

Question:

A key source of funding that has supported the activities of youth programs in Central Australia has been the Outside School Hours Care and Vacation Care program.

I understand that under current guidelines it has become increasingly harder for this money to be used as a part of an integrated youth program, potentially leaving a hole in existing service provision as after School Hours Care and youth programs become more separate (often the same worker delivered both services). Is the department aware of this dynamic, is the department taking any action to address the hole in service delivery that could result from this shift?

Response:

The Australian Government's primary role in child care (including Outside School Hours Care and Vacation Care) is to assist families with the cost through Child Care Benefit and the Child Care Rebate. The Government will invest \$19.9 billion in child care fee assistance over the next four years. This includes \$9.6 billion in Child Care Rebate and \$10.3 billion in Child Care Benefit.

This reduces the net cost of approved child care for families and provides strong incentives for child care operators to move into or expand existing services in markets of high demand. The Government has no limit on the number of Outside School Hours Care services and Vacation Care services that can be established. Operators make their own commercial decisions about the number of child care places they provide, subject to the relevant state licensing regulations. In areas of high demand, child care operators can make a business decision to increase the number of places offered. The Government, however, cannot compel providers to establish or expand services in any particular area.

Some Outside School Hours Care or Vacation Care providers may be supported directly by DEEWR through the Community Support Program. This program aims to improve access to child care especially in areas where the market or services might otherwise be unviable. In the September quarter 2011, there were 7,950 approved Outside School Hours services nationally with 1,333 funded by DEEWR under the Community Support Program. Of these 116 were in Western Australia and 11 were in the Northern Territory.

Outside School Hours Care services may also be funded under a number of other Australian Government programs, including the Active After School Care program administered by the Australian Sports Commission and the Outside School Hours Care for Teenagers with Disability program administered by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

Outside School Hours Care or Vacation Care providers may well have multiple income streams with Child Care Benefit and Child Care Rebate being deposited into a single bank account on behalf of eligible parents. The service provider largely makes the decisions as to how they will discharge their income and they may not necessarily compartmentalise dollars to prevent 'expenditure drift' across age groups.

The Australian Government is committed to supporting all young people to make a successful transition from school to further education, training or work. This commitment is seen through continued support of a range of Youth Support Programs, including those offered through the Office for Youth and the Youth Connections Program under the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions.

The Office for Youth aims to ensure that young people reach their full potential; make effective transitions to adulthood as they continue to learn; start work and make decisions that support a healthy lifestyle.

The Youth Connections Program provides support to at risk young people, including Indigenous young people in Central Australia. In 2012, approximately 4,860 Indigenous young people have received individual support services from Youth Connections, representing 21 per cent of Youth Connections participants. In 2012 there have been approximately 520 Indigenous youth accessing Youth Connections in the NT and 640 in WA.

Additional information about Outside School Hours Care and Vacation Care, the Office for Youth and Youth Connections is outlined at Attachment A.

Attachment A

Overview of Outside School Hours Care

Outside School Hours Care is an approved care type under family assistance law. Families using approved Outside School Hours Care services may also be eligible for Australian Government support through the Child Care Benefit and the Child Care Rebate.

Outside School Hours Care services provide Before School Care, After School Care and Vacation Care components, or any combination of these. Generally, services operate between 0700-0900 and 1530-1800 and provide care for children up to the age of 12 but this is a business decision and not a legal restriction.

The Australian Government doesn't place any limit on the number of Outside School Hours Care services that operate, or where they choose to open. The number of child care places that a service can provide is governed by the licencing requirements issued through the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) www.acecqa.gov.au.

Services are usually set up in or close to primary schools although they may also be in other locations such as community centres, halls, neighbourhood houses or recreation centres and can be for-profit or not-for-profit.

Additional Funding support for Outside School Hours Care services

The Community Support Program (CSP) is part of the broader Child Care Services Support Program (CCSSP) and provides a range of payments directly to child care service providers with the aim of improving access to child care, especially in areas where the market or services might otherwise be unviable.

Service providers may apply for one-off Set Up Assistance of up to a maximum of \$7,482 (in 2012-13) to assist with establishing new Outside School Hours Care services, and Sustainability Assistance of up to a maximum of \$38 160 per annum depending on the size and location of the service.(These amounts are based on a provider establishing and running Before, After and Vacation care components).

Subject to terms and conditions, new Outside School Hours Care services receive Sustainability Assistance for their first year of operation. At the end of this period, a number of additional eligibility criteria come into effect that focus primarily upon, small (i.e., less than 30 utilised places), not-for-profit services located outside metropolitan areas.

Outside schools hours care data from September quarter 2011:

- Indigenous children by service type:

Outside school hours care - total	6,470
Before school hours care	1,440
After school hours care	4,870
Vacation care	4,010

- Number of Indigenous children by service type in the NT and WA.

	NT	WA
Outside school hours care - total	440	340
Before school hours care	20	80
After school hours care	380	280
Vacation care	280	210

Number of Indigenous children using child care in remote and very remote areas of Australia

Outside school hours care - total	350
Before school hours care	20
After school hours care	230
Vacation care	280

Definitions

Outside school hour's care: Services provide care for school aged children before and/or after school during the school term. Some services also provide care on 'pupil free' days. Vacation care is also included in this category. Vacation care services provide care for school children during the school holidays.

Approved care: Care provided by long day care, family day care, in-home care, outside school hours care and occasional care services approved by the Australian Government to receive Child Care Benefit on behalf of families.

Office for Youth

The Office for Youth—aims to ensure that young people reach their full potential; make effective transitions to adulthood as they continue to learn; start work and make decisions that support a healthy lifestyle. To this end, the office delivers a range of initiatives to help young Australians reach their full potential and engage with their families and the community that complement the goals of the NP.

The Office for Youth manages the Australian Youth Forum which is a mechanism for young people to engage directly with the Government and have the opportunity to shape and influence policies on issues which matter to them.

The Office for Youth also has a research focus through the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) program, and works across government at all levels, and with the youth sector through the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition to identify gaps, emerging issues and areas of focus for the future.

Youth Engagement—The Office for Youth administers the following government initiatives and programs which support young Australians to engage with government on decisions that impact on them, to transition to independent living, to celebrate their contribution to the community, to provide specific assistance to vulnerable young people and also by providing comprehensive and up-to-date information about key issues and practices in the youth field.

- Australian Youth Forum—a formal communication channel between the Government, young people (15 to 24 years) and the youth sector. It provides young people the opportunity to have their voices heard and encourages all young people to get involved in public discussions so that their ideas can be considered in the development of Australian public policy, programs or projects.
- National Youth Week—the single largest celebration of and for young people, has been held annually as a joint Australian, state and territory and local Government initiative since 2000. It encourages young people to be engaged and active participants in their communities. The Government contributes in three key areas: support for local events (through funding agreements with the states and territories); implementation of a national communications strategy; and secretariat support for the National Planning Group.
- Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies—a central access point for information on youth issues in Australia. The Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies provides support to the youth sector and young people themselves, as well as policymakers, researchers and practitioners in other sectors working with youth by collecting and disseminating youth related research and best practice and building capacity within the youth sector.
- Transition to Independent Living Allowance—a program that provides a one-off allowance for young people aged 15 to 25 years who are about to, or have exited, formal state-based care and/or informal care such as juvenile justice, out-of-home care and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kinship care arrangements and who are at risk of not making a successful transition to independent living. This allowance encourages a preventative and early intervention approach, which can help these young people avoid further welfare dependency and homelessness.
- Youth Development and Support Program—a program that provides small grants to community-based organisations to conduct small-scale projects that engage young people in activities that develop their personal skills to support their transition to independence and adulthood, as well as providing an avenue for greater community involvement.

Youth Connections

Program Description: The Youth Connections program is part of the Australian Government's contribution to the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions (YAT NP).

The objective of Youth Connections is to support young people at risk to attain Year 12 or equivalent and to help them to make a successful transition through education and onto further education, training or employment. The program provides a safety net for young people who have disconnected or are at risk of disconnecting from education, and offers flexible individualised support services that recognise the role that family and community play in a young person's wellbeing and development.

Funding: \$286.8 million over four years.

Duration: Provider organisations are contracted until December 2013.

Program Delivery: national coverage across 113 Youth Attainment and Transitions regions (Youth Connections regions), with 66 organisations delivering the program.

Service Model: The Youth Connections service model includes three service delivery elements:

Individualised Support Services: providers deliver individualised case management to young people to assist them to overcome barriers and remain engaged or re-engage with education and /or further training with the eventual aim of achieving a Year 12 or equivalent qualification. Case management must be flexible and individualised.

Outreach and Re-engagement Activities: providers offer outreach and re-engagements services across their region with the aim of finding and engaging with severely disengaged young people and assisting them to address personal barriers and develop resilience, self efficacy and social skills.

Strengthening Services in the Region Activities: providers work to build community capacity and strengthen services for young people at risk and ensure providers of other youth services in the region are connected.