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2005 Child Care



With the compliments of:

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Child Care Guide 2005

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1. The Australian Government Child Care Program

The Australian Government is committed to providing families with access to high quality childcare and providing assistance to parents with the cost of child care.

This commitment has been illustrated by the Government's unprecedented support for Australian families and the child care sector, with more than \$9.5 billion projected expenditure to 2008-09, principally this will go towards Child Care Benefit and Child Care Tax Rebate, which support parents who use child care with the overall cost.

The Australian Government also provides additional support through the Child Care Support Program, which includes quality support, inclusion support for children with additional needs and additional support for some rural and remote services. The Child Care Support Program complements the significant assistance provided to families through CCB and the CCTR. Another aspect of the Australian Government's commitment to child care is Jobs, Education and Training (JET) Child Care, which is an initiative that provides flexible child care assistance to jobless parents wishing to undertake study, work or job search activities.

Child Care Benefit (CCB)

The Australian Government assists parents with the affordability of child care through CCB. The Australian Government has committed an allocation of around \$8.5 billion to support families through CCB over four years to 2008-09.

CCB reduces the cost of child care for eligible families who use 'approved' child care services or 'registered' carers (described in the next section). Families using registered care are only entitled to the minimum rate of CCB. CCB is paid either as reduced fees directly to services on behalf of a family, or as a lump sum to the family after the end of the income year. CCB is most commonly claimed as reduced fees at an approved child care service.

CCB is an income-tested payment. Families on low incomes, including most families in receipt of an income support payment, receive the highest rate of assistance. The rate of CCB is gradually reduced as family income increases to the point where families receive the minimum rate of CCB. *(Rates of CCB are outlined on page*

As CCB is an income-tested payment, the entitlement is based on an estimate provided by families of annual taxable income. After the end of the income year, the Family Assistance Office reconciles the family's CCB entitlement by comparing a family's actual entitlement (based on their actual taxable income) to the amount the family received during the year (based on their income estimates). Families are entitled to a top-up if they received less than their entitlement, or are required to make a repayment if they received more than they were entitled to given their actual income for the tax year.

Currently all parents can receive up to 20 hours CCB per week for each child using an approved child care service, regardless of their work status. This is because high quality child care provides a positive early learning and developmental environment to benefit all children. It also assists parents to undertake activities that can be difficult with a small child, such as attending doctor's appointments. To receive assistance for more than 20 hours per week, the child's parents must be working, studying or training for work.

Changes after July 2006

As of 3 July 2006, all eligible families will be able to receive CCB for up to 24 hours of child care per child per week, regardless of whether they are working, studying or training. However, in order to receive more than 24 hours of CCB per child per week, parents will need to undertake paid or voluntary work, or work-related study or training for the equivalent of 15 hours per week, or have an exemption from this requirement.

Child Care Tax Rebate (CCTR)

Parents who are eligible for CCB and using approved care for work related purposes will also be eligible for Child Care Tax Rebate and be able to claim 30 per cent of their out-of-pocket costs for child care up to \$4000. Out-of-pocket child care expenses are fees incurred less CCB.

The CCTR will provide additional child care assistance to around 640,000 families with a total cost of around \$1 billion over four years.

The CCTR will cover costs incurred from 1 July 2004. Families can claim the rebate in the tax year after child care expenses have been paid. This means that families will lodge claims for child care expenses paid for in 2004-05 in the 2005-06 tax return. The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) administers the CCTR.

The timing for claiming the rebate is affected by the CCB reconciliation process, as out-of-pocket expenses can only be calculated once the final reconciliation of CCB is completed. The tax rebate is paid on out of pocket child care expenses. To calculate out-of-pocket childcare expenses a family needs accurate information the amount they have spent on child care and the amount of CCB received from the Government. Final CCB entitlements are based on a family's taxable income - ie once their tax return is assessed by the ATO. Thus out of pocket costs can only be determined after tax returns have been submitted. Therefore a tax rebate can only be calculated and then claimed in the tax year after child care expenses have been incurred. This timing has been constructed to ensure that the majority of taxpayers will receive their correct entitlement without adjustments. It will also minimise taxpayers' interaction with the ATO and Centrelink.

Note the current CCB work test will be retained for CCTR purposes.

The Child Care Support Program

The Australian Government Child Care Support Program provides the funding to support child care and related services. This program was previously known as the Child Care Broadband. Following the Broadband Review, which involved extensive consultation, the new Child Care Support Program was announced in June 2004.

The objectives of the Child Care Support Program are to:

- Promote, support and enhance quality child care;
- Improve access to child care for children and families with special or additional needs;
- Support equitable access to child care for children and families in areas and/or circumstances where services would not otherwise be available.

The Australian Government has committed \$232 million for the 2005-06 financial year for the Child Care Support Program. This is an additional \$25 million on 2004-05.

Funding for the three program areas:

- Quality programs are expected to cost \$26 million
- Inclusion Support programs are expected to cost \$60 million
- Community Support programs are expected to cost \$142 million

Jobs, Education and Training (JET) Child Care

JET Child Care provides flexible child care assistance to jobless parents wishing to undertake study, work or job search activities to help them to enter or re-enter the workforce. JET Child Care can help parents find suitable care for their children and can help parents meet the costs of child care by paying most of the 'gap fee' – the difference between the full child care fee and CCB, with Special JET Fee Assistance (SJFA). Most parents will still make a small contribution to the cost of child care.

The Australian Government announced under the Welfare to Work package additional funding for JET in the 2005/06 Budget. The measure, which commences in July 06 provides additional support for an extra 52,000 customers over four years who need additional support with the "gap" fees for child care.

2. Australian Government & State/Territory Responsibilities for Child Care

Responsibility for childhood education and child care is shared between the Australian Government and the State/Territory governments. The Australian, State and Territory governments have different but complementary roles. The major differences in the roles of the different levels of government relate to the objectives of each for children's services.

The primary focus of the Australian Government is support for families with accessing quality childcare and providing assistance to parents with the cost of child care. The Australian Government provides this support through payments such as the CCB, CCTR and the Child Care Support Program.

State and Territory governments place a greater emphasis on preschool services, which provide educational and developmental opportunities for children, and on other forms of family support and service delivery.

All levels of government have a role to play in planning for child care.
(See specific headings for further explanation of roles)

3. Quality Assurance

The Australian Government and State and Territory Governments have different roles and responsibilities in relation to the promotion and assurance of quality in children's services. We do share common objectives, however, of ensuring children are cared for in a safe and nurturing environment, and of promoting the best interest of children as the paramount consideration.

The State and Territory governments set legislative and regulatory requirements for the licensing of children's services and monitor adherence to these requirements. These regulations include safety standards and health and safety requirements.

The Australian Government Quality Assurance is designed to build on and complement State/Territory Government licensing regulations (where they exist), which generally provide a minimum standard of operation for services.

The broad objective of the child care quality assurance (QA) program is to ensure that children in care have stimulating, positive experiences and interactions that will foster all aspects of their development and promote quality care for all children in Australian child care services.

The aim of QA is to provide a framework for reviewing, measuring and improving the quality of the work being done by approved child care providers. QA focuses on quality outcomes for children. They are processes of self-study and improvement against principles of good quality care.

The QA framework:

- improves the accountability of child care to the public
- better equips services to cater for children's individual needs and, most importantly,
- improves outcomes for children.

Quality Assurance Framework

Child care QA has an administrative framework comprised of three core partners – the Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS), the National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC) and the Accreditation Decisions Review Committee (ADRC). The framework partners have individual but interconnected responsibilities for the day-to-day management, monitoring and implementation of QA and those services, structures and customers that deliver and use quality child care in Australia.

FaCS manages the administration of the QA framework. It funds and has contracts with the NCAC, the ADRC and Inclusion and Professional Support Program. The Inclusion and Professional Support Program is funded by the Australian Government and one of its purposes is to assist child care services to achieve and maintain QA standards. FaCS also has legislative responsibilities for managing services' non-compliance with QA standards. To be eligible for approval for CCB purposes, Family Day Care, Long Day Care and Outside School Hours Care services must register for and satisfactorily participate in QA.

Quality Improvement and Accreditation System

The Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS) was developed to encourage continuous improvement in the quality of care provided to children in Long Day Care services.

QIAS involves services undertaking a process of self-study and improvement against 35 principles of good quality care. These principles are incorporated into ten quality areas:

1. Relationships with children
2. Respect for children
3. Partnerships with families
4. Staff interactions
5. Planning and evaluation
6. Learning and development
7. Protective care
8. Health
9. Safety
10. Managing to support quality

Family Day Care Quality Assurance

Family Day Care Quality Assurance (FDCQA) was developed to encourage continuous improvement in the quality of care provided to children in Family Day Care services.

FDCQA involves schemes undertaking a process of self-study and improvement against 30 principles of good quality care. These principles are incorporated into six quality elements:

1. Interactions
2. Physical environment
3. Children's experiences, learning and development
4. Health, hygiene, nutrition, safety and well-being
5. Carers and coordination unit staff
6. Management and administration

Outside School Hours Care Quality Assurance

Outside School Hours Care Quality Assurance (OSHCQA) was developed to encourage continuous improvement in the quality of care provided to children in Outside School Hours Care services.

OSHCQA involves services undertaking a process of self-study and improvement against 30 principles of good quality care. These principles are incorporated into eight quality areas:

1. Respect for children
2. Staff interactions and relationships with children
3. Partnerships with families and community links
4. Programming and evaluation
5. Play and development
6. Health, nutrition and well-being
7. Protective care and safety
8. Managing to support quality

4. Other Elements of the Child Care Program

Professional Support for Child Care Services

Resource and Advisory Agencies

Resource and Advisory agencies (R&As) are organisations contracted to provide support, advice and resources to child care services to help continuously improve the quality of child care. The overall objective of R&As is to support services with their immediate issues while also assisting them to develop strategies that are sustainable over the longer term. Support can be provided in a number of ways including: mentoring, developing or acquiring resources, telephone support, practical assistance, newsletters, referrals etc.

In Service Training

In Service Training (IST) providers are contracted to deliver one-off training programs to child care services. The focus of this training is the support of the underlying principles of quality care for mainstream child care services. The training complements the assistance provided by R&A agencies.

The new Professional Support Program

From 1 January 2006 professional support will be provided under the Inclusion and Professional Support Program. The Australian Government has committed \$14 million per year for the new Professional Support Program, which is an increase of around \$1.6 million on the amount spent on professional support in 2003-04.

The Professional Support Program represents a more efficient and coordinated approach to the delivery of child care professional support and will increase the skill level of child care workers and services. The Program features a two-tier approach with the introduction of state based Professional Support Coordinators who will oversee and manage the delivery of professional support to child care services. This will include undertaking a state wide professional support needs analysis, developing a professional support implementation plan, engaging Professional Support Service Providers and regular evaluation to ensure the program is meeting the needs of child care services.

Supplementary Services Program

The Supplementary Services (SUPS) Program assists mainstream child care services increase access and participation for children with additional needs. The target client groups are:
Children with ongoing high support needs including those with a disability
Children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds including refugee children and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander children.

The program focuses on providing support, training and resources to child care services to facilitate developmentally and culturally appropriate programs for children with additional needs.

The new Inclusion Support Program

From 1 January 2006 inclusion support will be provided under the Inclusion and Professional Support Program. The Australian Government has committed \$25 million per year for the new Inclusion Support Program, which is an increase of around \$5.6 million on the amount spent on inclusion support in 2003-04.

The Inclusion Support Program will assist child care services to include children with additional needs in quality child care. The Program involves the establishment of Inclusion Support Agencies operating on a regional basis to coordinate assistance provided by a network of field workers, known as Inclusion Support Facilitators. These field workers will predominantly be early childhood trained specialists in inclusive practices. They will assist child care services to build their skill base and capacity to include children with additional needs and provide advice and support in developing an inclusive child care service. They will also help services to access a range of practical supports, including onsite inclusion readiness planning, access to specialist equipment and resources, funding to engage additional workers, or specialist cultural expertise. The target client groups for support remain the same.

Special Needs Subsidy Scheme

The Special Needs Subsidy Scheme (SNSS) assists children with ongoing high support needs, particularly children with disabilities, to access quality child care.

The eligible groups of children are:

- Children with disabilities (diagnosed physical, sensory, neurological, intellectual or learning impairment);
- Children undergoing continuing assessment for such disabilities or developmental delay; and
- Refugee children who have been subjected to torture or trauma either in their country of origin or during their refugee experience.

The essence of SNSS is inclusion of children in the activities and experiences of child care through participation and interaction with other children and utilising support from all staff members. It is not designed to replace the range of physical and developmental services needed by children with ongoing high support needs (such as therapies, medical and health services, counselling and family support services).

SNSS assists child care services through:

- Subsidising the costs of employing an extra worker (not to be considered a 1:1 worker)
- Relief while permanent staff attend specialised training related to the additional needs of the child
- Essential specialised equipment and resources.

SNSS assistance may be available when SUPS services or any other type of support are not sufficient to include a child with ongoing high support needs. The SNSS scheme allows for economies of scale where more than one child with a high level of additional needs attends a particular service.

Disabled Supplementary Services

The Disabled Supplementary Services (DSUPS) Program provides an extra payment to Family Day Carers and In-home Carers who care for children with ongoing high support needs, including children with disabilities, in recognition of the additional care and attention that such children require.

The eligible groups of children are:

- Children with disabilities (diagnosed physical, sensory, neurological, intellectual or learning impairment)
- Children undergoing continuing assessment for such disabilities or developmental delay and
- Refugee children who have been subjected to torture or trauma either in their country of origin or during their refugee experience.

The DSUPS Program aims to ensure that the families of these children can participate in the workforce and general community through the provision of support to the child in child care.

New arrangements - Inclusion Support Subsidy

From 1 July 2006 support for children with additional needs currently provided under the SNSS and the DSUPS program will be consolidated under new arrangements.

The Australian Government has committed \$35 million per year for the new Inclusion Support Subsidy. This is around \$12 million more than was spent on SNSS and DSUPS in 2003-04.

Under the Inclusion Support Subsidy there will be a single approach to eligibility, the approval process and review mechanisms which will make it easier for services and families to access support.

Funding for services (Fact sheets are available from the FaCS website)

The Australian Government Child Care Support Program provides targeted financial support to some not for profit childcare services.

All of the following services receive additional financial support – to assist services to remain viable, support carers and provide flexible caring models.

- Family Day Care (FDC)
- In-Home Care (IHC)
- Occasional Care (OC)

The following services may be eligible for Sustainability Assistance funding to ensure parents are able to access child care where a service may not be viable.

- Long Day Care (LDC)
 - Outside School Hours Care Services (OSHC)
- Note: Only approx 4% LDC and 20% of OSHC services receive financial support

The Australian Government programs and funding arrangements that are specifically aimed at assisting child care services in a range of circumstances include:

In Home Care Service Support (IHCSS), Family Day Care Network Support (FDCNS), Operational Support for Occasional Care (OpSOC), Regional Travel Assistance Grant (RTAG), Set-Up Assistance Grant, Long Day Care Incentive Scheme (LDCIS) Commencement Funding, LDCIS Utilisation Support, and Sustainability Assistance. (Fact sheets are available from the FaCS website)

Child Care Places

All levels of government have a role to play in childcare planning. The Australian Government is committed to providing families with access to quality childcare and providing assistance to parents with the cost of child care. State and local government have a role in licensing and planning and some provide childcare.

The Australian Government does not build childcare centres or provide childcare.

Additionally the Australian Government does not restrict the number of new long day care centres that may be established, or the number of places. If a centre meets state licensing regulations and Australian Government approval, parents using the service can claim Child Care Benefit.

Places for other types of child care are allocated by the Australian Government. The 2005 Federal Budget contained substantial additional funding for additional child care places. Outside School Hours Care (OSHC), which includes Vacation Care, will increase by a further 84,300 places over the next four years. An extra 2,500 Family Day Care (FDC) places and 1,000 In-Home Care places will also be established in the same period.

Need for places is identified primarily by services themselves. Services that require places may inform FaCS at any time. For major allocation rounds, applications may also be invited from services.

A range of demographic and other data, supplemented by independent advice from Planning Advisory Committees (PACs) in every state and territory, is used to identify the relative needs of areas that require additional child care places (especially Outside School Hours Care and Family Day Care). Membership of PACs includes representatives of State and local governments and of the different kinds of child care.

Taking into account advice provided by PACs, FaCS determines the areas of Australia where additional child care places may be allocated. Applications are assessed and places are then allocated to the most suitable operators in those areas.

5. Regularly Asked Questions

What types of child care are available?

There are several different types of approved Australian Government child care, which are outlined below.

Centre-based Long Day Care (LDC)

Long Day Care centres usually care for children under school age, in premises purpose built or adapted for child care. They provide flexible and quality care all day or part-time for children of working families and the general community. Some centres provide care for limited numbers of primary school children before and after school and during school holidays.

Family Day Care (FDC)

FDC is a network of experienced carers who provide care and development activities in their own homes for other people's children. The FDC service recruits and monitors these carers and provides them with training and support. FDC is primarily for children who have not yet started school, but care can also be provided for school age children. Care is flexible and may be tailored to suit your family's needs, including care outside working hours and, if needed, overnight care.

Outside School Hours Care and Vacation Care (OSHC)

OSHC provides care for primary school children before and/or after school and during school holidays. In some services, care is also provided on 'pupil free' days during the school term. Some before and after school services also provide Vacation Care or are linked to other Vacation Care services in order to provide care for primary school children all year.

In-home Care (IHC)

In-home Care is a flexible form of child care where an approved carer provides care in the child's home. In-home Care is not available to all families, but is aimed at families who do not have access to existing child care services, or where an existing service cannot meet their needs. Families eligible for In-home Care include families where the parent/s or child have an illness/disability, families in rural or remote areas and parents working shift work or non-standard hours or for families with multiple births (more than two).

Occasional Care

Occasional Care services provide short periods of care for children under school age. Occasional Care allows the flexibility for families to leave children, on a regular or irregular basis, in an early childhood learning environment to socialise and interact with other children.

Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services (MACS)

These services provide flexible child care to meet the social and developmental needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Care offered for preschool and school aged children includes Long Day Care, playgroups, Outside School Hours Care, school holiday care and cultural programs.

Flexible and Innovative Services

These services can meet the needs of families living in rural and regional areas that may experience difficulty in finding suitable child care as standard care may not be viable, or not suit their needs. Flexible child care can combine standard models of care (such as Long Day Care, Outside School Hours Care, Family Day Care), with Occasional Care, mobile multi-purpose centres, on-farm care, and In-home Care.

What if I need care in my home?

In-home Care is a targeted form of child care where an approved carer provides care in the child's home. It is only available for families who do not have access to existing child care services or their needs cannot be met by an existing service. In-home Care may suit your needs (if you meet the eligibility criteria) or, alternatively, you may prefer to make a private arrangement with a nanny, relative or friend. You may be eligible for Child Care Benefit (CCB) for In-home Care as it is an approved child care service. You may also be eligible for some CCB for the private arrangement if the carer is registered with the Family Assistance Office.

What if I just need child care every now and then?

Occasional Care or Outside School Hours Care may suit your needs.

What is the difference between approved and registered child care?

Approved child care is care provided by a service provider that has been approved to receive CCB payments on behalf of eligible families. Your service can tell you if they are approved to receive Australian Government payments.

Registered child care is care provided by nannies, grandparents, relatives or friends who are registered with the Family Assistance Office. It can also include work related care provided by registered private pre-schools, kindergartens, Occasional Care centres and Outside School Hours Care services. Families using registered care are entitled to the minimum rate of CCB.

Your carer can contact the **Family Assistance Office on 13 6150** to find out how to become registered.

How can I find out more about which child care service is the right one for my family?

The Australian Government provides the Child Care Access Hotline to make it easier for families to find and select the right child care for their children. The Child Care Access Hotline is a national telephone service (freecall unless calling from a mobile phone) that provides families with information about child care services in their area, the types of care available, how to choose a quality service and government assistance with the cost of care.

The Hotline can also help employers support employees by supplying information on child care options. Publications about the different service types, Family Assistance Office publications and information about choosing quality child care are also available through the Hotline.

Child Care Access Hotline – 1800 670 305

The Child Care Access Hotline is open Monday to Friday between 8am and 9pm, Australian Eastern Standard Time on 1800 670 305. A Telephone Typewriter Service (TTY) is available on 1800 639 327 (only for people who are deaf or who have a hearing or speech impairment). A Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) is also available to assist callers from culturally diverse backgrounds.

What kind of financial assistance will the Australian Government give me with my child care fees?

The Australian Government assists parents with the affordability of child care through Child Care Benefit (CCB) and the Child Care Tax Rebate (CCTR).

The Australian Government offers CCB to eligible families who use approved care or registered care.

How much CCB will I receive from the Government?

How much CCB you get depends on:

- whether you use approved or registered care
- the types of care your children use
- how many hours of child care you use for each child
- whether your child goes to school
- how many children you have in child care
- your family's income (if you are using approved child care) and
- your reasons for needing child care.

The rates and limits for CCB are indexed in July each year. The amounts below relate to child care used during the 2004-2005 tax year. These rates are for non-school children. Rates for school children are 85 per cent of rates for non-school children.

If you are using approved child care and your annual family income is \$33,361 or below, in the 2005-2006 tax year you could get up to:

\$144 a week for one child who is in approved child care for 50 hours a week;
\$300.99 a week for two children who are both in approved child care for 50 hours a week;
\$469.78 a week for three children who are all in approved child care for 50 hours a week.

You will get a part-rate of CCB if your annual family income is more than \$32,485 but less than:

\$95,683 if you have one child in approved child care;
\$103,739 if you have two children in approved child care; or
\$117,848 if you have three children in approved child care.

If your annual family income is above those amounts, you could get up to \$24.15 a week for each child who is using approved child care for 50 hours.

If you are using registered child care there is no income test. You could get up to \$24.15 a week for each child using 50 hours of registered child care.

Who is eligible for CCB?

To receive CCB, you need to meet the following requirements:

- the child must attend approved or registered care
- you must be liable for the payment of some or all of the child care fees.
-

In most cases, CCB will only be paid if you, or your partner, are an Australian resident or a Government sponsored student. However, it may still be paid in certain other circumstances. Please contact the Family Assistance Office on 13 6150 for more information

Who is eligible for CCTR?

Parents who are eligible for CCB and using approved care for work related purposes will also be eligible for Child Care Tax Rebate and be able to claim 30 per cent of their out-of-pocket costs for child care up to \$4000. Out-of-pocket child care expenses are fees incurred less CCB.

Will my family be financially better off if I return to work?

If you start work part of the way through the financial year, the taxable income on which your CCB is based will increase. This may affect your rate of payment, as CCB is an income-tested payment. However, generally you should still be better off overall because of the additional income earned and from having access to a tax-free threshold.

You can contact the Family Assistance Office on 13 6150 to discuss how returning to work will affect your entitlements to Government assistance, including Child Care Benefit and Family Tax Benefit.

My child has a disability and has ongoing support needs. What assistance is there for me?

The Australian Government is committed to supporting child care services to provide the best possible care to all children, including those with ongoing high support needs, through the Supplementary Services Program (SUPS), Special Needs Subsidy Scheme (SNSS), and the Disabled Supplementary Services Program (DSUPS). These programs assist in helping parents balance work and family commitments and can also provide an important first step toward achieving a positive early childhood experience.

Changes to these programs will be introduced from 1 January 2006 (see the new *Inclusion Support Program* on page 6).

I am a single parent and want to return to work. What help can I get with child care?

JET Child Care provides flexible child care assistance to jobless parents wishing to undertake study, work or job search activities to help them to enter or re-enter the workforce.

How can parents apply for JET Child Care?

Parents who wish to apply for JET Child Care must see a JET Adviser (JA) or Personal Adviser (PA) in Centrelink to discuss their eligibility. JAs or PAs refer parents to community workers called JETCCRW ('JET crew') who liaise with child care services. Once JET Child Care is approved a letter will be sent by JETCCRW to the child care service confirming the arrangements. Parents may be approved for fee assistance for paid/unpaid work, for Job Search and for education, training or participation in a government funded program ie, rehabilitation program.

Who is eligible?

- JET Child Care is available to parents receiving the following Centrelink payments:
- Parenting Payment;
- Widow B Pension;
- Widow or Partner allowance;
- Carer Payment;
- Community Development Employment Projects(CDEP) Participant Supplement (CPS) – for customers who also have Widow Allowance or Parenting Payment (Partnered) payment status;
- Special Benefit (SpB) – those customers who would qualify for Parenting Payment, except that they do not meet residency requirements; and
- Abstudy recipients.

For more information contact the Centrelink Call Centre on 13 6150.

What licensing/accreditation should I expect of child care services?

The state and territory governments set legislative and regulatory requirements for the licensing of childcare. Licensing addresses such areas as health and safety and child to staff ratios. The Australian Government relies on the states and territories to ensure the child care service has met their licensing requirements. Although all states regulate the Long Day Care sector, not all have a licensing regime for Outside School Hours Care and Family Day Care programs.

The Australian Government is responsible for Quality Assurance (QA) systems that aim to ensure that children in Commonwealth funded child care services have positive experiences that foster all aspects of their development. The Australian Government funds the National Childcare Accreditation Council to administer the QA systems. In order to be eligible for CCB and other funding support, services are required to satisfy state government regulations and to satisfactorily participate in the relevant QA system.

The following service types are required to participate in QA systems: Long Day Care, Family Day Care and Outside School Hours Care.

If you would like further information please contact the NCAC on the toll free number 1300 136 554, or visit the website at www.ncac.gov.au. A publication about choosing quality child care is available from the NCAC.

6. Where can I find more information?

If you would like to know more about the child care services available in your area you can ring the Child Care Access Hotline

Child Care Access Hotline – 1800 670 305

The Child Care Access Hotline is open Monday to Friday between 8am and 9pm

A Telephone Typewriter Service (TTY) is available on 1800 639 327
(only for people who are deaf or who have a hearing or speech impairment).

A Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS)
is also available to assist callers from culturally diverse backgrounds.

For information about Child Care Benefit or to make a claim

- Visit our website at www.familyassist.gov.au; or
- Visit your nearest Family Assistance Office located in Centrelink Customer Service Centres, Medicare offices and Tax Office shop fronts; or
- Call the Family Assistance Office on 13 6150* between 8.00am and 8.00pm (local time), Monday to Friday; or
- Call TTY Service FreecallTM 1800 810 586* (Only for people who are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment.) A TTY phone is required to use this service; or
- Call 13 1202* for information in languages other than English.

* Calls to 13 numbers cost 25 cents from anywhere within Australia. Calls to 1800 numbers are free of charge. Calls from public pay phones or mobile phones will be charged at a higher rate.