

**COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS
OF FOSTER PAYMENTS
ACROSS AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND
2000**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In September 1996, a meeting of the Protection and Care of Children Sub-Committee of the Standing Committee of Community Services and Income Support Administrators agreed that Queensland would undertake an analysis of payments made to foster carers across Australian states, territories and New Zealand. When this subcommittee disbanded in early 1997, there was an ongoing interest and it was decided by all contributors to continue this process.

The outcome was a report entitled *Comparative Analysis of Payments: Australia and New Zealand 1996/97*. A further report was developed in 1997/98.

The current report contains data for the 2000 calendar year.

1.2 Purpose

There are wide differences in how foster carers are paid across Australia and New Zealand. This analysis provides a source document for each state/territory/country in the ongoing development and assessment of policy in relation to foster payments.

1.3 Methodology

Although this analysis was coordinated from Queensland, it has been a process involving all Australian States, Territories and New Zealand. The initial proforma was designed in Queensland and refined after feedback from all contributors. The final proforma was then completed by each contributor and compiled in Queensland. The initial draft of this document was circulated for checking by all contributors. The subsequent revised document was progressed in the same way. There are slight differences in the presentation of information from each contributor. These have not been altered to ensure the accuracy of the data.

1.4 Design

The task of comparing foster payments is complicated by major differences in approach across state, territory and national borders. A comparison of the standard rates alone does not consider the large array of other allowances and payments made to foster carers. It was decided to approach this problem from three perspectives and the data has been compiled accordingly.

The three perspectives are:

- 1 **Descriptive:**
Provides a general overview of how payments are made. Standard subsidy, add-on loadings to the standard subsidy, add-on allowances, one-off grants or contingency payments and services in kind are examined.
- 2 **Comparative:**
Provides in table form a comparative overview of how various basic commodities or services are funded.

3

Sample cases:

Provides a demonstration of how each system works in action and which may give a more concrete method of comparison.

1.5 Use of information

The information gathered in this report is for use by those who contributed. Every attempt has been made to ensure its accuracy. However, given the volume of information collected and the complex and ever changing nature of the payments structure, it is advisable to check with the source where current information is required. It should also be noted that because of the wide variations in terminology and practice, there is a strong likelihood that the data is not totally consistent across jurisdictions. Comparisons should thus be treated with caution.

Where New Zealand dollars are quoted, they have been converted to Australian dollars for ease of comparison. The New Zealand figures are those provided by New Zealand converted by them at the time of writing at a conversion rate of **NZ \$1.25 = AUD \$1.00.**

1.6 Australian Foster Care Association

This report also contains comment from foster carers. It is provided in order to show how these payment systems work in practice. This information was compiled by the Australian Foster Care Association and represents the views of carers and their associations throughout Australia.

1.7 Acknowledgments

This report was produced in Queensland by Julie Bray of the Department of Families with the assistance of David Boyd in the early stages of consultation and Milan Crnic who provided administrative support.

2.0 CONTACT INFORMATION

The following states, territories and country were involved in this comparison.

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3.0 EXPLANATIONS AND DEFINITIONS

To assist in the completion of the proforma a number of definitions were agreed upon. These include:

The type of alternative care being examined in this paper refers to care provided for children in the foster carers' own home in some form of contracted or agreed upon way. This type of care is commonly known as 'foster care'. It does not involve the type of care where there is payment of a wage to the foster parent/foster carer as happens in some states with family group home care.

Foster Carer refers to the care for those children for whom foster parents/foster carers receive foster allowance. This can include care by relatives if payment is made.

Standard subsidy is defined as the regular payment of foster care allowance to cover basic costs.

Add-on loadings are defined as increases to the standard subsidy, either in the form of percentage loadings or as a flat rate (e.g. special needs loadings).

Add-on allowance is defined as a regular payment for a special purpose (e.g. incidentals).

One-off payments or contingency payments are defined as payments which are paid under special circumstances in a non-recurrent way (e.g. medical expenses).

Mandatory refers to those payments which are virtually automatic or involve very little decision making (e.g. age categories).

Discretionary refers to payments which are made after some decision has been made about eligibility (e.g. special needs loading).

It should be noted that despite the agreement reached about these definitions, there may still be inconsistency in how other terms were interpreted. Comparisons between states, territories and New Zealand must therefore be treated with some caution.

4.0 GENERAL DESCRIPTION

4.1 Total number of children in "foster care " (ie those children for whom foster carers receive foster care allowance) on 1 December 2000.

NZ	TAS	WA	NT	SA	VIC	NSW	ACT	QLD
3,827*	216	956 Family & Children's Services 101 Non Government Agencies	123	1,050	3,379	5,446**	205	2,819*

* Calculated as at 31 December 2000

** This figure includes both DOCS and Community Partner foster carers. An additional 484 carers received the Non Parental Care allowance.

4.2 Total number of distinct children in "foster care" care throughout 2000 (a throughput figure).

NZ	TAS	WA	NT	SA	VIC	NSW	ACT	QLD
6,502	395	1408 – Family & Children's Services * 280 – Non Government Agencies * 1408 – Family & Children's Services ** 327 Non Government Agencies **	278	No figure provided	7,495	Unable to provide figure	469	Unable to provide figure

* 2000 Calendar Year

** 1999/2000

4.3 Total budget (actual expenditure) of all foster payments for the financial year 1999/00. Include a breakdown of this budget if possible.

NZ	TAS	WA	NT	SA	VIC	NSW	ACT	QLD
NZ\$20.70M AU\$16.56M	\$1.42M	\$10.18M	\$1.82M	\$8.40M	\$20M	\$51.81M	\$1.90M	\$20.50M

NEW ZEALAND

Care	NZ\$17.163M
Clothing	NZ\$1.688M
Education/recreation	NZ\$1.589M
Health	NZ\$256,000
Total	NZ \$20.696M/AUD \$16.567

TASMANIA

Total	\$1,415,170
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WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Subsidy	\$7,139,044
Client support	\$3,038,554
Total	\$10,177,598

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Foster payments	\$1,153,569
Discretionary payments	\$664,327
Total	\$1,817,896

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Subsidy	\$6.40M
Incidental Expenses	\$1.50M
Remand INC	\$0.50M
Total	\$8.40M

VICTORIA

Actual expenditure for the previous financial year of 1999/2000 was \$20,000,000.

NEW SOUTH WALES

Unable to provide total budget (actual expenditure) for all 2000 until all payments have been reconciled.

Total budget (actual expenditure) for 1999/2000 **\$51,810,000**

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Foster care subsidies	1,256,882
Contingencies	641,406

Total **\$1,898,288**

QUEENSLAND

Standard Allowance (including High Support Needs Allowance)	16,506,672
Child Related Costs	3,993,690

Total **\$20,500,362**

4.4 Total budget of all foster parent/foster payments proposed for financial year 2000/01.

NZ	TAS	WA	NT	SA	VIC	NSW	ACT	QLD
NZ\$18.34M AUD\$16.67M	\$1.67M	\$10.07M	\$1.22M	\$8.59M	\$25M	\$59.92M	\$1.49M	\$22.60M

NEW ZEALAND

[no breakdown provided]

Total **NZ \$18,338,000/AUD\$14,670,400**

TASMANIA

[no breakdown provided]

Total **\$1,674,586**

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Subsidy	\$6,855,024
Client support	\$3,210,933
Total	\$10, 065,957

NORTHERN TERRITORY

[no breakdown provided]

Total **\$1.218M**

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Subsidy	\$7.03M
Incidental Expenses	\$1.16M
Remand INC	\$0.4M
Total	\$8.59M

VICTORIA

[no breakdown provided]

Total **\$25.0M**

NEW SOUTH WALES

[no breakdown provided]

Total	\$59,920,000
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AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Foster Care Subsidies	\$1,043,518
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Contingencies	\$442,900
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Total	\$1,486,418
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QUEENSLAND

Standard Allowance (including High Support Needs Allowance)	18,600,000
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Child Related Costs	4,000,000
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Total	\$22,600,000
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4.5 Common title/s of foster parents/foster carers.

NEW ZEALAND

The title “**caregiver**” is generally given to foster parents/foster carers in New Zealand.

TASMANIA

Foster Carers and Special Contract Carers

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Foster Carer is the broad title given to people who provide care for children in supported placements. Four separate categories of carer have then been identified: General Carers, Relative Carer, Self Selected Carer and Pre-adoptive Carer.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Foster Carers

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Foster Carers

VICTORIA

Caregivers

NEW SOUTH WALES

Foster Carer. However the Act, Children and Young Persons (care and Protection) Act 1998, some of which is proclaimed, refers to an authorised carer. Foster carers will need to be authorised and it is likely that both terms will be used.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Carers, Foster Parents / Carers, Kinship Carers

QUEENSLAND

Foster Carer, Relative Carer, Limited Approval Carer

4.6 How is care managed, ie recruitment, placement and ongoing support (e.g. departmental, community or non-government schemes or combination)?

NEW ZEALAND

Refer Table 1.0 for case management in terms of **support**. Child, Youth and Family have some workers who liaise with the family home caregivers as well as “general pool” caregivers, (i.e. those not recruited for a specific child). This liaison worker has the responsibility to provide additional support for the family home caregivers and also support general pool caregivers. In contrast, case work social workers support caregivers specifically with a placement by linking them to other supports or agencies if appropriate and keeping caregivers informed of any issues that arise and challenge when appropriate. Child, Youth and Family recruitment approaches vary depending on the type of caregiver sought. Family members are sought using the usual processes through which members are identified, located and invited to a Family Group Conference. Non-family caregivers are recruited through general advertising campaigns, advertisements for a specific child or young person, and through targeted approaches to cultural groups, church groups etc. A formal assessment process has been designed to allow Child, Youth & Family Social Worker and potential caregivers to properly appraise the reality of the task and the caregiver’s readiness and aptitude for it. The assessment process includes:

- Routine police checks for criminal convictions
- A full medical report from their medical practitioner
- Providing two referees who will be asked specific questions
- Two assessment interviews.

Placement requires that children and young people who are not able to be placed within their own family will be matched with caregivers according to the following priorities:

- Within their own or similar cultural/ethnic background
- Within their familiar locality
- According to their particular needs and the particular skills of the caregiver.

A range of special group homes has also been established and continues to be developed.

Table 1.0 Table highlighting Primary and Secondary Supportive Workers for children placed with various caregiver types.

CASE MANAGEMENT		
Caregiver type	Case Management	
	Primary Supportive Worker	Secondary Supportive Worker
CYF	CYF Liaison Social Worker	CYF Social Worker
Agency	Agency Social Worker	
CYF Family Home	CYF Liaison and Social Worker	CYF Social Worker
Family / Whanau	CYF Social Worker	
Residence	Residential Social Worker	CYF Social Worker

TASMANIA

Care is managed by a combination of departmental and non-government schemes.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The Department for Community Development has a central Foster Carer Recruitment Service (FCRS) which is responsible for the recruitment and screening of "general" foster carers for all metropolitan and country offices. The FCRS also undertakes the assessment of all general carers for the metropolitan offices, while in the country this remains the responsibility of the local office. Recruitment, screening and assessment of relative and self selected carers is the responsibility of the local office. Non government schemes are responsible for the recruitment, screening and assessment of their own foster carers, although non government carers can attend departmentally run orientation sessions.

Pre-service training (ie prior to a child being placed) of new carers for both the department and non government foster schemes is provided by the FCRS. Ongoing training, post placement, for general carers in country and metropolitan locations and for non government schemes is undertaken by the departments Community Skills Training Centre (CSTC). Local offices and non government schemes also provide their own topical training to supplement the core training provided by CSTC.

Placement support is undertaken by local offices for departmental carers and by the non government scheme staff for their carers.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Foster Care and Family Group Homes in Darwin - all departmental. Family Group Homes - Non Government organisation in Alice Springs only.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Recruitment, placements and ongoing support to foster carers has been outsourced to a range of non-government alternative care service providers.

VICTORIA

Care is predominantly managed via the non-government sector/funded agencies, with the exception of Kinship Care, which is managed primarily by the Department of Human Services.

NEW SOUTH WALES

A combination of departmental and Agency carers. The Agencies are responsible for the recruitment and training of their own carers, although in some areas DoCS and Agencies share care arrangements. An entry level training package auspiced by DoCS has been developed by the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies and introduced early in 2001. Called Shared Stories, Shared Lives this induction/training package has been accepted for use by both DoCS and Community Partners. Further supplementary training packages will follow in the next twelve months.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Substitute care services are currently provided through a mixture of direct government service provision and by non-government agencies. Government service provision focuses on kinship care. Non-government agencies recruit and train their foster carers. Ongoing support is provided from the agency which recruited the carer. With the introduction of Looking After Children (LAC) the non-government agencies undertake increased roles and responsibilities in the provision of support to the children and their natural families.

QUEENSLAND

The recruitment, placement and ongoing support of foster carers is a joint responsibility of the Department and non-government sector. The proportion of involvement varies across regions. In some areas it is solely agency provided and in some only departmental provision.

4.7 Does the status of the child vary eligibility or level of payment (e.g. whether child is under Care and Protection Order, etc)? If so, how?

NEW ZEALAND

No. In general terms eligibility for payment is not determined by status, rather by need. Examples are:

- A) Parents are considered to be financially responsible for their own children. When daily care reverts to parents, guardians or the person usually having the care of the child, the original arrangements apply and payment rate is nil. This is likely to be in a situation where the child while still legally in the Chief Executive's care, custody or sole guardianship but has been placed back home with their parent, guardian or person usually having the care of them. However, payments to meet reasonable needs of these children where, particular circumstances demand, are discussed and negotiated with the usual caregiver, family and budget manager.
- B) Once a young person reaches financial independence and may still be subject to a court order and continues to live with their caregiver, that caregiver will no longer be eligible for a care allowance. But should extraordinary costs for the young person arise, again, payment is at the discretion of the budget manager.
- C) Formal outcomes from family meetings and Family Group Conferences may recommend that Child, Youth and Family provide some financial assistance. This may occur without the child or young person being subject to a court order or legal care agreement.
- D) Caregivers have the choice of not accepting financial assistance.
- E) Some community organisations are contracted by Child, Youth and Family to provide bednights per year for Child, Youth and Family as well as the community. They are funded accordingly and are required to pay the equivalent board rate to caregivers. Other costs not covered by the bednight contract are discussed and negotiated with the statutory social worker.

TASMANIA

Children under guardianship receive clothing allowance of between \$12.00 - \$19.00 per week.

Children who are on non-guardianship orders receive a payment of \$18.70 per week In Lieu of Family Tax Benefit.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Status are ward and non-ward. For subsidy, level of payment for both is determined by age. There is no difference in the rates between both categories.

For placement support, ward expenditure is, in the main, mandatory. For non-wards it is discretionary.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Child must be in custody or guardianship of Minister (called "in care") to be eligible for payments under Child Maintenance. Eligibility for carer payments or discretionary allowances is the same for all children in care regardless of whether they are in the custody or guardianship of the Minister.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

There are two categories of payment made to foster carers, Category A and Category B. Category A or full-subsidy payments are paid on behalf of those young people for whom the Minister has assumed Custody or Guardianship. Category A includes the basic subsidy and the additional allowance. Category B is base subsidy, paid on behalf of young people who are under guardianship of another person, or who have been placed in foster care as the result of a Family Care Meeting.

VICTORIA

An additional \$21.00 per week is paid to all caregivers of children under 13 years of age in a reception care placement.

NEW SOUTH WALES

Generally, no. There is an allowance titled "Non Parental Care Allowance" which is, in effect, a cash payment to support a child's placement in the community. The payment is to support family or kin carers where they would experience hardship in meeting the child's needs and to prevent children coming into formal out-of-home care. The amount paid does not exceed the Care Allowance and contingency payments are not paid.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Family Services would have an opened case and identified care and protection issues before paying a subsidy to a carer or extended family member. However, it is possible for a child to be accepted into care on a voluntary arrangement requested by the child's parents. The level of payment is not affected by existence or non-existence of an order.

QUEENSLAND

No. Children not in care can access emergency placements within the Shared Family Care program and at the same rates for children in care.

4.8 Does the way care is provided vary eligibility or level of payment (e.g. an non-government scheme might pay different rates)? If so, how? Approximately what proportion of your cases would be subject to these different conditions?

NEW ZEALAND

Yes. See (E) – Section 4.7. Also children with special needs are able to receive care from specialised health care providers and/or caregivers. In cases such as these, costs are shared between the Department of Health and Child, Youth and Family.

TASMANIA

Two non-government organisations in Tasmania are funded to provide short-term foster care programs. Data on these placements is not recorded on the Child Welfare Information System (CWIS) and as consequence it is not possible to determine the percentage of placements covered by these programs. The majority of these placements are short term (an average of 5 days).

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Four non government agencies are funded to provide a range of emergency, short, and long term foster care programs. These agencies receive block funding to provide a specific number of placements and determine their own payment rates for carers which currently differ from the rates paid by the department.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

No.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

No.

VICTORIA

No, payment levels are consistent across the state.

NEW SOUTH WALES

Generally, the rate of payment is based on the child or young person's needs, irrespective of whether they are cared for by a Departmental or agency carer. Some non-government agencies pay additional "top up" payments to their carers. There are also some individual arrangements made for DoCS carers in excess of the three Allowance rates (Care Allowance, Care +1, Care +2) which may be paid as a Subsidy payment. High needs young people receiving a service from an Intensive

Support Service usually attract for their carer a higher rate of payment. At this point it is not possible to provide accurate data on these arrangements.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Specialist programs run by non-government agencies have stipulated amounts paid to carers which reflect the needs of the children placed in their care (i.e. significantly challenging behaviours). These programs total approximately 1% of total placements at any time.

In addition, Family Services has a system of Special Needs Subsidies. This varies the basic subsidy by up to 150% depending on the child's special needs, which are assessed by the Family Services caseworker. The subsidy applies to any child in any foster care program. On 30 June 2000, 21% of total placements were receiving the Special Needs Subsidy.

QUEENSLAND

Yes. There are specialist services which target particular groups (e.g. Bail Accommodation Program, Intensive Personal Support Program). Less than 1% of the children in care population would be subject to this allowance and these allowances are currently under review.

4.9 What allowance (if any) has been provided for the introduction of the Commonwealth's Goods and Services Tax (GST) on any foster payments? Have any increases to the allowances been provided? If so, please describe.

NEW ZEALAND

Not applicable for New Zealand as GST was introduced a number of years ago. All budget bids are GST inclusive.

TASMANIA

Payments to carers were increased by 4% to compensate for the impact of the GST.

Payment In Lieu of Family Tax Benefit for carers not eligible for Centrelink payments were increased in line with Commonwealth payments.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

4% increase in subsidy and 10% increase in clothing allowance from 01/07/00.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

All foster payments were indexed by 4.7%.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The increase in subsidy granted in 2000 did not factor in a specific component for the GST, but it was cognisant of the impact that carers costs were likely to increase as a result of the change to taxation laws. Agreement has been reached for regular reviews as the cost of living increases, which should take care of increased costs to carers.

VICTORIA

Caregiver payments have been increased by 6% to cover GST and other associated increases in living expenses.

NEW SOUTH WALES

The GST component was factored into the new enhanced Care Allowances which commenced on July 01, 2000.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Foster care subsidies were increased by 7%.

QUEENSLAND

There was a 4% increase in the standard allowance and 10% increase in outfitting (i.e. clothing) allowance from 01/07/00 to allow for the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax.

4.10 Summary

The following table is derived from information gained from the information already provided in this section. A per capita figure or payment per child is gained from dividing the budget amount provided in 4.3 by the number of children in foster care from 4.1.

There are a number of problems with this type of comparison including variations in the way figures are collated and whether the overall amount is applied to the total number of children. This type of comparison assumes that the date chosen is indicative of the number of children in the system generally. It also assumes that each contributor has a similar flow of children throughout the year. This table should then be viewed with some reservation.

Annual foster care payment per child (Australian dollars):

NZ	TAS	WA	NT	SA	VIC	NSW	ACT	QLD
4,327	6,552	9,629	14,780	8,000	5,919	9,513	9,260	7,272

The average annual foster care payment across all states, territories and New Zealand can be deduced in a similar manner, by adding the total number of children in 4.1 and dividing this into the total monies from 4.3. Again this amount should be viewed with some reservation.

The average annual foster care payment per child is approximately **AU\$8,361**

The most common title for those who provide “foster care” is “foster carer” although there is a wide range of terms used.

The most common way care is managed is through a combination of departmental and non-government services.

Generally there is some difference in the level of payment in relation to the legal status of the child.

In most instances, the type of scheme under which care is provided does not vary eligibility or rate of payment.

5.0 STANDARD SUBSIDY

Standard subsidy is defined as the regular payment of foster care allowance to cover basic costs.

5.1 Common title/s of standard subsidy

NEW ZEALAND

Board payments or care allowance.

TASMANIA

Board Payment – which includes Pocket Money and Clothing Allowance.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Basic Subsidy.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Foster care payment.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Children's Payments Subsidy, comprising basic subsidy and additional allowance for children in Category A placements. Children in Category B placements (i.e. other person guardianship) receive basic subsidy only.

VICTORIA

Caregiver reimbursement.

NEW SOUTH WALES

Care Allowance.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Standard foster care subsidy.

QUEENSLAND

Foster Allowance.

5.2 Is there an established method for determining the payment schedule (e.g. Lovering)? If so, briefly describe.

NEW ZEALAND

The standard set rate is a minimum. It is set by the Chief Executive to cater for standard caregiving and it takes account of the fact that there will be a degree of difficulty in caring for any child or young person who has become separated from their home/family situation and is in care. The standard rate is also set to recognise that costs and demands will vary with the age of the child or young person. It is estimated that the needs of 80% to 90% of children and young persons in care are adequately catered for through the standard rate. There are different rates and allowances for Family Home caregivers. Payments are reviewed annually and any increases are based on changes in the CPI.

TASMANIA

The payment is based on historical benchmarks with an annual adjustment for variations in the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Policy links the Basic Subsidy rate to the cost of caring for children as identified by the Australian Institute for Family Studies (AIFS) based on Lovering (1983). Subsidy rates are reviewed annually in March against Consumer Price Index movements for the preceding calendar year and any increase is introduced from December 1st.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Lovering Estimate used as basis for defining basic costs of children in different age groups. An additional allowance covering ongoing costs such as pocket money, haircuts, basic medical, travel, etc. has been added to the basic costs. Rates have been indexed to reflect NT cost of living using ABS data, and are adjusted annually in accordance with NT CPI figure.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Loosely based on Lovering.

VICTORIA

Costings were originally based on the Lovering December 1995 "Basket of Goods" survey for middle income families plus an additional \$20 - \$33.50 per week. The Lovering middle income level has been selected to reflect the wide range of incomes in the caregiver pool. This approach, developed by the Australian Institute of Family Studies, aimed to provide a measure of the actual costs of caring for children and young people across the different age groups. The additional \$20 - \$33.50 incorporated in the costings was designed to meet the additional health, educational and transport costs not incorporated in the Lovering approach. Since this approach was developed caregiver payments have increased to reflect GST costs and indexation.

NEW SOUTH WALES

The new Care Allowance is based on the latest “costs of children” research published by the Social Policy Research Centre at the University of New South Wales and the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling in Canberra.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

In 1994 the Lovering system was used as a basis, and then an allowance was added to cover items not included by Lovering (e.g. transport, school fees or uniforms, childcare, medical and dental expenses). These two elements combined are referred to as the “standard foster care subsidy”. Each year a CPI increase has been applied.

QUEENSLAND

No particular method - although there has been irregular CPI increases.

5.3 What does the standard subsidy cover?

NEW ZEALAND

General board e.g. food, heating, and lighting as well as personal items such as toiletries, haircuts, local travel, minor stationery and pocket money.

TASMANIA

General board such as food/heating and incidental expenses such as toiletries, haircuts, local travel, basic medical and pharmaceutical, and hobbies and recreational activities. The clothing allowance covers general clothing and footwear. Pocket money is for the child/young person's own discretion.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Food and accommodation, heating/electricity/gas, local transport, outings and entertainment, haircuts, small toys, general expenses related to personal hygiene items, basic general medical treatment and non-prescriptive pharmaceutical requirements, incidental expenses for education, leisure and hobby activities.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Food, shelter, household provisions, general clothing and footwear, school books, stationery, excursions up to \$20, toys/presents, haircuts, pocket money, leisure and hobby activities, outings and entertainment, daily travel, incidental child care, general hygiene items, basic medical and pharmaceuticals.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

General household expenses i.e. food, electricity, gas, fuel, telephone, school expenses, gifts and entertainment.

VICTORIA

The payment is to reimburse caregivers for the ordinary costs of care i.e. food, fuel, household provisions, clothing, costs of schooling (except uniforms, fees, books), gifts, pocket money and entertainment.

NEW SOUTH WALES

Rent, energy, food, clothing, school clothing and equipment, household goods and services, general transport, leisure and personal care are covered in the standard subsidy (Care Allowance).

Certain other costs are met from the Allowance paid to the carer. These cover the first \$80 per week of childcare expenses, the first \$250 per quarter of school/tutoring fees, the first \$250 per quarter (short-term care) and \$1,000 pa (long term care) of health costs, and the first \$250 per quarter of case plan agreed transport costs. Carers are not expected to meet costs associated with family contact.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Food and shelter, heating, electricity and gas, general clothing and footwear, school books and stationery, day school excursions, pocket money, leisure and hobby activities, non-school social and sporting activities, toys and presents, outings and entertainment, haircuts, general travel, personal hygiene items. Basic general medical, dental treatment and pharmaceutical items. Other than those items specified in payment of contingency items.

QUEENSLAND

Food, shelter, household provisions, general clothing and footwear, sports and activity fees, school books, stationery, school excursions, toys/presents, haircuts, pocket money, leisure and hobby activities, outings and entertainment, daily travel, incidentals, childcare, general hygiene items, basic medical and pharmaceutical needs.

5.4 What age groups are used?

NEW ZEALAND

0-4, 5-9, 10-13, 14 and over.

TASMANIA

Under 7; 7 – 9 years; 10 – 11 years; 12 – 13 years; 14 years and over.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

0 – 12 years of age;
13 years of age and more

NORTHERN TERRITORY

0-4, 5-7, 8-11, 12-14, 15-17

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

0-4, 5-7, 8-11, 12-14, 15-17

VICTORIA

Foster Care, Shared Family Care, Permanent Care, Kinship Care, Specialised Home Based Care:

0 – 24 months; 2 – 7 years; 8 – 10 years; 11 – 12 years and 13+ years.

Adolescent Community Placement:

12+ years.

NEW SOUTH WALES

There are no longer any age categories. Payments are consistent across all age groups.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

0 - 4, 5 - 7, 8 - 11, 12 - 14, 15 - 17

QUEENSLAND

0 - 1, 2 - 5, 6 - 10, 11 - 15, 16+

5.5 How is the standard subsidy paid (e.g. frequency and mode such as cheque)?

NEW ZEALAND

The standard subsidy is paid fortnightly by direct credit to caregiver's bank account.

TASMANIA

Each fortnight by direct deposit into carer's bank account.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Payments for subsidy are processed fortnightly, in arrears, and cover a fortnight or part thereof. Funds are transferred by the department to the bank on alternate Tuesdays for immediate distribution by electronically funded transfer (E.F.T.) to the carer's bank account.

Payment of subsidy can also be made by cheque to the carer but this is not preferred.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Generally fortnightly by direct credit (Electronic Funds Transfer) to carer's bank account. In some cases where the child is in a permanent phase of care, payments may be made monthly. Cheques are used where this is not possible.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Fortnightly; direct debit.

VICTORIA

Payment is made fortnightly by cheque or direct payment into banking account.

NEW SOUTH WALES

Fortnightly by direct payment into a bank account or by cheque.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Fortnightly by electronic funds transfer into carer's bank account.

QUEENSLAND

Payment is made fortnightly in arrears by direct deposit to bank account (Electronic Funds Transfer) except in remote areas where cheques are used.

5.6 Are there cases where less than the standard subsidy may be paid (e.g. when foster parent/foster carer also receives Centrelink Child Disability Allowance or young person receives payment such as Youth Allowance)? Describe this process.

NEW ZEALAND

The standard board rate is the minimum. A figure less than the standard subsidy will only be paid when the child or young person is placed with a parent or the caregiver chooses to receive less.

TASMANIA

A young person who is in receipt of an income such as a Youth Allowance contributes a percentage of the income to board. The departmental board payment is decreased so that the young person's contribution to the board and the department's contribution equals the standard board payment.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

When a Young Person is in receipt of a Youth Allowance – “At Home Rate” pocket money payments automatically cease but otherwise there is no impact on the subsidy payment to the carer. When a Young Person is in receipt of an income from employment or from a Youth Allowance – “Away from Home Rate” pocket money payments again automatically cease and the Young Person is expected to contribute a percentage of the income to board. Subsidy payment to the carer will then decrease by the amount of the board paid by the Young Person.

Where a Double Orphan Pension is paid the subsidy payment to the carer decreases by the amount of the Double Orphan Pension.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

No.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

At age 16 years, if the young person is approved to receive a Disability Pension or Youth Allowance, subsidy drops to the basic subsidy only.

VICTORIA

If a young person is residing in an Adolescent Community Placement and is in receipt of income, caregiver payments reduce according to a sliding scale. In other home based care placements, reduction in payment is set at a maximum fixed rate and is subject to negotiation between the carer, agency and young person. In both cases, the young person is expected to contribute to board and lodging. Victoria ensures that caregivers receive an amount equal to the standard caregiver payment in these situations.

NEW SOUTH WALES

Where a young person in foster care receives a Youth Allowance, a Subsidy Payment is then paid to the carer. This is calculated by subtracting from the Care or Care+Allowance received by the carer, the amount of the YA. Some Commonwealth benefits (e.g. Family Allowance, Parenting payment) received by the foster carer for the young person prior to the payment of the YA, will be discontinued once YA is paid. These amounts are taken into consideration when determining the appropriate level of Subsidy Payment for the foster carer.

Where a young person receives a Commonwealth Disability Support Pension (DSP) from 16 years of age, the Subsidy Payment paid to the foster carers is reduced to adjust for the increased Commonwealth income support from DSP.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

When a carer receives both the Child Disability Allowance from Centrelink and the Family Services Special Needs Subsidy. The Family Services subsidy is adjusted on a dollar for dollar basis to take account of the allowance. The carer receives the same total payment, but it is a combination of the allowance and the subsidy.

QUEENSLAND

No - allowance is stopped two weeks after young person commences work, or is in receipt of the independent rate of (unsupported state care) of Youth Allowance through Centrelink.

5.7 STANDARD SUBSIDY LEVELS (dollars per week)

Age	NZ**	TAS	WA***	NT	SA	VIC	NSW	ACT	QLD
0	86.53	70	78.55	97.20	84.50	85	175	92.40	75.92
1	86.53	70	78.55	97.20	84.50	85	175	92.40	75.92
2	86.53	70	78.55	97.20	84.50	76.50	175	92.40	92.56
3	86.53	70	78.55	97.20	84.50	76.50	175	92.40	92.56
4	86.53	70	78.55	97.20	84.50	76.50	175	92.40	92.56
5	104	70	78.55	100.50	90.75	76.50	175	104.75	92.56
6	104	70	78.55	100.50	90.75	76.50	175	104.75	114.40
7	104	71	78.55	100.50	90.75	76.50	175	104.75	114.40
8	104	71	78.55	120.25	97.75	92.50	175	123.00	114.40
9	104	71	78.55	120.25	97.75	92.50	175	123.00	114.40
10	117.08	72	78.55	120.25	97.75	92.50	175	123.00	114.40
11	117.08	72	78.55	120.25	97.75	111.50	175	123.00	138.32
12	117.08	83	78.55	135.80	118.25	111.50	175	140.75	138.32
13	117.08	83	118.30	135.80	118.25	156.50	175	140.75	138.32
14	130.08	90	118.30	135.80	118.25	156.50	175	140.75	138.32
15	130.08	90	118.30	163.35	144.75	156.50	175	170.55	138.32
16	130.08	90	118.30	163.35	144.75	156.50	175	170.55	128.96
17	130.08	90	118.30	163.35	144.75	156.50	175	170.55	128.96

** converted from NZ\$ NB: Departmental family homes receive a flat rate of \$119.78/week/child regardless of child's age D

*** WA also has a separate fostering program run by the Department for Community Development where carers are recruited, assessed and trained to care for children and adolescents who have significant emotional and behavioural problems. These are called One to One Intensive Care Placements and the subsidy paid to such placements is at a special rate of \$536.74 P/F for all ages of children.

6.0 ADD-ON LOADINGS TO THE STANDARD SUBSIDY

Add-on loadings are defined as increases to the standard subsidy, either in the form of percentage loadings or as a flat rate, e.g. special needs loadings.

6.1 Common title/s of add-on-loading (complete this section for each discreet loading).

NEW ZEALAND

Higher Foster Care Allowance

TASMANIA

Board Special

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Special Needs Loading
Special Purpose Subsidies

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Crisis Placement Rate
Special Needs Placement Rate
Individual Care Package

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Additional Allowance
Special Needs Loading
Reunification Loading

VICTORIA

1. Specialised Home Based Care placements - 3 loadings: 25%, 50%, 100%
2. An additional \$21.00 per week paid to all caregivers of children under 13 years of age in a reception care placement
3. Carers of young people aged 12 years (Adolescent Community Placement) or 13 years and over (Foster Care; Shared Family Care; Kinship Care) are paid an additional \$21.00 per fortnight for the first six months the young person is in placement.
4. Flexipack placements - 3 loadings: 25%, 50%, 100%

NEW SOUTH WALES

Care +1 Allowance, (50% loading on the Care Allowance), and Care +2 Allowance (100% loading on the Care Allowance) amounting to \$525 and \$700 per fortnight.

A Crisis Establishment Contingency of \$75 per child is payable to a foster carer for children and young people placed in emergency situations, i.e. a placement made outside the normal working hours of 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday, OR where a carer is requested to accept a child or young person on the day of the request.

A Short/Medium Term Contingency is payable to a foster carer for children and young people placed with them on a short to medium term basis (up to six months). This is paid at \$350 per child, in addition to the appropriate level of Care Allowance. The payment of a Crisis Establishment Contingency does not preclude the payment of the Short/Medium Term Contingency if a request is made to the carer to extend the initial crisis placement period. The payment should be made for the first four placements with each carer within a financial year. Siblings group are counted as one placement, with each child of that group attracting a separate establishment contingency.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Special Needs Loading

QUEENSLAND

High Support Needs Allowance

6.2 Description and purpose

NEW ZEALAND

Higher foster care allowance is payable to meet both reasonable and special needs. Payments for reasonable needs are made on a cost equivalency basis for items or services. Reasonable needs are not defined in policy and are made at the discretion of the person authorised to make the decisions. Payments for special needs arise from two main sources as difficulties in maintaining, restoring or creating developmental and environmental normalcy.

TASMANIA

Additional payments specifically approved as part of the child/young person's case management plan to cover ongoing costs associated with the care of children/young people with particular needs.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Special Needs Loading is for children in foster care with special needs and/or disabilities that require supervision, care, accommodation and maintenance by carers in excess of normal requirements for a child in foster care. The special needs may relate to physical or intellectual disabilities, or medical, emotional or behavioural problems. The amount of loading is determined by the level of special needs the child has and the associated expenses incurred in caring for the child. The payment of a higher subsidy is viewed as a contribution to these care costs. It also recognises in a small way the extra duties or tasks carers may need to undertake.

Special Purpose Subsidies are used when a child may require the expenditure of a large sum of money in circumstances that are not covered by Case Support Costs (one off grants). Categories of Special Purpose Subsidies include;

- Accommodation other than normal care arrangements
- Boarding School Attendance
- Vehicles
- Caregiver's Home Modification
- Major and Extraordinary Events
- Ongoing major costs items associated with Special Needs Loadings

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Crisis Rate – up to two weeks for placements made after hours or with less than 24 hours notice.

Special Needs – for children assessed as requiring additional care and support services.

Individual Care Package rate – an individually developed package for the care of a particular child. Includes weekly foster payment and any additional expenses approved. Package developed according to child's level of need. Other allowances e.g. Child Disability Allowance and entitlements the child and carers are receiving are documented in the package.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Additional Allowance – Personal costs i.e. pocket money, clothing, pharmaceuticals, haircuts, medical, childcare and travel.

Special Needs Loadings – are for children with physical or intellectual disabilities or medical problems and for children who exhibit emotional or behavioural problems which require additional effort on the part of the caregiver to meet the needs of the child. The rate of loading varies between 50% - 200%.

Reunification Loading – can be paid at a rate of 25% when caregivers are actively involved with the reunification of the child with his or her own family.

VICTORIA

1. Specialised Home Based Care provides community based placements to children and young people where previous, less intensive, community based placements have been inappropriate or unsuccessful because of the child or young person's challenging behaviour, additional needs, recruitment difficulties, or high demands associated with co-placing large sibling groups.
2. Payment of an additional \$21.00 per week to carers of children under 13 years of age in reception care until the child leaves reception care. This is to reflect additional costs associated with legal processes, i.e. costs.
3. To reflect additional establishment costs.
4. Flexipacks are individually tailored packages designed to create and maintain home based care placements for children and young people who have previously been unable to access or remain in home based care.

NEW SOUTH WALES

This allowance is based on an assessment of the care needs of the child. This payment, whilst still described as a contribution to care costs, acknowledges that the costs in caring for a child increases in line with the child's needs.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

The Special Needs subsidy is paid for the care of those children who, by virtue of their special needs, require emotional, physical, personal and/or auxiliary care in excess of what is usually required by a child in care.

There are 5 levels of loading (25%, 50%, 75%, 100% and 150% of the standard foster care subsidy) added to the standard amount. The levels reflect the child's level of Special Needs.

QUEENSLAND

This allowance is designed to target those placements where the foster carer must provide intensive levels of support related to a child's special needs. It is a flat rate of \$60 per week.

6.3 How is the allowance paid (e.g. frequency and mode such as cheque)?

NEW ZEALAND

The standard subsidy is paid fortnightly by direct credit to caregiver's bank account.

TASMANIA

Each fortnight by direct deposit to carer's bank account.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Special Needs Loadings are paid with Basic Subsidy on a fortnightly basis by direct credit into carers bank account or by cheque as previously detailed.

Special Purpose Subsidies may be paid as an add on to subsidy payments where the expenditure relates to a cost incurred by the carer. Where the expenditure relates to purchasing a service or item the Special Purpose Subsidy will be issued by a one off payment to the service provider or creditor.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Generally fortnightly by direct credit (Electronic Funds Transfer) to the carer's bank account. In some cases where the child is in a permanent phase of care, payments may be made monthly. Cheques are used when this is not possible.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Fortnightly, direct debit.

VICTORIA

Payment is made fortnightly by cheque or direct payment into banking account.

NEW SOUTH WALES

Direct deposit to the carer's bank account or by cheque.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Fortnightly by electronic funds transfer into carer's bank account.

QUEENSLAND

Direct deposit to the carer's bank account or by cheque.

6.4 Is loading mandatory or discretionary? If discretionary briefly describe the approval process.

NEW ZEALAND

Payments of higher foster care allowances are discretionary. The social worker identifies with the caregiver the extra costs associated with the special need of the child or young person and makes a recommendation to the budget manager for approval of the expenditure. All high foster payments are reviewed on a six-monthly basis to determine whether the special need still exists.

TASMANIA

Discretionary. The need for additional payments is identified by the case manager via the case plan. The Minister or delegated officer approves payments depending on the amount to be approved per week.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The decision to seek a Special Needs Loading must be part of a formal Case Plan and application is made through the Zone Manager who has discretionary approval authority. The written application requires the Case Manager to assess the child under three categories of care (eg emotional, physical and personal care, and auxiliary care) and under each category to grade the level of care required as either minimal/moderate/severe/intensive. Each level of care has a set allocation of points which are then totalled across the three categories of care to determine the child's overall level of needs. A percentage loading is then calculated based on this needs level and identifying the associated costs to the carer. The maximum level of loading that can be approved is 200% on top of basic subsidy.

Following approval the carer must sign a "Special Needs Loading Advice to Carers" which details the level of loading and the items the loading is to contribute towards. Approval for the Special Needs Loading is for a maximum of 12 months. Continuation of the payment after each 12 month period requires an updated assessment and approval by the Zone Manager.

Approval of Special Purpose Subsidies is discretionary. A written submission explaining the justification for the requested subsidy is prepared by the caseworker as part of the case planning process and is submitted through the Team Leader and Zone Manager to the Executive Director Service Delivery who must approve all submissions. Following approval the carer is required to sign an agreement/contract similar to the "Special Needs Loading Advice to Carers".

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Discretionary. Senior worker or Manager approves payment rate based on assessment conducted by caseworker.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Additional Allowance – discretionary, approved in accordance with determination criteria.
Special Needs Loadings – discretionary, approved in accordance with determination criteria.
Reunification Loading – discretionary, approved in accordance with determination criteria.

VICTORIA

1 + 4. Discretionary - based on assessment.
2 + 3. Mandatory.

NEW SOUTH WALES

This loading is subject to a Special Needs Assessment which must demonstrate that a higher than normal level of care is required. Eligibility for these higher allowances should be considered for all children and young people prior to, or upon, entry into care. The payments are mandatory within this assessment process. The Manager of the local office can approve both levels of loading.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Discretionary. Each case requires a detailed assessment to determine whether there are demonstrated extra expenses, duties, tasks or stresses associated with the care of the child based on a number of categories. An assessment is made against each category and graded as to the level of care required.

QUEENSLAND

Discretionary. Caseworker submits assessment to either line manager or senior personnel for approval.

7.0 ADD-ON ALLOWANCES

“Add-on allowance” is defined as a regular payment for special purpose (e.g. outfitting or incidentals etc).

7.1 Common title/s of add-on-allowance

(complete this section for each discreet allowance)

NEW ZEALAND

- a) Birthday allowance
- b) Christmas allowance
- c) Clothing allowance

TASMANIA

Special Contract Care

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Clothing Allowance
Pocket Money

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Nil

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Additional Allowance
Education Grants

VICTORIA

No 'add-on' allowance.

NEW SOUTH WALES

Nil

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

None applicable in the ACT.

QUEENSLAND

Outfitting Allowance.

7.2 Description and purpose

NEW ZEALAND

- a) Payment equivalent to half the weekly board payment, for caregivers to purchase birthday present for the child or young person.
- b) Payment equivalent to half the weekly board payment for caregivers to purchase the child or young person a Christmas present.
- c) For the everyday clothing needs of the child or young person.

Current rates:

Age: 0-4	NZ \$174.90 (AUD\$) a quarter
5-9	NZ \$198.20 (AUD\$) a quarter
10-13	NZ \$244.75 (AUD\$) a quarter
14+	NZ \$293.80 (AUD\$) a quarter

TASMANIA

Special Contract Care rate is paid to carers who provide short-term goal-oriented care and accommodation for children and young people with complex needs.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Clothing Allowance is the principle means of providing for the day to day clothing needs for children. The scheme consists of two categories of payment, an Initial Clothing Grant and Clothing Allowance. There are two rates of payment for each category, these being Primary School and High School. An eligible child in continuous care for a 12 month period will receive three clothing payments per year, whereas a child coming into care for the first time will receive one Initial Clothing Grant and two Clothing Allowance payments. The Initial Clothing Grant is paid on a sliding scale, which is reducible depending on when the child entered care during the first four month period of eligibility. Only wards are automatically entitled to a clothing allowance, other children require prior approval supported by a case planning process. Note - school clothing is additional to the clothing allowance.

Age	Clothing Allowance	Initial Grant
5 years and under	\$178.81	\$299.75 (full 4 mths)
6 – 12 years	\$235.28	\$299.75 (full 4 mths)
13 years and over	\$235.28	\$381.50 (full 4 mths)

Pocket Money payments are automatic for wards but must be recommended as part of a case planning process for non wards. The amount of pocket money paid is linked to age commencing at

- 6 – 12 years \$8.00 P/F
- 13 - 15 years \$20.00 P/F
- 16 – 18 years \$26.00 P/F

NORTHERN TERRITORY

N/A

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The additional allowance is to cover costs such as pocket money, clothing, childcare, travel, medical or pharmaceutical items, and extra costs such as haircuts.

Education Grants are paid to Category A placements to assist caregivers to meet school and education related expenses i.e. school clothing, stationary items, camps, excursions.

\$50 a term for early childhood.

\$150 a term for primary school students.

\$200 a term for secondary school students.

VICTORIA

N/A

NEW SOUTH WALES

N/A

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

N/A

QUEENSLAND

To provide for the regular replacement of a child's clothing/outfitting.

7.3 How is allowance paid (e.g. frequency and mode such as cheque)?

NEW ZEALAND

- a) Yearly. Direct credit to caregiver's bank account with the board payment due two weeks prior to the child or young person's birthday.
- b) Yearly. Direct credit to caregiver's bank account in the board payment due two weeks prior to Christmas.
- c) Quarterly by direct credit to caregiver's bank account or caregivers reimbursed for clothing purchased up to the rates stated or caregivers asked to get quotes from stores and stores order provided for purchase.

TASMANIA

Fortnightly direct deposit.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Payment of pocket money is included within the fortnightly subsidy payment to the carer who is expected to pass the money onto the child in care. The rate of pocket money is calculated from January 1st in the year in which the child turns the relevant age.

The Clothing Allowance is paid in the first subsidy pay in January, May and September and is to cover the coming four month period from when it is paid. The Initial Clothing Grant, issued when a child comes into care, may be paid via an immediate Client Purchase Order (CPO) or included within the first fortnightly foster subsidy payment.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

N/A

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Fortnightly, paid direct to carer's accounts.

VICTORIA

N/A

NEW SOUTH WALES

N/A

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

N/A

QUEENSLAND

Single payment made during school years 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 11 and post-year 12.

Child < 12 \$214.50

Child > 12 \$264

Payment made by EFT or cheque.

(From 01.07.2001, outfitting allowance was changed. It is now paid in a flat weekly rate of \$17.50 per child. There is also a start-up payment of \$50 for each new foster placement as well as additional payments in special circumstances as required.

7.4 Is allowance mandatory or discretionary? If discretionary, briefly describe approval process.

NEW ZEALAND

- a) Mandatory
- b) Mandatory
- c) Payment for clothing mandatory

TASMANIA

Mandatory.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Payment for pocket money and clothing allowance is mandatory for wards. For non-wards it is discretionary and is recommended and approved as part of the formal case planning process for the child.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

N/A

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Mandatory for children in Category A placements.

VICTORIA

N/A

NEW SOUTH WALES

N/A

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

N/A

QUEENSLAND

Mandatory - additional payment is discretionary.

8.0 ONE-OFF GRANTS OR CONTINGENCY PAYMENTS

One-off payments or contingency payments are defined as payments which are paid under special circumstances in a non-recurrent way (e.g. medical expenses).

8.1 Common title/s of payment (complete this section for each discreet type of payment)

NEW ZEALAND

Education and medical expenses

TASMANIA

Christmas Allowance
Initial Clothing Outfit
School Uniforms and Working Outfit
Contingency Payments (this could include medical, educational, recreational and other costs).

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Case Support Costs

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Discretionary payment

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Establishment Grant
Incidental Expenses
Brokerage Fund
Discretionary Payments

VICTORIA

Placement and Support Grant
Supplementary Client Expenses

NEW SOUTH WALES

Contingencies. Paid to carers, or directly to service providers, to provide for expenses that are not met by the Care Allowance.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

1. **Establishment Costs** – Family Services may meet the costs of initially establishing a child in foster care, on a case by case basis. These costs may include initial clothing, initial school clothing and materials, and beds, desks or other items of essential furniture. These items would be coded to the contingencies budget.
2. **Short Term Placement payment** – In order to compensate carers for the inconvenience and disruption caused by accepting emergency placements at short notice, Family Services pays foster carers a set daily rate for the first seven days. If a placement extends longer than a week the rate payable reverts to the standard subsidy.
3. **Contingency Payments** – Those goods, services or fees incurred by the child in foster care which are not covered in the payment of subsidies. Where a foster carer is receiving the Special Needs Subsidy, payment of some contingency items are not applicable. Items intended to be covered are (for example) school fees, excursions, coaching / tutoring / remedial work, child care / vacation care / camps, medical and dental costs for specialist treatment, and travel not covered in basic subsidy such as travel to contact visits.

QUEENSLAND

Child Related Costs

8.2 Description and purpose

NEW ZEALAND

- (a) School uniforms and other “out-of-home expenses” associated with schooling including: school books, text books, sewing or wood work materials etc, school fees, sports fees, examination fees and cost of school trips.
- (b) Routine doctors visits and specialist visits for physical, psychological or psychiatric problems.

TASMANIA

The Christmas Allowance is an annual payment of \$30.00 to foster carers with children / young people under guardianship towards the costs of Christmas presents. Initial clothing is provided at the commencement of the placement. School uniforms and working outfits are provided as required. Contingency payments cover specific costs as approved by the case plan.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Case Support Costs can be approved for children in supported placement as well as for families and children where placement has not occurred. Where children are in placement Case Support Costs relate to those expenses that arise from time to time that are over and above the regular, day to day costs of care. They may be one off or recurrent. They are normally paid to third parties for the provision of goods or services for the child in care.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Discretionary items are those goods, services or fees incurred by the child in substitute care which are not covered by the standard foster payment or one of the special payment rates. Where a foster carer is receiving a Special Needs or Crisis Placement rate, payment in respect to many discretionary items may not be applicable.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Establishment Grant – a one-off payment in support of a young person who has been placed on an order for 12 months or more, to buy significant items for the child that will remain the property of the child and with the child from one placement to another.

Incidental Expenses – for additional costs across a range of areas including clothing, transport, education, household items, medical, optical and dental.

Brokerage Fund – provision for services i.e. mentor, counselling and household items i.e. fridge, bed and bedding, necessary to ensure the stability and ongoing tenure of a placement.

Discretionary Payments – for out of the ordinary, usually high costing expenses associated with interstate travel, orthodontic and medical treatment and property damage.

VICTORIA

Placement Support Grants – To meet additional, non-routine/exceptional costs.

Supplementary Client Expenses – Payments are made to the caregiver to meet one-off supplementary expenses, for example school uniforms. Payments are made upon receipt and approval of specific applications for these funds.

NEW SOUTH WALES

Contingency payments can be paid to carers, to certain young people and directly to service providers to meet expenses that are not covered by the Care Allowance and which are approved in the Case Plan.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

1. **Establishment Costs** – Family Services may meet the costs of initially establishing a child in foster care, on a case by case basis. These costs may include initial clothing, initial school clothing and materials, and beds, desks or other items of essential furniture. These items would be coded to the contingencies budget.
2. **Short Term Placement Payment** – In order to compensate carers for the inconvenience and disruption caused by accepting placements at short notice, Family Services pays foster carers a set for the first 7 days. If a placement extends longer than a week the rate payable reverts to the standard subsidy.
3. **Contingency payments** – those goods, services or fees incurred by the child in foster care, which are not covered in the payment of subsidies. Where a foster carer is receiving the Special Needs Subsidy, payment of some contingency items are not applicable. Items intended to be covered are (for example) school fees, excursions, coaching / tutoring / remedial work, child care / vacation care / camps, medical and dental costs for specialist treatment, and travel not covered in basic subsidy such as travel to contact visits.

QUEENSLAND

To provide contingency payments for extra costs in areas of medical, outfitting, personal assistance and travel.

8.3 How is grant/payment paid (e.g. frequency and mode such as cheque)?

NEW ZEALAND

- (a) As required whether payment on invoice or reimbursement of caregiver through direct credit to bank account.
- (b) Either payment on invoice or reimbursement of caregiver through direct credit to their bank account.

TASMANIA

The Christmas Allowance is paid annually via direct deposit to carer's bank account. Other payments are paid in a variety of ways including vouchers, reimbursement to carers or direct payment to the provider.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Reimbursement to the carer or direct payment to service provider.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Carers reimbursed by EFT or cheque, or payment I made direct to careproviders.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Establishment Grant – Once only; direct credit

Education Grant – Paid per school term i.e. four times a year; direct credit.

Incidental Expenses – Range from one-off to recurrent.

Brokerage Fund – Range from one-off to recurrent.

Discretionary Payments – Range from one-off to recurrent.

VICTORIA

Placement and Support Grants:

- Foster Care & Shared Family Care – paid by cheque.
- Adolescent Community Placement & Specialised Home Based Care – paid by cheque or directly into the caregiver's bank account.

Supplementary Client Expenses – Direct payment to the supplier or reimbursement to the caregiver by cheque.

NEW SOUTH WALES

Either by cheque or direct deposit to the service provider.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

By Electronic Funds Transfer direct to carer or by cheque to service provider.

QUEENSLAND

Reimbursement to foster carer or direct payment to service provider by EFT or cheque.

8.4 Is payment mandatory or discretionary? If discretionary, briefly describe the approval process.

NEW ZEALAND

- (a) Most of these payments are discretionary. Where the cost is extraordinarily high. (E.g. a school trip overseas) the social worker would prepare a proposal for budget manager's approval. This type of trip would also be subject to the approval of the Chief Social Worker if parents did not consent.
- (b) Payment mandatory. All "free" options in the Public Health System are checked first.

TASMANIA

The Christmas Allowance is mandatory (but limited to children / young people under guardianship). Other payments are discretionary.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

In the case of both wards and non-wards eligibility for case support costs is discretionary and requires a formal case plan. In the case of non-wards this should include assessment of the parents ability to either meet the costs in full or to contribute towards the costs. Following recommendation by a formal case plan the expenditure is then approved by the relevant delegated authority as follows:

Up to \$1,000 = Team Leaders and Area Manager
\$1,000 - \$5,000 = Service Delivery Managers and Office Managers
\$5,000 – Zone Budget allocation limit = Zone Managers

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Discretionary payments based upon an assessment of need. When a discretionary payment is anticipated in advance, it can be documented in the child's case plan.

Casework Supervisor or Office Managers can approve discretionary payments. Discretionary payments exceeding \$2,000 need approval from the appropriate Delegated Officer.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Incidental expenses – Discretionary. The caseworker must submit a completed application form to their supervisor for approval. Each District centre has their own allocated budget.

Brokerage Fund – Discretionary. The caseworker must submit a completed application form via their supervisor to the Central Alternative Care Unit for consideration and approval. This is a central fund.

Discretionary Payments – Discretionary. The caseworker must submit a written request via their supervisor to the Central Alternative Care Unit for consideration and approval. This is a central fund.

VICTORIA

Discretionary – based on assessment of need.

NEW SOUTH WALES

The decision to cover contingency expenses is discretionary. However, certain costs (e.g. therapy, contact/access costs) are available provided they are part of an approved case plan. Some contingency payments are subject to ceiling and threshold payment levels.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

1. **Discretionary.** The need for establishment assistance is identified and quantified, then recommended by the caseworker, through the supervisor and approved by the manager, before the purchase is arranged.
2. **Mandatory.** Unless it is clear from the outset that the placement will be a long-term placement.
3. **Discretionary.** Approval is through the caseworker, supervisor for approval by manager.

QUEENSLAND

Discretionary. Paid if approved by the Manager. Needs to be part of the caseplan and also needs to comply with the guidelines in the Child Related Costs Manual.

9.0 SERVICES IN KIND

‘Services in kind’ refers to the funding of other services which assist children, young people or carers.

9.1 Direct services to the child or young person

Does your agency provide (or help to provide by funding) services which a foster carer might otherwise have to pay for and which is a direct service to children living with foster carers (e.g. psychologist, occupational therapy)? Do not include direct casework assistance, general support or training. Describe these services and provide annual cost of providing these services – if possible.

NEW ZEALAND

In some areas direct services are provided through psychologist employed by the Service. CYPFS is able to fund direct services where they are not available or offered by the public health system or the Accident Compensation Corporation.

TASMANIA

The Division of Child, Youth and Family Support is part of a broader agency (the Department of Health and Human Services). The agency manages a range of services that children and young people in foster care may access. These services include child and adolescent mental health services, alcohol and drug services, community health services, dental services, and disability services. Access to these services for children in foster care varies.

It is not possible to provide the annual cost of these services.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

A variety of direct services may be provided in individual cases and is based on an assessment of need. The department employs Clinical Psychologists and Education Officers who are able to provide direct services to the children. The department also refers children to access services provided by other government departments eg Health, Disabilities and Education. Alternatively these services and others can be provided by private practitioners who are funded by the department (under the Case Support Costs and Special Purpose Subsidy categories) to provide the service needed. These services can include but are not limited to counselling, assessment, speech therapy, occupational therapy, tutoring and mentoring. A break down of annual costs for “services in kind” is not available as a sub-category of the overall Case Support Costs budget.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Territory Health Services is a combined health and community services department. Hence some services such as speech therapy, psychological services, OT, Physio etc are already provided by this Department. Children in care access these services free of charge.

Difficult to provide annual cost as these services are also provided to the general community and for children in care there had been no disaggregation.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

5% of the monies provided to the Alternative Care Providers is to be used under the mantle of Brokerage for the provision of these services.

VICTORIA

Such services may be provided through Placement Support Grants and Supplementary Client Expenses. No separate budget.

NEW SOUTH WALES

All such services are paid by DoCS or may be provided by NSW Health, Dental Hospital, etc. The amount of expenditure is not specifically identified in the budget.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

All such services are provided by or paid for by Family Services or sought through the appropriate government agencies.

QUEENSLAND

Many agencies are funded by the Department to provide these types of services. It is difficult to assess the budget component for these, as these services are also provided to a wider population, and from the budget of a variety of different programs conducted by this Department. Some examples are:

- Sexual Abuse Counselling Service
- Special services are funded through a Children with Disabilities in Care Program; and
- Child Protection and Family Support Program funding to non-government agencies to provide a range of specialist services.

9.2 Funding of Foster Care Associations

Many states fund foster care associations to provide advocacy and support services to foster carers. The following table provides details of this funding.

State/Territory	Recurrent Funding	Non-recurrent funding	No of carer families in the state	Recurrent funding per carer family
Queensland - Foster Parent's Association of Queensland (FPAQ)	\$187,000 (rent, salaries, administrative costs, newsletter, Carer recognition dinners and conferences etc)	\$10,000 attendance of carers at national conference, \$30,000 attendance of carers at state conference, \$10,000 IYOV project on natural children of carers	1861	\$100
New South Wales	\$291,987 (rent salaries, state conference, newsletter, identification of training needs)			
Western Australia	\$61,019 (salaries, mileage, accommodation costs, operating costs, newsletter)	grants for specific activities eg preparation and publication of manuals, attendance at international, national and state conferences, provision of training, library acquisitions.	968*	N/A
Tasmania	\$24,000 (administration, travel, equipment, conferences attendance, state conference, newsletter)			
Victoria	\$13,455 (direct costs of organising & hosting Foster Care Day; collaboration & liaising with Dept. & others; newsletter;	\$2,076 (for 2 FCAV reps to attend National Conference in Tasmania)	~ 2,000 (no statistics kept by Department)	Approximately \$7.50
South Australia		\$6000 (to send 4 carers to the national conference and 2 carers to the Qld conference (Qld based on content)	650	
ACT	\$12,500			
NT	No association			
New Zealand				

* This figure represents the total number of carer families, across all foster carer categories (eg. general, self selected, relative, pre-adoptive), registered with the

10.0 COMPARATIVE TABLES

The following tables are designed to give an overview of the way payments are made and expenses reimbursed.

The columns are titled using the terminology from the last section. Mandatory refers to those payments which are virtually automatic or involve very little decision making e.g. age categories. Discretionary refers to payments which are made after some decision has been made about eligibility. e.g. special needs loading.

The following abbreviations have been used to code the response from each state/territory or country:

Z	New Zealand
T	Tasmania
W	Western Australia
Y	Northern Territory
S	South Australia
V	Victoria
X	New South Wales
A	Australian Capital Territory
Q	Queensland

10.1 GENERAL LIVING COSTS

	Basic Subsidy	Additional Loading Mandatory	Additional Loading Discretionary	Additional Allowance Mandatory	Additional Allowance Discretionary	One-off Payment Mandatory	One-off payment - Discretionary	Other	Not Funded by Dep't
Food and shelter	Z,T,Y,V,A,W, Q,X								
Heating - elec/gas	Z,T,Y,V,A,W, Q,X								
Pocket-money	Z,T,Y,V,A,Q, X			W**	W***				
Haircuts	Z,T,Y,V,A,W, Q,X								
Personal hygiene	Z,T,Y,V,A,W, Q,X								
Toys/ Presents	T,Y,V,A,W,Q, X	Z	Z				T+		
Childminding Day Care or Child Care Centre	Y*,X ¹		W,Z		Z,T,V,A		Y,Q,W		
Childminding Casual	Y,A,Q,X ²		Z		Z,T,V,W				
Establishment costs		X ³	W				Z,T,Y,V,A,W,Q		
Clothing	T\$,Y,V,A,Q, X			Z,W**	W***		T++,Y,V,W***,Q		

* Incidental child care costs only + If approved as part of case plan ++ One off payments may be approved in response to specific circumstances e.g. the child commences a new school \$ clothing allowance is paid each fortnight in addition to board payments and pocket money ** Wards ***Non Ward

¹ First \$80 to be met from the Care Allowance. Department to pay costs above this.

² As above

³ "Mandatory" one off payment of \$75 for crisis establishment placements, \$350 for short/medium placements (first four placements in a year), and up to \$1,400 per child for long term placements.

10.2 EDUCATION

	Basic Subsidy	Additional Loading Mandatory	Additional Loading Discretionary	Additional Allowance Mandatory	Additional Allowance Discretionary	One-off payment Mandatory	One-off payment Discretionary	Other	Not Funded by Dep't
Kindergarten	A~,Q,X ³				Z,T,V	W^	Y,W##,Q		
School clothing - uniforms & shoes	Y*,A*,Q,X^			Z,Q	T#,V	W^	T,Y,W##,Q		
Books & Stationery	Y,A,Q,X^			Z,W^	T,V	W^	T,Y***, W##		
Excursions under \$30	Y**,V,A=, Q,X^			Z	T		T,Y,W		
Excursions over \$30	Q,X^			Z	T,V		T,Y,A>,W,Q		
Private school fees	X^				Z,T&,V,A		Y,W		Q

These payments could be factored into the additional allowance of Board Special or they could be paid as one-off payments. * Basic ** Under \$20 in the NT ***Extra-ordinary costs only ~No charge ^Wards ## Non Wards ^ Education costs are subject to partial roll-up into the Basic Subsidy. Where the child or young person is in a foster care placement, the carer is expected to meet, from the basic Subsidy, the first \$250 per quarter for education costs. These costs include school fees, tutoring, hire and purchase of textbooks. Foster carers are expected to meet the costs of school uniforms, sports uniforms, writing materials, excursions and school camps from the Basic Subsidy. = Under \$50. > Over \$50.

⁴ First \$80 per week to be met from the Basic Subsidy. DoCS to pay costs above this. Reference to Kindergarten is to pre-school services – in NSW kindergarten usually refers to first year of school –

10.3 HEALTH

	Basic Subsidy	Additional Loading Mandatory	Additional Loading Discretionary	Additional Allowance Mandatory	Additional Allowance-Discretionary	One-off Payment Mandatory	One-off Payment Discretionary	Other	Not Funded by Dep't
Basic medical treatment	Y,V,A,Q, X^, T,W			T	V	Z	Q		
Basic dental treatment	Y#,V,A,Q, X^, T			T	V	W~	W~~,Q		Z*
Basic Pharmaceutical expenses	Y,V,A,Q, X^, T,W			T		Z,W~	W~~,		
Specialist medical treatment	X^		A		T,V,A	Z,W~	Y,W~~,Q		
Specialist dental treatment	X^				T,V,A	Z,W~	Y,W~~,Q		
Extraordinary pharmaceutical expenses	X^		A,W		T,V,A	Z,W~	Y,W~~,Q		
Ambulance	X^					Z,T,V,W~	Y,A,W~~,Q		
Public hospital	T,Y,A%, X^					Z,V,W~	W~~		Z,Q^
Private hospital	X^						Z,T**,Y,V,A+,W,Q		V

* Basic dental treatment is free while child or young person is in school. However, if they are 18 years and still at school, it becomes CY&F responsibility to fund costs. ** If the child is covered under the carer's medical insurance # Free general dental health care through school dental program %No charge + If carer insured ~ Wards ~~ Non Wards ^ Health costs are subject to partial roll-up into the Basic Subsidy. Where the child or young person is in a long term foster care placement, the carer is expected to meet the first \$1,000 per placement year, (for combined medical, optical, dental, pharmaceutical and ambulance costs, including medical appliances), from the basic Subsidy. This computes to approximately \$20 per week from the Care Allowance. Where it's anticipated that the child or young person will not remain in that foster placement for a whole year, DoCS will reimburse the carer for expenses in excess of \$250 per quarter.

▲Public Hospital is free in Queensland

10.4 RECREATION

	Basic Subsidy	Additional Loading Mandatory	Additional Loading Discretionary	Additional Allowance Mandatory	Additional Allowance Discretionary	One-off Payment Mandatory	One-off Payment Discretionary	Other	Not Funded by Dep't
Recreation/Leisure e.g. movies etc	Z,T,Y,V,A,Q,X,W		Z		Z,T*				
Hobby/Craft	Z,T,Y,V,A,Q,X,W		Z		Z,T*		V		
Sport/clubs	Z,T,Y,V,A,Q,X		Z		Z,T*		Y,V,W		
Holidays with foster parent/carer	Z,T,V,A,Q,X		Z		Z		T,Y,W#		
Toys	Z,T,Y,V,A,Q,X,W		Z		Z		T		

* If approved via case plan

Also generally covered by Basic Subsidy

10.5 FAMILY CONTACT

	Basic Subsidy	Additional Loading Mandatory	Additional Loading Discretionary	Additional Allowance Mandatory	Additional Allowance Discretionary	One-off Payment Mandatory	One-off Payment Discretionary	Other	Not Funded by Dep't
Travel	V	V**	Z,V,W#		Z,A	X	Y,W#,Q	T*	
Presents to family	Z						T,Y,Q,X		V,A,W

* Travel costs associated with family contact are met in different ways. Where the child is not under guardianship the parents may be responsible to meet the costs. Where the child is under guardianship, there are a range of scenarios including the case manager providing transport or arranging for an escort officer or service provider to provide transport. In some cases (especially for older children and where contact is regular and nearby) a taxi service may be used. In some cases the travel is provided by the carer and the carer is reimbursed. ** If written into case plan. # Could be either, and/or covered by basic subsidy for local area transport

10.6 SPECIAL NEEDS

	Basic Subsidy	Additional Loading Mandatory	Additional Loading Discretionary	Additional Allowance - Mandatory	Additional Allowance - Discretionary	One-off Payment Mandatory	One-off Payment Discretionary	Other	Not Funded by Dep't
Disability allowance	V**	X^	Z,T*,Y,A,W#,Q		Z		T		Z
Mobility aids			Z,V,A		Z,A		T,Y,W##,Q,X		Z
In-home services			Z,T,V,A,W#		Z,A		Y,Q,X		Z
Respite			Z,T,V,A,W#,Q		Z,A	X^	Y,Q		Z

NB (for New Zealand) – Some payments for special needs can come from other sources depending on the level of disability. For example, a support subsidy may be available through the Health sector when c/yp has an intellectual or physical disability.

* Where there are additional costs in providing care associated with the disability. NB (for Northern Territory) – Eligibility to be reviewed every 12 months in conjunction with case planning progress and based upon a detailed assessment. ** Centrelink payment may apply # Special Needs Subsidy (Loading) and/or special purpose subsidy ## Disability Services Commission (State) may meet these costs or they may shared with DCD ^ When approved as part of case plan.

11.0 COSTS OF SAMPLE CASES

The third method used in this analysis is to compare the costings of some sample cases. These cases were designed to give a range of typical case types in an attempt to give a more practical context to the information provided in the previous sections. These cases were designed in Queensland but confirmed as realistic by all contributors in the initial check of the proforma.

Four cases are used. The first three give a range of cases from a relatively low cost case (called the basic case) to a typical case to a more expensive special needs case. No attempt has been made to establish the proportion of cases that each level represents. The fourth case is a short-term emergency case which is costed for one week as compared with all other cases which are costed for one year. Each case has variations in an attempt to capture other issues such as remote/rural and sibling groups.

It should also be noted that these cases are intended to give an overview of the payment system and do not represent the extreme levels of costs that some placements can incur.

Section 11.1 gives the sample cases and the individual costings provided by each contributor. In some states there could be more than one answer because of the different programs operating.

Section 11.2 provides a summary of the information in table form.

11.1 Sample cases and individual responses

CASE A

"Basic case" - this case was designed to represent a case at the less expensive end of the scale.

1. Jimmy is aged five. He has resided with his current foster carer for eight months. The current case plan indicates that he will continue in alternative care for at least another twelve months. He has no siblings and monthly visiting contact with his mother who is in a psychiatric hospital. He is of good health and is currently reasonably settled in his behaviour. Calculate the foster payments paid for Jimmy during one year using the following parameters:
 - he commences school - his uniforms cost \$100 and his books cost \$50
 - he receives pocket money (however this is paid in your state)
 - he requires to see the doctor twice for minor complaints and receives two prescriptions
 - he receives "normal" gifts for birthday, Christmas and Easter
 - he belongs to a soccer team - which costs \$120 initially (joining fees and uniforms) and \$2 each week
 - he gives his mother Mother's Day and birthday gifts each valued at \$30
 - he attends movies and restaurants regularly with his foster carer at a cost of \$10 per month
 - the foster parent / foster carer drives Jimmy to visit his mother once a month - 75km round trip
 - the foster parent / foster carer provides all basic necessities e.g. food, clothing, shelter etc.

2. What would the additional payments have been if Jimmy has just started in care and in this placement on 01 January i.e. is there any establishment costs funded?

3. If Jimmy was in fact quadruplets who each have identical costs to what is described above what additional costs would there be (i.e. over and above four times the amount quoted for 1)?
 - the foster parent / foster carer cannot transport all children in her current vehicle? A minibus is required. \$40,000 to purchase extra insurance and fuel costs of \$50 per week.
 - extra furniture is required - \$1,000 for bunks and wardrobes
 - the house requires an extension - \$10,000.

RESPONSES - CASE A (No. 1)

NEW ZEALAND

School uniform and books	150.00
Pocket money, \$4.20 @52 weeks is included in basic subsidy	0.00
Doctor is free for under 7s plus prescriptions \$15 @2	30.00
NB: Each medical centre has different prescription fees. \$15 is the average costs from 5 Centres	
Gifts = each _ normal board rate, therefore for 2 gifts per year	104.00
Joining soccer fees and uniform	120.00
Ongoing fee of \$2 from basic subsidy	0.00
Mother's gifts - from pocket money	0.00
Movies/Restaurants with caregivers – from basic subsidy	0.00
Access visits to mother, reasonable travel costs, say 12 months @ \$25 per month, for 75 km round trip therefore	300.00
Basic subsidy \$104.00 @ 52 weeks	5,408.00
TOTAL	\$6,112.00

TASMANIA

School uniform	100.00
Books	50.00
Pocket money @ \$2.00 x 52 weeks	104.00
\$16.00 x 2 per prescription plus approximately \$10.00 x 2 for gap, doctors visit	52.00
Gifts approx \$30.00 x 2. Gifts not usually given at Easter =	60.00
Joining soccer fees \$120 plus \$2.00 x 52 weeks	224.00
Mother's gifts	60.00
10.00 x 12	120.00
75 kilometres @ at 33 cents per kilometre x 12	297.00
Board Payment \$56.00 x 52 weeks	2,912.00
Clothing allowance \$12.00 x 52	624.00

Total **\$4,603.00**

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Basic subsidy (157.10 p/f)	4,085.00
Pocket money	Nil
Clothing Allowance (initial \$299.75 – wear and tear \$358)	658.00
School Uniform and Books	150.00
Doctor - Medibank coverage	Nil
Prescription total	40.00
Gifts	Nil
Soccer team costs-initial costs	120.00
Movies/Restaurants	Nil
Travel (Visit Mother, approx. 60c/km)	540.00

Total **\$5,593.00**

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Basic weekly foster care payment of \$100.50 to cover basic food, shelter, clothing medical, presents etc.

Discretionary payments for:

Soccer team joining and uniforms	120.00
School uniforms	100.00
Books	50.00
Mother's day and birthday presents for his mother	60.00
Travel costs for access with mother	135.00

Total **\$5,691.00**

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Subsidy	4,719.00
Education Grant	600.00
Christmas Present	30.00
Birthday Present	30.00
Soccer Joining Fee	120.00

Total **\$5,499.00**

VICTORIA

Total yearly Caregiver Payment for five-year-old:

(\$160 per fortnight) 4,251.00

Additional Payments would be made for the following:

School uniform cost	100.00
School Books	50.00
Initial costs of leisure activity/soccer	120.00

Access visits to Jimmy's mother - the caregiver is eligible to have mileage reimbursed if financial reasons would otherwise preclude their attendance. However, requests such as these are assessed on a case by case basis.

Total **\$4,521.00**

NEW SOUTH WALES

ITEM	EXPLANATION	TOTAL
Start up schooling	Included in Allowance	Nil
Care Allowance	\$350 per fortnight	9,100.00
Pocket Money	Now incl. In Allowance	Nil
Gifts	Nil	Nil
Prescriptions	Included in Allowance	Nil
Soccer	Included in Allowance	Nil
Gifts to parents	Discretionary	60.00
Outings	Included in Allowance	Nil
Carer transport – access	900km@22.2c/km (base on rate for 2lts car)	199.80
Basic necessities	Included in Allowance	Nil
	TOTAL	\$9,359.80

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Foster Care subsidy \$97.90 x 52	\$5090.80
School uniform and books	\$150.00
Access travel 12 x 75 x 53.8	\$484.20

Total **\$5725.00***

* The travel cost should ideally be calculated at 53.8 but under current practice in the teams a set price may be negotiated. The travel could say "up to \$484.20". Could the total reflect this by looking like "\$5248.80 - \$5725.00 (currently depending on negotiated travel payment)".

QUEENSLAND

Foster payments for Jimmy during one year are as follows:

Foster Allowance \$92.56 @ 52weeks	\$4,813
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Child Related Costs (CRC)

Outfitting (includes school uniform, books, compulsory)	\$214.50
School fees	\$150.00
Sports team	\$120.00*
Presents	\$60.00
Mileage	\$450.00*
CRC Total	\$994.50

Total **\$5,807.50**

* if part of case plan

RESPONSES - CASE A (No. 2)

NEW ZEALAND

No additional payments

TASMANIA

There would not be any additional payments unless there were specific discretionary costs (e.g. clothing).

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Assumption that placement was 01 January.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

No change as of 01 January.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Establishment Grant (in care for first time) \$245.00.

VICTORIA

There would not be any additional payments.

NEW SOUTH WALES

There would not be any additional payments.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

If Jimmy was starting in care his carer may be entitled to Establishment Costs depending on what Jimmy needed and also, if it was a crisis placement, the higher subsidy would have applied for the first seven days.

QUEENSLAND

No additional payment.

RESPONSES - CASE A (No.3)

NEW ZEALAND

It is not likely that CY&F would place a family of four children with caregivers who required significant structural changes to their home as well as a new vehicle. CY&F would seek to place the child with caregivers who were equipped to manage them. CY&F would seek to place the child with caregivers who were equipped to manage them. CY&F might however, purchase additional furniture, therefore \$1,000.

TASMANIA

The principle of placing siblings together would apply and placement costs would be considered as part of the overall plan for the four siblings. The purchase of a minibus and house extension would require ministerial approval.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

No additional costs would automatically apply to the placement of a sibling group. The costs associated with minibus and the extension to the carer's home would require a submission to the Executive Director for a Special Purpose Subsidy (one off). This would also involve negotiation with Disability Services Commission as to cost sharing. The \$1,000 for extra furniture would require an application for a one off discretionary grant and would likely be approved as part of establishment costs.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

If the boys were not significantly different to Jimmy, and did not collectively pose a management problem, the costs would be similar to the above, but four times over.

However, the placement of quadruplets in foster care may be regarded as a Special Needs Group. A thorough assessment would be conducted to determine the children's level of need in relation to their physical care, supervision/behaviour management, auxiliary care and expenses, stress and restriction of activities and other special circumstances.

Approval of a Special Needs rate rests with the Office Manager.

Purchase of the extra bunks and wardrobes would be met through a discretionary payment. In the event that the placement broke down these items would relocate with the children to establish the next placement.

The house extensions and the costs of the Minibus would be considered as exceptional and would require approval from High management. The department may not fund.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

If Jimmy was quadruplets:

- The carers ability to house and transport four children would be taken into consideration as part of the placement process.
- FAYS would not purchase a vehicle for the carer or pay for house extensions out of the children's payments budget.
- Extra furniture requirements could be purchased from the Brokerage Fund or incidental expenses.

VICTORIA

Quadruplets would be regarded as a Special Needs Group, and would be eligible to receive the same Additional Payments as mentioned previously. The group may also, subject to assessment, be eligible for assistance in purchasing a minibus, extra furniture, building an extension.

NEW SOUTH WALES

- (a) Provision of a mini-bus is not guaranteed however, if approved, DoCS will meet 50% of the purchase or lease price.
- (b) \$1,000 cost of establishment furniture would be met.
- (c) This request would be considered by the Area Director from a specific submission prepared by the caseworker. The designated central Office Director needs to approve the request.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Quadruplets would be assessed as Special Needs and payments such as vehicle, respite care and assistance with housework would be assessed on a case by case basis. If the Special Needs were moderate the calculation would be:

Special Needs subsidy \$171.35 x 52 x 4	\$35,640.00
Leasing of vehicle \$830 x 12	\$ 9,960.00
Fuel and insurance \$50 x 52	\$ 2,600.00
Cost of additional furniture is met from Establishment Costs	\$ 1,000.00

While Family Services will meet reasonable costs of modifications to a home (e.g. wheelchair bound child requiring rails in the bathroom, or yard fences to contain a young intellectually disabled child) an extension to a privately owned, foster carer's home would not be approved.

TOTAL **\$49,200.00**

QUEENSLAND

If Jimmy was in fact quadruplets, the Department would seek to place the four children with foster carers who were equipped to manage them. Thus extra costs of minibus, furniture and house extensions would not be required.

Extra costs CRC \$1,000 (furniture)

Home improvements would be dependent on the case plan.

CASE B

"Typical case" - this case was designed to represent a more typical level of expenditure in the majority of cases

1. Richard is an eleven-year-old boy who has been in care for some time. He is currently exhibiting serious behaviour problems and has moved placement twice in the last year. Richard has a lot of problems at school and has regular tutoring to help with this. Richard has asthma, requires regular medication and sees the doctor regularly. He wears glasses for short sightedness. Richard sees his mother on a regular basis and visits another sibling who lives 50 km away in alternative care a few times each year. Calculate the foster payments paid for Richard during 1997 using the following parameters:
 - he receives pocket money
 - he requires to see the doctor every month for chest complaints and is on 2 prescriptions per month. He regularly uses a nebuliser which costs the foster carer \$50 who has also purchased specialist bedding at a further \$50
 - he has thrown glasses away twice. Replacements - \$150 (x2)
 - he receives "normal" gifts for birthday, Christmas and Easter - \$100
 - he belongs to a soccer team - which costs \$120 initially (joining fee and uniforms) and \$2 each week
 - he gives his mother - Mother's Day and birthday gifts and his brother cards valued at a total of \$50
 - he attends movies and restaurants regularly with his foster parent / foster carer at a cost of \$100 per month
 - the foster parent / care provider drives him to visit his brother four times a year - 100km round trip (total - 400km)

2. Would these payments have been different if Richard's foster carer had lived in a remote area?

RESPONSE - CASE B (No. 1)

NEW ZEALAND

Pocket money, \$6.50 @ 52 weeks is included in the basic subsidy	0.00
Doctor's visits, \$28 per visit x 12	336.00
Prescriptions @ \$15 per visit, say \$30 per month	360.00
Bedding	50.00
Glasses	300.00
Gifts for birthday/Christmas = each _ normal board rate therefore 2 gifts per year, therefore	117.08
Easter – from basic subsidy	0.00
Soccer team	120.00
Ongoing fee of \$2 from basic subsidy	0.00
Gifts to family from pocket money	0.00
Movies/Restaurants from basic subsidy	0.00
Access with brother, reasonable travel costs say, \$30 per round trip @ 4 visits per year, therefore	120.00

TOTAL **\$1,403.08**

TASMANIA

pocket money \$4.00 x 52	208.00
2 x \$16.00	32.00
gap \$10.00 x 2	20.00
neb \$50.00 + bedding \$50.00	100.00
glasses \$150.00 x 2 = \$300.00	300.00
Birthday \$100.00 + Christmas \$100.00, no Easter	200.00
soccer \$120.00 + \$2.00 x 52 = \$104.00	224.00
gifts	50.00
movies, etc*	1,200.00
400km x 33cents	132.00
Board payment @ \$56p/w and clothing allowance @ \$12p/w	3,536.00

Total **\$6,002.00**

* These costs would need to be approved

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Cost for the year:

Basic subsidy \$157.10 p/f	4,085.00
Pocket money (\$8 P/F)	208.00
Clothing Allowance (initial \$299.75 – Wear and tear \$235.28 x 2)	770.00
Prescriptions (\$40 per month)	480.00
Nebuliser	50.00
Special Bedding	50.00
Replacement Glasses x 2 @ \$150 per pair	300.00
Gifts	Nil
Soccer team initial costs	120.00
Movies/restaurants	Nil
Travel (400km @ approx. 60c/km)	240.00
Total	\$6,303.00

Richards behavioural problems and his special needs educationally and medically may make him eligible for a special needs loading which would be paid on top of his basic subsidy. This would require assessment and discretionary approval by the Zone Manager.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Weekly basic foster payment of	120.25
Cost of hiring the nebuliser	50.00
Cost of specialist bedding	50.00
Replacement glasses	150.00
Soccer team	120.00
Mothers Day and birthday gifts	50.00
Travel for carer to drive Richard to his brother	60.00
Total	\$6,733.25

Given Richard's placement history, combined with his behavioural problems, school difficulties and health problems his needs may be such that his carer would be eligible for Special Needs entitlement rate. His Caseworker would conduct an assessment of Richard's needs and submit this to their supervisor for approval.

If approved, the Special Needs Placement rate would be \$179.85 a week. This rate would be expected to cover the costs of Richard's regular prescriptions and nebuliser.

Total at Special Needs Payment Rate **\$9832.20**

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Subsidy per annum	5,083.00
Education Grant	600.00
Glasses	150.00
Christmas Present	30.00
Birthday Present	30.00
Soccer Joining Fee	120.00
Special Needs Loading (50%)	2,541.00
Medical Expenses	
Transport Costs	

Total **\$8,554.00 pa**

VICTORIA

ITEM	COST
Total caregiver payment for one year for 11 year old	\$ 5,798.00
Specialist bedding	\$ 50.00
Nebuliser	\$ 50.00
Glasses	\$ 150.00
Initial costs of leisure activity	\$ 120.00
TOTAL	\$ 6,168.00

The caregiver is eligible to have mileage reimbursed if financial reasons would otherwise preclude their attendance. However, such requests are assessed on an individual case basis.

NEW SOUTH WALES

ITEM	EXPLANATION	TOTAL
Pocket Money	Included in the Allowance	Nil
Prescriptions Nebuliser and bedding Glasses (total \$424)	Carer is responsible for the first \$1,000 for combined medical, pharmaceutical dental and optical for placement year.	Nil
Gifts	Included in the Allowance	Nil
Soccer	Included in the Allowance	Nil
Gifts to parents	Gifts to the family (discretionary)	50
Outings	Included in the Allowance	Nil
Carer transport – access	400km@22.2c/km (based on rate for 2ltr car)	88.80
Basic necessities	Included in the Allowance	Nil
Allowance (At Care +1)	Allowance@\$525 fortnight	13,650.00
	TOTAL	\$13,788.80

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Richard is likely to be assessed as warranting the Special Needs Subsidy at a category 3. Depending on the carer's income, Richard might be eligible for replacement glasses through the ACT Government's Subsidised Spectacles Scheme.

Special Needs Subsidy \$201.15 x 52	\$10,459.80
Contingency Payment – Nebuliser and special bedding	\$ 100.00
Contingency payment for glasses	\$ 150.00
Contingency payment for soccer – joining and uniform	\$ 120.00
Contingency payment to cover contact visits 400 x 53.8	\$ 215.00
TOTAL	\$11,044.80

QUEENSLAND

Foster Allowance \$138.32 @ 52 weeks	7,192.64
CRC	1,014.00

Total **\$8,356.64**

CRC breakdown includes:

Prescriptions 2 X 16 X 12 - 20 = 364

Nebuliser = 50

Bedding = 50

Soccer =150 *

Glasses = (150 x 2) = \$300

Gifts for family = 50

Mileage = 200

CRC Total \$1,014

6-10 sessions of specialist counselling at approximately \$30-\$45 per session (if such counselling could not be obtained through the government sector).*

* if part of case plan

RESPONSE - CASE B (No. 2)

NEW ZEALAND

If caregiver lived in a remote area, transport costs for doctor's visits and access may be different.

TASMANIA

There is no standard additional payment for placements in remote areas. However, there may be additional costs associated with travel for medical treatment.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

In remote areas mileage is reimbursed at a higher rate.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

There may be additional discretionary payments made to cover the costs of travel.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

No response provided.

VICTORIA

Additional payments related to additional transport requirements, etc, may be considered, subject to assessment.

NEW SOUTH WALES

No.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Does not apply to the ACT as we have no remote areas. If carers move interstate and orders have not been transferred then carers would continue to receive the rate of subsidy assessed against the child's needs. If for example they had to travel significant distances to access appropriate medical then there may be additional for travel costs from contingencies.

QUEENSLAND

No. If Richard's foster carer had lived in a remote area there may be additional expenses granted for travel.

CASE C

This case was designed as a special needs case.

1. Beth is a thirteen-year-old girl who has been in care since birth. She suffers from spina bifida and uses a wheelchair. She is beginning to demonstrate very challenging behaviours and is often destructive of her own and other people's possessions. She has limited contact with her parents but spends regular holidays with an aunt who lives interstate. Calculate the foster payments paid for Beth during 2000 using the following parameters:
 - a specialist doctor every three months, a physiotherapist on a fortnightly basis, an occupational therapist three times a year at a total out-of-pocket cost of \$2,000
 - she needs a new wheelchair as she has outgrown her previous one - \$900
 - she is on regular medication costing \$500 each year
 - she attends school and requires uniforms and books - \$200
 - she attends school in Handicab taxis \$1,000 per year
 - her foster carer uses a housekeeping service to help her cope 5 hrs/wk, total cost of \$50
 - Beth goes to a respite carer for one weekend/mth and for two one-week periods a year
 - she flies to her aunt's once a year for three weeks - return airfares \$500 - other costs \$50
 - she destroys or loses several outfits and other items such as school bags - \$500 per year
 - she receives pocket money
 - she requires to see the local doctor twice for minor complaints and receives two prescriptions
 - she receives "normal" gifts for birthday, Christmas and Easter - \$100
 - she belongs to Girl Guides - which costs \$120 initially (joining fees and uniforms) and \$2 each week
 - she gives her parents Mother's and Father's Day cards and sends her aunt a birthday gift - total value \$30
 - she attends movies and restaurants regularly with her foster parent / foster carer at a cost of \$30 per month
 - Beth causes damage to the walls in her bedroom, TV and lounge chair which costs \$2000 to repair
 - she attends two school camps per year \$300
 - the foster carer provides all basic necessities e.g. food, clothing, shelter etc.

2. What would the additional payments be if Beth's placement broke down and she moved to another placement which required \$6,000 modifications to make the house wheelchair accessible?

RESPONSE - CASE C (No. 1)

NEW ZEALAND

Specialist treatment costs met by Health sector.	0.00
New wheelchair – met by Health.	0.00
Medication – possibly met by Health. As medication is required because of permanent disability, child's GP could recommend that medication be subsidised. Otherwise CY&F would be responsible for all medication fees.	UNK
Uniform and books	200.00
Handicab taxi costs met by Education sector.	0.00
Housekeeping service \$50 /week for 52 weeks	2,600.00
Respite carer, 24 days / year @ 16.73 per day	401.52
Respite carer, 2 weeks / year @ 117.08 per week	234.16
Airfares and holiday with aunt	550.00
Clothing	500.00
Pocket money, (\$6.50 @ 52 weeks included in basic subsidy)	0.00
Doctor – 2 visits @ \$28 per visit, therefore	56.00
Prescriptions x2 @ \$15 each	30.00
Gifts – birthday/Christmas, each _ normal board rate therefore	117.08
Easter – included in basic subsidy/pocket money	0.00
Girl Guides	120.00
Ongoing fee of \$2 from basic subsidy	0.00
Presents for family from pocket money	0.00
Movies and restaurants from basic subsidy	0.00
Damage	2,000.00
School camps	300.00
Standard board rate plus 50 % special needs @ 175.62 per week, therefore	9,132.24
Clothing, @\$244.75 per quarter, therefore	979.00
TOTAL	NZ\$17,220.00/AU\$13,776.00

TASMANIA

medical	2,000.00
wheelchair	900.00
medication	500.00
school	200.00
taxi	1,000.00
housekeeping*	2,600.00
respite (as the rate is not set but determined on a case by case basis, the amount allowed is an estimate)	810.00
airfare etc	550.00
loss clothing	500.00
prescriptions $\$16.00 \times 2 = 32.00 + \text{gap } 20.00$	52.00
gifts $\$100.00 \times 2$, no Easter	200.00
Guides $\$120.00 + \$2.00 \times 52 = \$104.00$	224.00
gifts	30.00
entertainment $\$30.00 \times 12^*$	360.00
camps	300.00
board payment $\$60.00 + \text{clothing } \$16.00 + \text{pm } \$7.00 \times 52$	4,316.00
special contract care rate $\$137.00 \times 52$	7,124.00

Total **\$21,666.00**

* These would need to be approved as a board special payment or ongoing discretionary payments. Special contract care payments are included, as this scenario is likely to attract such payments. There could also be a case for additional board special payments.

However, this case scenario would almost certainly qualify for Board Special (additional payments in response to special needs). Board Special rates would probably also apply to payment to respite carer. Based on the previous response, it appears that some states have a set formula for calculating additional payments for special needs and they have added these costs. In Tasmania a set formula does not apply and each case is considered individually. There needs to be a footnote that highlights that the Tasmanian figures are based on minimum amounts paid and that the likelihood is that higher rates would be paid.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Basic Subsidy (\$236.60 P/F)	6,152.00
Pocket money (\$20 P/F)	520.00
School Uniform and Books	200.00
Clothing Allowance (\$381.50 + \$235.28 x 2)	852.00
Special Need subsidy/loading (200%)	12,304.00
(To cover medical/medication/travel/taxis/housekeeping/respice care/camps)	
Wheelchair (50% Disability Services Commission)	450.00
House Repairs	2,000.00
Lost Property*	500.00
Guides (initial payment)	120.00
Gifts	Nil
Movies, Restaurants	Nil
Airfare and costs to visit aunt	550.00
School Camps x 2	300.00

Total **\$23,948.00**

* Insurance may meet some costs.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

An Individual Care Package would be developed for Beth outlining the weekly foster care payment and the discretionary items required for her care. This package would be approved by the Manager and reviewed every three months. The package would outline what items and expenses are being covered by which type of payment.

An Individual Care Package for a child of Beth's age and based upon an assessment of a moderate level of need would be \$254.56 a week.

This payment would include:

all basic necessities food, clothing, shelter

regular medication

pocket money

consultation by Dr and two prescriptions

'normal' birthday and Christmas gifts

weekly Guides fees

costs of outings with foster parents

In addition the Department would meet the costs of:

cost of respite care	\$840.00
medical consultations with Specialists	\$2,000.00
travel to Aunt and associated expenses	\$550.00
initial costs of joining Guides	\$120.00
costs of repair to home (would be a discretionary payment covered by the cost of foster carer insurance)	\$2000.00

The Department of Education operates a bus service which transports children with disabilities to and from school and meets the costs of this service.

The costs of Beth's new wheelchair would be met by the Territory Health Services Disability Program.

TOTAL

\$18,747.12

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Subsidy	6,149.00
Education Grant	800.00
Incidental Expenses -	
Christmas Present	50.00
Birthday Present	50.00
Girl Guides joining fee	120.00
Air Fares	500.00
Special Needs Loading (100%)	6,149.00
Medical Expenses	
Costs associated with her disability.	
Total	\$13,818.00

Damage caused to the carer's house by Beth is covered by FAYS compensation.

VICTORIA

ITEM	COST	COMMENT
Caregiver payments for one year at \$391 per fortnight	\$ 10,166.00	Specialised Home Based Care rate (Loading 1)
Health Specialist services	\$ 2,000.00	All efforts should be made to ensure the client attends a medical practitioner or public hospital that bulk bills. However, if this is not possible DHS will pay the appropriate scheduled fee.
Wheelchair	\$ 900.00	
Regular medication	\$ 500.00	Pharmaceutical supplies are paid or reimbursed at the current scheduled pharmaceutical rates. Requests such as these are considered extraordinary and thus are reimbursed. It would assume the child/young person would have a Health Care and Medicare Card, and therefore these items could be purchased at a reduced rate.
Airfares	\$ 500.00	Child/young person would be eligible to receive such financial assistance, however, the request would be assessed on an individual case basis.
Girl Guides	\$ 120.00	
School camps	\$ 300.00	Child/young person eligible to receive financial assistance, however request would be assessed on an individual case basis.
School uniforms & books	\$ 200.00	
Handicabs	\$ 1,000.00	
		In regards to payment for property and goods damage, caregiver's own insurance would be considered and any additional financial support would be subject to individual assessment.

TOTAL	\$ 15,686.00	
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NEW SOUTH WALES

ITEM	EXPLANATION	TOTAL
Specialist Therapy	All therapy costs will be met by DOCS	2,000.00
Wheelchair	Special equipment will be met	900.00
Medication and Prescriptions	Carer is responsible for the first \$1,000 for combined medical, pharmaceutical dental and optical for placement year.	Nil
School Clothing	Included in the Allowance	Nil
Taxi	Provided by Dept of Education	Nil
Housekeeping service	\$2,600 Discretionary payment	
Respite	Respite costs will be met	1,425.00
Visit Aunt	Contact costs met by DOCS	550.00
Outfits destroyed	Special Needs payment would provide for this	Nil
Pocket Money	Included in the Allowance	Nil
Guides	Included in the Allowance	Nil
Gifts to child	Included in the Allowance	Nil
Gifts to parents		30.00
Outings	Included in the Allowance	Nil
Damage to carers home	If carer did not have private insurance, DOCS to meet costs	2,000.00
School camps	Included in the Allowance	Nil
Basic necessities	Included in the Allowance	Nil
Allowance (Alt Care+2)	Allowance at \$700 per fortnight	18,200.00
	TOTAL	\$25,105.00
	Or if housekeeping approved in case plan	\$27,705.00

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Intensive special needs subsidy \$328.85 x 52	\$17,100.00
Liaison with Disability Services re physiotherapist and OT support -	
Contingency payment for new wheelchair (liaise re medical aids)	\$ 900.00*
Interstate Travel	\$ 550.00*
One off discretionary payment for repairs	\$ 2,000.00
TOTAL	\$20,550.00

The wheelchair may be accessed through medical aids scheme and the school taxis are paid for by Education. Airfares will be booked through Family Services.

QUEENSLAND

Standard Allowance with High Support Needs Allowance \$198.32x 52 weeks	10,313.00
Child Related Coast (CRC)	8,521.00
Ex-gratia payment	2,000.00
Total	\$20,834.00

CRC comprises:

Specialist	2,000.00
Wheelchair	900.00
Medication	480.00
Housekeeping*	2,500.00
Dual payments	1,077.00
Airfares	500.00
Replacement	500.00
Girl Guides*	120.00*
Parents	30.00
School camps*	150.00
Outfitting	264.00

* Dependent on case plan

Total	\$8,521.00
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CASE C (No. 2)

NEW ZEALAND

Difficult to determine as children with permanent disabilities have a certain amount of funding attached to them. Health would be asked to reassess the need and determine whether child is still eligible for funding. CY&F would however fund the wheelchair ramp either wholly or partial (should Health costs not cover the full amount).

TASMANIA

One off discretionary payment of \$6,000 would need to be approved.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

An approach would be made to the Disability Services Commission to share the costs for the house modifications, with the result that either all or part would likely be met by the department through an application for a special purpose subsidy.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Costs for modifications to carer's home would be sought through the Aged and Disability Program of this Department.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The Children's Payments Budget is not used to upgrade carer's homes. An application could be made for the \$6,000 in modifications to be covered by the Brokerage Fund i.e. monies allocated to the alternative care providers to establish and maintain a child or young person in a placement.

VICTORIA

This issue would be assessed on case-by-case basis.

NEW SOUTH WALES

DoCS would meet the costs of modifications to a new Carer's home to facilitate Beth's placement.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

One-off discretionary payment for modifications \$6,000.

QUEENSLAND

Amount depends on feasibility of placement, but it could be paid.

CASE D

This case was designed as an emergency/short term case.

1. A family of four children aged 4, 6, 8 and 9 require emergency care for five days while their single mother is in hospital. These children were previously subjects of substantiated child protection notification and the family has had ongoing contact with the Department. They arrive in only the clothes they have on and all have colds and need to see the doctor. They also need to be treated for head lice infestation. What would be the costs of this care for one week if the children are in care and if they are not in care but department is funding in some way (if applicable)?
 - the foster carer purchases \$150 worth of clothes
 - each child requires antibiotics - 4 x \$16
 - head lice treatment for four children costs \$20

RESPONSE - CASE D

NEW ZEALAND

If children are in care:

Board payments	278.68
Clothes	150.00
Antibiotics, 4 x 16	64.00
Head lice treatment	20.00

TOTAL **\$512.68**

If children not in care, no costs to the Department.

TASMANIA

In Tasmania, the preference would be to place the children with a member of the extended family and there may be a variety of ways that a family placement could be supported including financial support.

If the children were placed in care for one week

Board payments	304.00
Pocket money	10.00
Antibiotics	64.00
Head lice treatment	20.00
Clothing	150.00*

TOTAL **\$548.00**

* Payment of clothing would need to be approved – normally for this type of placement the parents are responsible for clothing. If the parents were unable to provide clothing other options may be pursued before the option of purchasing new clothing.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Basic Subsidy (\$157.10 p/f each)	314.00
Clothes	150.00
Medication	64.00
Head Lice Treatment	20.00

TOTAL **\$548.00**

Note: Costs for visiting mother in hospital would be incurred for the one week and on a regular basis if mother's hospitalisation continues.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

The carer would receive a Crisis payment of \$543.00 for one week for the four children.

It would be broken down as follows:

0-4 years	114.50
5-7 years	125.60
8 – 11 years	151.45

The crisis payment would be expected to cover the costs of the head lice treatment and clothing purchases. The costs of the doctor consult and prescriptions would be paid as additional discretionary items.

TOTAL **\$607.00**

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Emergency respite placements attract a 100% loading for the first seven days.

Each of the four children would attract a daily rate of subsidy to cover the costs mentioned in the case study.

4 year old	\$24.14 x 5 days =	120.70
6 year old	\$25.93 x 5 days =	129.65
8 year old	\$27.93 x 5 days =	139.65
9 year old	\$27.93 x 5 days =	139.65

TOTAL **\$529.65**

VICTORIA

ITEM	COST
4 & 6 year olds in care for 1 week at \$76.50 each per week	\$153.00
8 & 9 year olds in care for 1 week at \$92.50 each per week	\$185.00
Clothes	\$150.00
Antibiotics x 4	\$ 64.00
Lice treatment	\$ 20.00
TOTAL	\$ 572.00

For children in care, the initial clothing money would be funded by the Department of Human Services as an addition to the allowance, otherwise via Placement Support Grant.

NEW SOUTH WALES

The four children would each attract for the carer \$175 each for the week. Additionally, each child would attract the Crisis Establishment Contingency of \$75. This contingency would be used to cover the costs of antibiotics, head lice treatment and clothing.

Total: \$1,000 for a week

The carer may also be paid the Short/Medium Term Establishment Contingency of \$350 per child, if warranted. Such payments can only be made for the first four placements with each carer in a financial year. Sibling groups are counted as one placement, with each child attracting the payment

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

4 children x short term rate \$25.65 per day x 7 \$718

If the children could be placed with an appropriate extended family member or family friend who would not be able to care for the children, either in their own home or in the children's home, without financial assistance, the same rate would be paid.

QUEENSLAND

Payment for 4 year old (includes bonus payment)	66.11
Payment for 6 year old (includes bonus payment)	81.71
Payment for 8 year old (includes bonus payment)	81.71
Payment for 9 year old (includes bonus payment)	81.71
Discretionary Outfitting payment for the four children	308.00

Total **\$619.24**

11.2 Comparative Tables - Sample Cases

Basic Case

	<u>NZ</u>	<u>TAS</u>	<u>WA</u>	<u>NT</u>	<u>SA</u>	<u>VIC</u>	<u>NSW</u>	<u>ACT</u>	<u>QLD</u>
Basic Case (Case A.1) Jimmy	\$4,890	\$4,603	\$5,593	\$5,691	\$5,499	\$4,521	\$9,360	\$5,725	\$5,808
Basic Case - newly in care (Case A.2)	No change	No change	No change	No change	No change	No change	No change	Establishment costs	No change
Basic Case - Sibling Group (Case A.3)	Furniture \$1000	Additional costs considered as part of placement. Purchase of minibus and house extensions requires Ministerial approval.	Additional \$1000 Minibus & modifications by negotiation with Disability Services Commission.	Special Needs Rate subject to assessment.	Furniture from Brokerage Fund.	Subject to assessment. Eligible for Special Needs payment for minibus, furniture and extension.	Consider 50% of purchase or lease of mini- bus. + \$1000 furniture + assistance with house extension if placement could not be maintained otherwise.	\$49,200	\$1,000 furniture from CRC. Additional components dependent on case plan.

Standard, Special Needs and Emergency Cases

	NZ	TAS	WA	NT	SA	VIC	NSW	ACT	QLD
Typical Case (Case B.1) Richard	\$5,449	\$6,002	\$6,303	\$6,733 If on special needs rate: \$9,832	\$8,554	\$6,168	\$13,789	\$11,044	\$8,357
Typical Remote Area Case (Case B.2)	Possible travel	Possible travel	Possible travel	Possible travel	[no response]	Possible travel, subject to assessment	No	N/A	Possible travel
Special Needs Case (Case C.1) Beth	\$13,776	\$21,666 additional payments considered	\$23,948	\$17,907	\$13,818	\$15,686	\$25,105 or \$27,705 with housekeeping	(a) \$20,550 (b) \$24,091	\$20,834
Special Needs Case Placement Move (Case C.2)	Requires assessment	\$6,000 Requires approval	\$6,000 by negotiation with Disability Services Commission	Aged and Disability program	\$6,000 from Brokerage Fund	Case by case basis	Will meet the costs of modifications	\$6,000	Depends on feasibility of placement
Emergency Care (Case D)	\$187	\$548	\$548	\$607	\$530	\$572	\$1,000	\$718	\$619

12.0 The provision of foster payments in Australia from the carer perspective

This section of the document provides comments on carers' experiences in receiving care provider payments, subsidies and allowances. The comments included have been drawn from carers and carer associations throughout Australia. The inclusion of a comment does not necessarily mean the situation applies throughout Australia, but rather that it is a significant issue for a particular group of carers. The comments are made in good faith as honest feedback and as an attempt to identify issues carers believe need to be addressed and modified in today's care system.

Looking after children is expensive. Looking after foster children is even more expensive. Carers who have monitored their own expenses in caring for and raising children claim that foster children are at least 50% more expensive to raise than their own children.

AFCA believes that:

- carers very strongly believe that children in care are the moral, legal and financial responsibility of the State/ Territory government - NOT the carers;
- carers should be fairly compensated for the challenging role they undertake; and
- subsidies and allowances made to carers should reflect the *real* costs of providing foster care for a child or young person.

Carers want to provide a professional quality standard of care for foster children and young people, and do not generally expect a "professional" salary to do this. Carers do, however, expect and need adequate, full and prompt reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses. They also require increased payments to cover actual everyday costs of providing care, so that they do not have to meet these out of their own pockets. Payment of subsidies and allowances should also recognise the specialist skills of carers and the skills they are required to use in providing for children from difficult backgrounds, with challenging behaviours or special needs or disabilities.

Carers are prepared to sacrifice their privacy, and give freely of their personal time and effort, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to achieve positive outcomes and quality care for the children and young people in their care.

Often carers become long-term parents by default because of delays in the system which have extended placements well beyond the originally agreed limit. They are then caught by their affection for, and obligation to, the children in their care. The decision to take on children long-term in these cases, therefore, was not informed by full knowledge of the financial commitment this entails.

12.1 Basis of payments

Many States and Territories have based their payment regimes on Lovering's¹ estimates. Lovering's estimates were regularly updated and published until 1999 by the Australian

¹ Lovering, K. (1984), *Costs of children in Australia*, Institute of Family Studies, Working Paper No.8, August.

Institute of Family Studies. Since then three models have been used to determine the costs of children. Two of these_ used data derived from the Australian Bureau of Statistics Household Expenditure Survey, to identify what is *spent* on children by *choice* to estimate the costs of children. The third model_, developed by the Budget Standards Unit (BSU), of the Social Policy Research Centre, UNSW, has identified the goods and services *needed* by a variety of households to establish the costs of children. This last method was used to inform the NSW government in making their most recent carer payment variations.

As at June 2001, a study on the costs of children in care is being finalised using the BSU method. In this study, the standard costs have been unpacked and re-packed specifically for the foster care sector. Extensive testing of the estimates throughout Australia has also been conducted to ensure their validity. Carers are looking forward to the publication of this study so that the discussion on the costs of children in care and carer payments is better informed and concerns can be addressed.

12.2 “Payment” terminology

There is a range of terminology used throughout the sector to describe the payment of subsidies, allowances, re-imburements etc. Some of these terms are specific, others are interchangeable.

There are carers experiencing difficulties when foster payments and allowances have been described as ‘pay’ on the statements they have to produce to establish a proof of income, entitlement eligibility or tax status with financial institutions, the Australian Taxation Office or at the time of applying for benefits available through Centrelink and State housing authorities. As payment of subsidies, allowances and re-imburements are usually considered to be tax-free and not to be declared as income, the careful description of direct credits to carers’ bank accounts and on other similar documents would significantly ease the administrative difficulties for these carers.

12.3 Uniformity in payments

There is no uniformity across the nation in policy formulation or in the application of policy relating to the provision of payments and allowances. Carers encourage the development of a more realistic and equitable national model to address this concern with, hopefully, a clear drawing together of all the issues. In the interim, carers also encourage a more consistent approach to the determination of the components of the standard allowances.

12.4 Payment of “real” costs

Carers recognise that there are various formulae used throughout Australia for determining the payment of allowances for children in care. We note that these formulae are generally based on a “normal” child’s needs. Carers also accept that there are

2 Valenzuela, R. (1999), ‘Costs of children in Australian households: New estimates from the ABS Household Expenditure Survey, *Family Matters*, Winter, Issue No.52:62:70; and Percival, R. Harding, A. and McDonald, P. (1999) *Estimates of the cost of children in Australian families, 1993-94*, report prepared for the Department of Family and Community Services, National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling, May.

3 Saunders, P. Chalmers, J. McHugh, M. Murray, C. Bittman, M. and Bradbury, B. (1998), *Development of Indicative Budget Standards for Australia*, Policy Research Paper No. 74, Department of Social Security, Canberra.

economies of scale that can be achieved when there is more than one person in the family unit. However, foster children are not 'normal' children with 'normal' children's needs. By virtue of being in care they have additional needs. These needs usually translate into needs for additional services, additional clothing (see 12.19), special equipment and more.

Carers also note that whilst the "basket of goods" figures are often quoted as the basis for determining the carer allowance rates, there are items not included in this approach which carers in various States are expected to absorb within their basic allowance. These include to varying degrees: housing; transport; school fees, transport and uniforms; child care; medical and dental expenses. It is of concern to carers that the number of carers is not keeping up with the demand for placements. One of the major reasons for this is the inadequate, late or non-existent reimbursement of the real costs carers incur. In other words, the standard subsidy is not meeting the basic costs of care.

12.5 Access to allowances

This document provides details of a range of allowances and entitlements available to support a foster placement. Evidence from the 2000 national carers' survey⁴ suggests, however, that carers often do not access many of the allowances and entitlements available to them. This is either through lack of knowledge about them, or because of the difficulty in gaining approval to access them. If Departments and agencies actively supported and facilitated carers to access such allowances and entitlements, carer disillusionment with the current systems and carer resignation rates could be significantly reduced. Volunteers in other sectors usually claim re-imbursment for such activities as a matter of course. Carers would appreciate the same practices being extended to them.

12.6 Carers' administration costs

Carers regularly incur significant incidental costs associated with placements. These include phone calls, postage and emails; and transport to and from case conferences, care planning meetings, court hearings, access/contact, training, support meetings and consultations. These costs are obviously higher in rural areas (see 12.23). Generally, these costs are ignored or the items are expected to be absorbed within the standard subsidy.

12.7 "Normal" children

Currently standard allowances and subsidies are based on the costs associated with "normal" children. However, the majority of children coming into care are not "normal". These children are in care because they have special needs, often as a result of negative experiences and abuse experienced prior to being removed from their families, or through not having their own family. In reality, children in care have a range of specialist medical, educational, developmental and psychological needs which are in addition to those of the "normal" child. These may have occurred as a consequence of the abuse/ deprivation suffered prior to entry into care or, they may be the result of being taken into care. Some of these problems may not be apparent at the time of placement and may manifest themselves several years later. For example, issues of abandonment and self-identity commonly arise at adolescence for children in care. These needs require considerable time, skills and financial resources from carers. Existing payment scales do not acknowledge or compensate for this.

⁴ Australian Foster Care Forum, July-September 2000, National Carer Survey on support provisions for carers.

Furthermore, studies have shown that these children are more seriously affected than in the past and carers comment that the children display more 'challenging behaviours' than previously. These children require considerable time, skills and financial resources to overcome their early histories.

In particular, children in care are often in need of extensive and extended counselling compared to their cohorts. Generally speaking, they are also educationally disadvantaged and may need extra tutoring or special programs at school. Social skills may be underdeveloped and inclusion in after-school activities or other sporting/recreational activities is encouraged to assist them to develop their potential.

All the above require financial input, either directly through the payment of fees or charges or indirectly through transport costs, equipment or uniform expenses.

Carers are prepared to facilitate the meeting of these children's needs but do not consider that they should be expected to meet them either in part or in full from their own pockets. Carers have also reported examples of special needs for a child being paid for by the "State" in one placement, but not in a subsequent placement for the same child, even though the needs remain unchanged.

Provision of foster care for sibling groups is recognised as a particular challenge for the sector. There is a limited supply of carers who are willing and able to take on such groups. Many carers are supported when they do take on such placements with special supports, services and facilities being put in place in recognition of the additional demands being placed on the carers. The goodwill of the carers is sorely tested, however, when such supports are then withdrawn without the carers' agreement, while the carers are expected to continue to maintain the placement.

12.8 Payment reliability

Carers generally receive payments on a fortnightly basis. There appear to be few problems with this system for carers with established and settled placements. Delays and short payments do occur, however, with crisis/emergency payments and sometimes with shared care arrangements. Discretionary payments and mutually agreed out-of-pocket expenses reimbursements often take much longer than two weeks to be received and can extend to in excess of six months.

12.9 Commonwealth government payments

In some States and Territories carer payments are reduced or ceased once a child in care receives a Commonwealth payment on a regular basis, particularly those relating to Youth Allowance and Disability Allowances. Carers have reported that whilst this may be a positive step towards a young person becoming independent, it often disadvantages the carers financially. They still have to provide for the care for the young person, do not always receive the board component of the allowance, and lose the "fringe" benefits/entitlements associated with the previous form of payment and which are not available under the new payment method.

Furthermore, some carers have reported significant reductions in the joint net income of carers and the young person in care when such practices occur. Some of these have been the vicinity of \$10 000 per annum, when a Commonwealth payment is received and a State/Territory payment is either reduced or ceased. Such actions have created tensions within placements or even destabilised them. The need for the young person to negotiate with the carer on issues such as board has created problems.

In some States where State payments cease when a Commonwealth payment is received, despite the fact that the Commonwealth payment is not meant to cover all the items the State payment previously covered. The disadvantages experienced by carers are significantly greater for those carers on lower incomes and pensions than they are for those who are supporting a placement through higher wages and other independent sources of income. Neither group should have to supplement the carer allowance to the extent they do.

12.10 Mutual obligation

Carers provide foster care on a 24-hour a day, 7 day a week, basis for the duration of a placement. If a child attends school, carers are often occupied during the 'child free' part of their day undertaking roles to support the child's placement. These include attending meetings and appointments, assisting at schools, arranging appointments for the child and other activities associated with disturbed or traumatised behaviours. Some carers report they have an agreement with the school to be available to collect the child from school during school hours in case of difficult behaviour. For older children who for some reason are not attending school, there are just as many demands placed on the carers to ensure the safety of the young person, attending therapy, counselling, alternative programs etc.

It is therefore disappointing to see that the Commonwealth government does not recognise a foster carer's contribution to society for mutual obligation purposes. There are numerous examples of cases where carers are placing foster children into occasional day care or making other child care arrangements, often at the carer's own expense, simply so that the carer can perform their additional voluntary work obligations 'outside the home' as is currently required.

12.11 Means testing

Carers do not support the means testing of their own incomes to determine a child's eligibility for a Commonwealth payment. Most children coming into the care system are eligible for Commonwealth entitlements prior to placement, and again on return to their own families. During a placement, either the parent(s), or the State/Territory are the guardians of these children, not the carers. It is therefore inappropriate to apply a means test to the foster child's temporary carers to determine a foster child's continued eligibility for payments. Carers strongly believe that the financial burden for covering the suspended entitlement whilst in care should not be left to the 'volunteer' to pick up. They commend the one State which makes a payment to their carers to compensate for this.

12.12 Access to Health Care Cards

Most children coming into care have been listed on a Health Care Card prior to placement. Before 1 July 2001 this entitlement was not routinely transferred with the child. Carers were then required to re-apply for a HCC and be means tested (see means testing above) to determine if the child should retain their entitlement. The ability to access such an entitlement facilitates significant savings on the costs of medications for the foster child. In some states it also allows the child to access state benefits such as Education Maintenance Allowance, pre-school fee relief and free Ambulance travel. Carers welcome the recent Commonwealth government initiative to make Health Care Cards available to all foster children in their own name.

12.13 Family contact / access

Carers' report they are often expected to cover the costs associated with family contact and access from their regular allowance, or from their own pockets, despite most States having a policy of covering such costs. These costs can include travel, accommodation, food, spending money for the child during access, and compensation for lost income whilst attending, supervising or transporting a child to contact / access. These costs often vary from one visit to the next and therefore need to be identified and provided for as separate payments, not from the carers' own pockets. Carers also regularly report that they have incurred additional costs when visits fail due to a 'no show' by the birth parent(s), or when visits are cut short without notice. There is a need for a better balance between facilitating contact / access, completing the required paperwork and carers not being out of pocket for such activities.

Carers do not agree with the practice occurring in some agencies/departments of ceasing the payment of their care allowance during contact / access visits which extend over night but are not of a significantly longer duration. Carers still have to meet the ongoing costs associated with maintaining the placement and often providing for the daily child's needs. Carers also have to put in additional effort to facilitate the access by preparing the child (even when the child does not wish to attend), supporting the contact / access whilst it is occurring through phone calls and visits; provision of food, medications, nappies and other special needs; collecting the child early if necessary, and then restabilising the child on its return to the foster home. When such events occur repeatedly, carers develop the belief that they are being used, physically and emotionally. They are also financially penalised for having to put in even more effort on these occasions. Perhaps some form of a "carer retainer" payment could be made on such occasions.

12.14 Child support

Carers have reported instances where workers have pressured the carers to claim child support payments from custodial parents where they have been in receipt of a child support payment from a non-custodial parent. Such impositions on carers are inappropriate and beyond the scope of the carers voluntary role and legal status.

12.15 Mileage allowance

All carer associations have reported that the figures provided earlier in this document do not reflect actual practice at the coal face. Mileage payments, when made, are usually lower.

An equity issue also exists in the payment of mileage allowances to carers as opposed to workers to transport a child to contact / access or appointments. Carers report that they are receiving a nominal or significantly reduced mileage allowance for transporting a child in their own vehicle when compared with paid workers who receive standard public service rates or significantly higher rates than the carers. There are also issues associated with paperwork requirements, and complex and demanding approval processes. Allowances, where pursued, are often not being paid in a timely manner or for the full amount agreed to in a case plan.

12.16 Respite Care

Carers consider they should have access to respite care without having to pay for it themselves. This should be seen as an integral part of supporting the placement and be a part of the case plan. Carers report dissatisfaction with the practice occurring in some

agencies/departments/States of ceasing the payment of their care allowance during respite periods. As in the case of short access visits, they still have ongoing costs associated with maintaining the placement, providing for the child's daily needs and replacing shoes and clothing not returned with the child. This is particularly so in short periods of respite of 2-3 days. Respite care is also used at times by carers to repair or restore the home to a "normal" state because they are unable to do this when the child is in the home. The arguments for retaining some form of "carer retainer" payment as suggested above (see 12.13) apply to both access visits and to respite care.

12.17 Discretionary payments

There have been variations reported in the payment of discretionary payments in all parts of Australia and in the processing of discretionary payments. Reasons for variations include, different workers (even within the same office or organisation); different locations within a State or organisation; varying interpretations of policy documents; and timing within the budgetary cycle. Insufficient funds and competing priorities for existing funds, for example school camp vs tutoring or essential orthodontic treatment for another child, are also cited. It is apparent that with budgets facing more and more constraints over time, an increasing number of children's' needs of a discretionary nature are not being met.

12.18 CPI increases

It is very rare for the full CPI increase to be passed on in carers' payments and allowances. The reality is that many carers receive a portion of the increase or no increase at all. An inequity exists here in that workers and residential carers are more likely to receive a greater or full flow on of the increase in their salaries. Also of concern has been the lack of any regular CPI adjustment to subsidies and allowances prior to the introduction of the GST, thus discounting the real value of the GST compensation.

12.19 Clothing, foot wear and leisure goods

Carers regularly report that they have difficulty in meeting the real costs of the child or young person in care. Of particular note is clothing and footwear, particularly when a child comes into a placement with none, fails to return from access or contact with their belongings, or when the child or young person is experiencing rapid growth spurts. Foster children also tend to be harder on clothing and footwear and less respectful of their belongings. The flow on impact of the GST on clothing, leisure activities and goods has also added to the costs burden for carers at a rate higher than was generally compensated for.

12.20 Education and school expenses

Some carers report satisfaction with the payment of costs associated with schooling, but others report difficulties in claiming payments, whether they are mandatory or discretionary. In general, many carers consider there is scope for a more equitable arrangement to be made to cover the costs of school uniforms (annually or as necessary), tutoring, subject fees and levies, school photos, school sport and extra curricular activities, excursions and trips. The criteria should be the benefit to the child, irrespective of the cost.

Carers do not support the practice encouraged in some agencies/departments of encouraging a child in care to take the "cheapest" study package option available. They

support every child selecting the package which will best meet the child's future needs, regardless of the cost structure.

12.21 Medical, specialist, dental, pharmaceutical, counselling, ambulance and Hospital

Carers generally use the free health system whenever possible or on departmental insistence. However, carers nationally have reported major difficulties in accessing public health services due to long waiting lists and geographical difficulties. This has in turn resulted in delays for those requiring treatment. Lack of timely access to some services, such as counselling, is also resulting in placement breakdown when carers are unable to sustain the effort required to assist a child or young person with major unresolved issues.

Many carers with private health insurance are prepared to add foster children in longer term or permanent placement to their health cover. The goodwill of this gesture is lost, however, when carers are unable to recover costs associated with legitimate items not covered by Medicare or health funds, gap expenses, and transport costs to and from appointments. Carers believe that the provision of these payments should be mandatory and not left to carers' own resources.

Many departments and agencies provide Hepatitis B and other necessary vaccinations free of charge to their carer families. Some, however, expect carers to meet these significant costs themselves. Carers are of the view that their risk of exposure to such diseases is significantly higher because of their carer role. Such costs should, therefore, be met in full by the appropriate agency or government.

12.22 Variations between government and/or non-government agencies

Variations in payments frequently occur between government and/or non-government agencies. Non-government agencies sometimes "top up" allowances and pay additional allowances to meet the real cost of children and young people in care. Non-government agencies often use independent sources of funding to do this. Carers are very grateful for this support from the non-government agencies as the money is being used to benefit the child, but also carers regret the relative disadvantage experienced by the children in the government systems.

12.23 Rural and remote location needs

Rural carers face higher costs both in monetary terms and those associated with 'lost' time compared with their metropolitan counterparts. This is due to factors linked to distance and the subsequent costs of travel and communication. Distances travelled for foster care activities such as access, education, specialist services and meetings are greater, as is the cost of fuel. Telephone charges are often higher, with community and STD calls charged on time and distance. Carers often need to contact workers who use mobile phones, as they are often 'on the road'. Regional Department offices are also often sited in major towns or regional centres. Furthermore, rural carers pay higher prices for basic items such as food.

Access to, and availability of, specialist health and some educational services is also limited in many rural areas. This, in turn, increases travel expenses to major centres.

12.24 Kinship care

Carers recognise the principle of kinship or relative care is a sound option for a child or young person who is unable to live with its own family. At present many kinship carers receive little or no support from within the formal foster care system. Carer Associations are concerned that the kinship/relative carers are not receiving the same amount of information, training and support as mainstream foster carers in providing care for children and young people who often have special needs and challenging behaviours. Of particular concern is the high number of grandparents on age pensions providing care for demanding and challenging young relatives without support from foster care departments and agencies. This increases the potential for these placements to break down and further damage the younger generation.

12.25 Protection and damage to carers' property

An ongoing concern to carers in most States/Territories relates to the wear and tear and damage caused to their property (home, contents and vehicles) as a direct result of their involvement in foster care. Most children in care have little respect for others property and belongings. This is shown by the number of insurance claims made by carers for damage to belongings, houses and vehicles which are directly attributable to foster children. Insurance companies regularly refuse carers' claims for damage caused by children in care to carer's property as these children have been 'invited into the home' and therefore deemed to be under the control of the policy holder. Where claims have been allowed, carers are then further disadvantaged by a loss of 'no claim bonus'.

12.26 Legal protection

Carers are concerned about their own legal liability. Their status varies from State to State. With the trend to an ever-increasing litigious society, carers are particularly concerned about their legal status, their legal liabilities and indemnification. The potential exists for them to lose everything they have, simply for the sake of performing a 'volunteer' role.

Another issue relates to the harassment of carers by the members and associates of the foster child's family. Carers are being advised by agencies and departments to pursue their own legal recourse in such matters rather than seeking the support of their agency or department to undertake such action on the carer's behalf. The personal pursuit of such action by carers is usually beyond them due to the costs involved and leaves them in a particularly vulnerable position.