

**Senate Committee: Education and Employment**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE  
Additional Estimates 2016 - 2017**

**Outcome: Early Childhood and Child Care**

**Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ17-000118**

Senator Hanson-Young, Sarah provided in writing.

***Children 'at risk'***

**Question**

How do you determine whether children are 'at risk' in the real world? Is this a reactive or preventative process?

**Answer**

The intent of the ACCS (child wellbeing) subsidy is to reduce the possibility of the cost of child care being a barrier to children 'at risk' from either entering or remaining engaged with child care.

ACCS (child wellbeing) is targeted not just at children known to be 'at risk' but also children and families before they reach crisis point and before they are drawn into the statutory system.

Following feedback from the child care sector, the definition of 'at risk', which will be included in a Minister's Rule, has been broadened to include not only children who are at current risk of harm from serious abuse and neglect, but also those who have been abused or neglected, and continue to suffer harm as a result.

Approved providers make the initial decision about whether a child is 'at risk'. Ongoing decisions regarding children 'at risk' beyond a provider's initial decision will be made by the Department of Human Services, based on the child's circumstances and information from the provider, as required.

This process is designed to not interfere with, override or remove the obligation of child care providers to formally notify their relevant child protection agency. As per current arrangements, providers will need to distinguish between circumstances that warrant formal notification or not, in accordance with the relevant state and territory laws. Any child that is substantiated to be 'at risk' by a child protection agency will automatically meet the definition of 'at risk' for the purpose of the ACCS (child wellbeing) subsidy.

If a child does not meet the mandatory reporting threshold in the relevant state or territory, the child can still meet the broader definition of 'at risk' for the ACCS (child wellbeing) subsidy. In this situation, the provider makes an assessment of whether the child is 'at risk' based on the definition of 'at risk' in the Minister's Rule. Further consultation on the Minister's Rules will continue before finalisation.