts in real-time and providing real-time notification of any unsuccessful debit requests. A clearing house could, for example, set up a PayTo agreement with an employer to debit the employer's account. Or, using third party initiation, a clearing house could debit the employer and send the funds directly to the super fund without the need to hold on to the funds.

For the super industry, PayTo can:

- Reduce the time taken to process payments between an employer, clearing house and super fund
- Allow third-party initiation of payments so that a super intermediary can initiate a payment directly from an employer to a super fund
- Debit employers' accounts in real-time, providing real-time notification of any unsuccessful debit requests
- Improve payment reconciliation as PayTo agreements contain more information to support easy matching and reconciliation in accounting and customer management systems.

Confirmation of Payee

Confirmation of Payee is an industry-wide initiative that helps prevent scams and mistaken payments. It matches the account name, BSB and account number entered by the payer with the data held by the recipient's bank, providing a match outcome before payment is made. Using that match outcome, the payer can then decide to proceed with the payment, double check the information, or decide to stop the payment altogether. This can give a business the confidence that they are paying to the correct account and can help reduce mistaken payments.

For the super industry, upfront validation of the account can assist in ensuring that super contributions are going to the correct super fund and that refunds are going to the correct employer or intermediary, reducing manual exception handling.



How NPP product solutions can support superannuation payments

NPP product solutions can support all types of superannuation payments, including employer contributions, refunds, personal contributions, rollovers and payouts.

Payer	Payee	NPP product	Example
Employer contributions			
Employer	Clearing house	Osko	An employer can initiate an Osko payment to a clearing house and receive immediate confirmation that the payment has been successfully received.
		PayID	A clearing house can allocate an email PayID to a specific employer to make it easier to reconcile that employer's contributions. e.g. employername123@abcclearinghouse.com.au
		PayTo	A clearing house can set up PayTo agreement with an employer to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debit the employer's account and credit their own account, or • Using third party initiation, debit the employer and send the funds directly to the super fund without the need to hold on to the funds.
Clearing house	Super fund	Osko	A clearing house can send an Osko payment to a super fund using the category purpose code to ensure that the PRN and any additional information such as the payroll pay date can be passed on to the super fund.
		Confirmation of Payee	A clearing house can use Confirmation of Payee to ensure the account is in the name of the SMSF.
		PayID	To ensure that a super fund receives employer contributions via NPP, a super fund can register for a PayID: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SMSF's can register an ABN PayID to give employers, payroll bureaus and super payment intermediaries assurance that they are paying to the correct SMSF for employer contributions. • APRA-regulated super funds can register a PayID also which may be their ABN or an email address format.
Employer contributions			
Super fund	Clearing house/ Employer	Osko	If a super fund is unable to allocate a contribution, such as when a member does not yet belong to the fund, they can return the payment via Osko. When using the category purpose code, the super fund can also identify the payment as a refund.
		PayID	An employer or clearing house can provide their PayID for refunds. For clearing houses, they could create a PayID for each employer.
		Confirmation of Payee	A super fund can use Confirmation of Payee to ensure that the account they are making a payment to is in the name of the employer.



Payer	Payee	NPP product	Example
Personal contributions			
Member/ Spouse	Super fund	PayID	A super fund can create a PayID for each member so that when the member makes a payment to the super fund for personal or spouse contributions it can be attributed to that member and the contribution type recorded.
		PayTo	A super fund could setup regular personal contributions with their members. This could be done by creating a PayTo agreement to debit funds for a certain amount at a set interval. This could be set up via the super fund's member portal.
		PayID	To ensure that a super fund receives employer contributions via NPP, a super fund can register for a PayID: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SMSF's can register an ABN PayID to give employers, payroll bureaus and super payment intermediaries assurance that they are paying to the correct SMSF for employer contributions • APRA-regulated super funds can register a PayID also which may be their ABN or an email address format.
Rollovers			
Super fund	Super fund	PayID	A super fund can make a rollover payment using Osko and receive instant confirmation that the payment was successful. When using the category purpose code, the super fund can also include the Unique Superannuation Identifier (USI) of the super fund they are paying to.
		PayID	To ensure that a super fund receives rollover via NPP, a super can register for a PayID. SMSF's can register an ABN PayID to give employers, payroll bureaus and super payment intermediaries assurance that they are paying to the correct SMSF for employer contributions. APRA-regulated super funds can register a PayID also which may be their ABN or an email address format.
		Confirmation of Payee	When rolling over to an SMSF, a super fund can use Confirmation of Payee to ensure that the account they are making the payment to is in the name of the SMSF.
Payouts			
Super fund	Member	Osko	A super fund can make payouts to members using Osko and receive instant confirmation that the payment was successful.
		PayID	A member can provide a super fund with their PayID for payments to them. E.g. Member PayID or spouse/estate for other types of payments such as a death benefit payment.
		Confirmation of Payee	A super fund can use Confirmation of Payee to ensure the account they are making a payment to is in the name of the payee when making payments out to members. When transitioning any payment streams to NPP, including regular pension payments, it is recommended that a Confirmation of Payee check is conducted as part of the process.



Next steps in moving to modern superannuation payments

The approach and steps to move to modern superannuation payments will vary for each business. Factors, including the size, operational complexity of a business' operations, existing processes and systems, and the financial institutions or payment service providers a business use will all influence the path forward. Some considerations are outlined below.

Employers

As Australia transitions to more modern, streamlined and frequent superannuation payments, employers will need to make practical changes to their operations, systems and data ahead of 1 July 2026. Beyond payday super obligations, the move to real-time super payments provides an opportunity for employers to review their broader business payments, including payroll. To get started, some actions and considerations include:

- **Align super and pay cycles**
Transition from quarterly contributions to paying super at the same time as wages. Begin trialling more frequent payment cycles now to identify and resolve issues early.
- **Strengthen payroll data quality and validation**
Review onboarding processes to ensure employee fund and account details are captured accurately, and action current SuperStream error messages. Higher error sensitivity under tighter timeframes means clean data has never been more important.
- **Confirm system, payroll and payment readiness**
Engage your payroll provider and bank. Check readiness for single touch payroll updates, NPP payments and enhancements to SuperStream messaging. Assess whether system upgrades or process changes are required.
- **Prepare for cash-flow and operational impacts**
Model the impact of more frequent super payments on cash flow and internal workflows. Consider changes to approval processes, funding cycles and reconciliation and put in place support to manage the transition.

Clearing houses

Clearing houses play a central role in enabling the shift to modern, faster superannuation payments. With higher payment frequency, tighter fund allocation windows and expanded SuperStream capabilities, clearing houses will need to upgrade processes, technology and work with employers and super funds. To get started, some actions and considerations include:

- **Review and modernise payment processing infrastructure**
Ensure systems can support faster, more frequent contribution flows, including the ability to send and receive NPP payments, preserve the PRN consistently and manage increased contribution volumes.
- **Strengthen data handling and SuperStream compliance**
Prepare for enhanced error messaging, member verification requests and updated contribution messages. Improve upstream data validation and exception handling to minimise rejections and accelerate resolution.
- **Actively engage with employers, DSPs and super funds**
Work closely with payroll providers and employer clients on readiness, onboarding and testing. Coordinate with funds to validate payment routing, fund details, and statement formats, particularly where NPP receipts introduce new data flows. This collaboration will be critical given that contribution errors will surface immediately under a payday super model, reducing time for correction.
- **Establish early testing and transition programs**
Begin end-to-end testing. Trial NPP payments, assess reconciliation impacts and refine operational processes to prevent bottlenecks as volumes increase.



Super funds

Super funds are critical to the successful move toward modern, fast superannuation payments. With contributions arriving more frequently and with tighter three-day allocation timeframes, funds need to ensure their payment, data and reconciliation processes can support higher volumes and data-rich payments. To get started, some actions and considerations include:

- **Confirm NPP payment readiness and PRN visibility**
Engage your banking partner to ensure all receiving accounts are NPP enabled, that PRNs pass through unaltered, and that bank statement formats support straight-through processing. Understanding the specific formats and functionalities offered by your banking partner is important for maintaining consistency and preventing contribution reconciliation issues. Resolve any gaps now before volumes increase under payday super.
- **Prepare for SuperStream changes**
Implement enhanced error messaging member verification request and updated contribution messages. Streamline internal validation processes to facilitate the return of errors quickly and consistently.
- **Review and optimise reconciliation and allocation processes**
Assess your current matching logic, workflow timeframes and dependency on batch processes. Identify where faster routing, improved data quality and more frequent payments will require internal process changes or system modernisation.
- **Work closely with clearing houses, employers and DSPs**
Engage partners early to test receipt of NPP payments, confirm fund identifiers and share insights on any error patterns. Transparent collaboration will help reduce contribution rejections, support clean data flows and minimise friction across the ecosystem.

Digital service providers (DSPs)

DSPs have a pivotal role in enabling employers to transition to modern, fast and compliant superannuation payments. With increased payment frequency, tighter fund allocation windows and evolving SuperStream requirements, DSPs must ensure their platforms support accurate data capture, efficient processing and seamless integration with payment partners. To get started, some actions and considerations include:

- **Prepare for new requirements**
Implement support for new contribution messages, improved error codes and the member verification request. Strengthen data capture and validation at onboarding to prevent incomplete or incorrect employer submissions.
- **Enable faster and more frequent super payment flows**
Ensure platforms can support NPP payments, PayTo integration, and real-time or near real-time status updates. Build automated workflows that help employers meet the seven-day requirement and immediately detect and resolve exceptions.
- **Engage early with employers, clearing houses and funds**
Support clients through readiness planning, education, testing and migration. Collaborate with clearing houses and funds to ensure end-to-end message flow works as expected, particularly around PRNs, reconciliation and error handling.

For more information

For more information on real-time superannuation payments, contact your bank or payment service provider. You can also visit the [AP+ website for resources](#) and to subscribe to updates.



About Australian Payments Plus (AP+)

AP+ operates Australia's domestic payments infrastructure – including the eftpos debit card network, BPAY bill payments, and the NPP (the country's real-time payments system) – along with ConnectID, a safe and secure way for Australians to verify their identity.

By partnering with more than 150 organisations we connect banks, financial institutions, retailers, businesses, government agencies and fintechs to make it possible for millions of Australians to pay, get paid, and prove their identity every day. We're shaping the future of payments by enabling innovation, enhancing security, and ensuring the payments system works better for everyone.

The NPP was launched in February 2018 as a world-class infrastructure enabling real-time payments between Australian financial institutions, businesses and individuals. NPP supports instant, data-rich payments and has become foundational to modernising Australia's payments landscape.

As the operator of the NPP, AP+ is responsible for ensuring the platform's continued evolution and growth. We work closely with financial institutions, businesses and government to expand the use of NPP services, drive broader industry adoption and encourage innovation that delivers greater value to all participants. Our role is central in supporting the move towards faster, smarter and more secure payment experiences for all in Australia.



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