

Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment - Education

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2013-2014**

Outcome 1 - Early Childhood Education and Child Care

Department of Education Question No. ED0089_14

Senator Hanson-Young provided in writing.

Question

Special Child Care Benefit

1) How many families are accessing Special Child Care Benefit? 2) How many families with children with a disability are receiving SCCB as a proportion of the total number of families? 3) How many families with parents with a disability are receiving SCCB as a proportion of the total number of families? 4) Could the Department provide a list of the top 20 greatest SCCB spends by family for the financial years 10-11, 11-12, 12-13 (without naming the family)? 5) What evidence base underpins the 13 weeks reapplication timeframe for Special Childcare benefit? 6) Will the PC review the purpose of the SCCB and look at the needs of families with disability and its place within the ECEC or the broader family support system? 7) Could the Department provide information on the change in average fees across service types from the Child Care Management System? From 2010-2011 to 2011-2012 to 2012-2013.

Answer

1) During the March 2013 quarter 8,180 families accessed Special Child Care Benefit.

2 & 3) Data on the number of families with a disabled child or parent receiving Special Child Care Benefit (SCCB) is not available. The Department of Human Services records whether a SCCB claim is for 'child at risk of serious abuse or neglect' or 'family in temporary financial hardship' as the reason for families accessing SCCB.

4) SCCB is a component of Child Care Benefit. This data request would take an unreasonable diversion of departmental resources to produce.

5) For an initial SCCB application, and any subsequent application, the child care service and/or the Department of Human Services (DHS) must be satisfied that the eligibility criteria for SCCB are met. The eligibility criteria for SCCB and evidence required is the same for the initial and any subsequent periods of assistance. A child care service is able to approve the initial period of SCCB, up to 13 weeks, in any financial year. DHS makes the decision on subsequent periods of SCCB in that financial year.

Evidence for SCCB for a child at risk of serious abuse or neglect could include a referral by a state or territory child protection authority or other relevant agency. It could also be because of a service provider's belief that a child is at risk and that

continued or increased use of child care could improve the developmental outcomes and/or the safety and wellbeing of the child.

Evidence to support SCCB for temporary financial hardship claims could take the form of a statutory declaration from the parent/s, employer payslips or a letter from a social worker depending on the circumstances.

6) The Terms of Reference for the Productivity Commission’s Inquiry into Child Care and Early Childhood Learning enable the Commission to consider matters relating to vulnerable children, including children with disability, and the role of SCCB.

7) The change in average fees across child care service types from 2010-11 to 2011-12 are provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Change in average hourly fee: Financial year 2010-11 to 2011-12

Service type	% change 2010-11 to 2011-12
Long day care	6.5
Family day care & In-home care	7.1
- Family day care	6.6
- In-home care	9.3
Occasional care	5.9
Outside school hours care	5.9
- Before school hours care	7.1
- After school hours care	5.6
- Vacation care	6.3
Total	6.4

Source: Department of Education administrative data

The change in average fees from 2011-12 to 2012-13 cannot be provided at this time as the average child care fees for 2012-13 are not yet available.