



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture,
Water and the Environment

Security Clearance Questions Answered

Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment

Water Division



The need for a Security Clearance is very common for numerous Australian Public Service (APS) positions within Federal Government departments.

In order to help you work through the wealth of information out there, we have put together answers for some of our most frequently asked questions about security clearances. Check them out below!

What is it?

A Security Clearance, or Vetting, is a status granted to individuals after careful assessment, that allows them to access classified information and resources as part of their work. These checks are to ensure the people entrusted with security classified information and resources have been identified, are suitable to have access, and are willing to comply with the requirements of the Clearance that safeguard against misuse.

Who needs one?

Clearances are only required for individuals who, as part of their work in the Australian Government, need to access classified information and resources. This applies to people employed directly by the APS, by consulting organisations that contract to the Government and to individuals employed by a contract to the APS.

Are there different Types?

Australia has 4 different levels of Security Clearance, each involving additional and more in-depth clearance requirements.

The different levels range from Baseline through to Positive Vetting in the following order:

- Baseline Vetting
- Negative Vetting Level 1
- Negative Vetting Level 2
- Positive Vetting

The level of Clearance required will be dependent on the level of classified information and resources you will need to access in your position.

I have a Police Check, is this the same?

No, whilst completing a Police Check may be a part of the application process for a position and/or required to obtain a Security Clearance, the Police Check alone is not enough to issue you with a Clearance.

How do I get one, what is the process?

In order to apply for a Security Clearance, you will need to be sponsored by a Government agency, this will usually be the department or agency you are employed by.

Once sponsored, you will need to submit a security package online to the Australian Government Security Vetting Agency (AGSVA) for assessment, this includes an online questionnaire along with supporting documents that will need to be supplied.

The security officer at your department will initiate this for you.

Depending on the level of Security Clearance you need to complete your job, as well as your individual circumstances, the number and complexity of questions and documents required will vary. Your checks may include referee interviews, interviews with you, financial checks and searches of records held by the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation and the Australian Federal Police. Some clearances may also require you to submit to psychometric and psychological testing.

The information you provide will be used as a basis for conducting a range of background checks and inquiries, these are to assist in identifying any particular vulnerabilities that may expose you to manipulation, blackmail or coercion for classified information or resources.

How long does it take?

The time it takes to assess each case varies depending on the level of Clearance and the individual circumstances of the applicant. As a guideline though, [AGSVA](#) advises the following timelines, noting that these timelines only apply once they have received your full and correct security package and supporting documents.

- Baseline Vetting – 1 month
- Negative Vetting Level 1 – 3 months
- Negative Vetting Level 2 – 4 months
- Positive Vetting – 7 months

Can I get a clearance before I apply for a role?

It is not possible to obtain a Clearance on an on-demand or speculative basis, you will need to be sponsored by an Australian Government agency before you can apply for a clearance, therefore it is not possible to apply for a Clearance before you apply for a role.

What do I need to apply?

Australian citizenship is a condition of eligibility for Security Clearances and you will need to supply sufficient correct documentation to support this when you apply. Further information on what documentation you will need can be found at the [AGSVA website](#).

If my circumstances change, will this affect my clearance?

You will need to update [AGSVA](#) whenever your personal circumstances change as a requirement of your clearance. The notification of a change to your personal circumstances allows AGSVA to review the implication of those changes for your continued suitability to hold a Security Clearance.

What if I am declined?

Each application is individually assessed and some Clearance applications can be denied. The AGSVA website presses the most important factors in the Clearance process is your honesty, openness, and thoroughness when completing your security pack and answering questions.

Should your application for a Security Clearance be denied you can appeal the decision, [more information on the appeals process can be found on the AGSVA website](#).

I am not sure if I have a clearance or if my clearance is still valid, how can I find out?

If you're unsure if you have a Clearance, or what level your clearance may be, you can [contact AGSVA](#) to enquire on the current status of your Clearance.

How long do they last?

All Security Clearances are reviewed at regular intervals dependent on your Security Clearance levels. Security Clearances require revalidation every:

- Baseline Vetting – 15 years
- Negative Vetting Level 1 – 10 years
- Negative Vetting Level 2 – 7 years
- Positive Vetting – 7 years but reviewed annually

If you leave employment in the Australian Government your clearance will be made inactive, should you return to the APS it may be reactivated within certain protocols.

Tips for a smooth security clearance process

AGSVA advises that 50% of security packages submitted contain errors that require the application to be rejected and sent back causing further delays.

Common errors include:

- Incorrect or missed signatures on forms
- Applicant and witness signatures being dated on separate days
- Not providing sufficient ID documentation as per the Gold Standard Proof of Identity
- Documents not submitted in accordance with requirements
- Failure to meet post-1986 Australian Citizenship requirements



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