

# Things you need to know about child care



## What help does the Government provide with the cost of child care?

The Australian Government helps families with the cost of child care through:

- Child Care Benefit
- Jobs, Education and Training Child Care Fee Assistance
- The 30 per cent Child Care Tax Rebate.

## What is Child Care Benefit?

Child Care Benefit helps with the cost of approved and registered child care. It is designed to help parents, foster parents and grandparents balance their work and family commitments. The amount of Child Care Benefit you receive varies depending on your family's income, the number of children in care, the type of care you use and meeting work test requirements. All eligible families are entitled to some Child Care Benefit regardless of income.

## How do I claim Child Care Benefit?

If you already receive Family Tax Benefit, you can claim Child Care Benefit for approved child care by calling the Family Assistance Office or by using the online services at [www.familyassist.gov.au](http://www.familyassist.gov.au)

If you do not receive Family Tax Benefit, you need to complete a claim form. You can request a claim form by calling **13 6150** or by visiting your local Family Assistance Office located in Medicare offices, Centrelink Customer Service Centres and Tax Office shopfronts.

## What is approved child care?

Approved care includes outside school hours care, family day care, vacation care, long day care, in-home care, and some occasional care services. These services are approved by the Australian Government to accept Child Care Benefit directly from the Family Assistance Office on your behalf, so you pay less out of your own pocket. You can ask your child care service if they are approved.

A work, training, study test is used to work out the number of hours that you can receive Child Care Benefit. It makes sure child care services are targeted to those families who have work related commitments.

## What is registered child care?

Registered child care is child care provided by grandparents, relatives, friends or nannies who are registered with the Family Assistance Office. In some circumstances it can also include care provided by private pre-schools, kindergartens and outside school hours care services. To receive Child Care Benefit for registered care, parents must be involved in work-related activities (including training or studying) at some time during the week that care is used.

## What is Jobs, Education and Training Child Care Fee Assistance?

Jobs, Education and Training Child Care Fee Assistance (JET Child Care Fee Assistance) provides extra help with the cost of approved child care to eligible parents undertaking activities such as job search, work, study or rehabilitation as part of an Activity Agreement, to help them enter or re-enter the workforce.

[www.familyassist.gov.au](http://www.familyassist.gov.au)



**Australian Government**  
**Family Assistance Office**

# Child Care Facts

JET Child Care Fee Assistance can help meet the cost of child care by paying most of the 'gap fee'—the difference between the total child care fee and the amount covered by Child Care Benefit—for care related to participation in JET Child Care Fee Assistance approved activities.

JET Child Care Fee Assistance payments are made directly to the child care service on behalf of parents. Parents will still make a contribution towards the cost of care.

If you have an Activity Agreement with Centrelink as a condition of receiving an income support payment, and you need **approved** child care to support your participation activities, you may be required to accept available approved care.

## How do I claim JET Child Care Fee Assistance?

You should speak to your Centrelink Customer Service Adviser or employment service provider who can provide you with an application form which details the information you need to make a claim. Alternatively, you can contact the Family Assistance Office on **13 6150** to claim JET Child Care Fee Assistance or for further information. You need to be starting or doing an approved activity (this includes a job) and using approved child care to undertake the activity to claim JET Child Care Fee Assistance.

A fact sheet about JET Child Care Fee Assistance is available on the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs website, [www.facsia.gov.au](http://www.facsia.gov.au)

## What is the 30 per cent Child Care Tax Rebate?

If you receive Child Care Benefit for approved child care you may also be eligible for the Child Care Tax Rebate which covers 30 per cent of your out-of-pocket expenses.

Out-of-pocket expenses are total fees for approved child care less total Child Care Benefit to which you are entitled.

## How do I claim the 30 per cent Child Care Tax Rebate?

The Rebate is claimed from the Tax Office in your income tax return for the year after the child care expenses were incurred. You can claim the rebate for out-of-pocket expenses incurred from 1 July 2004 to 30 June 2005 in your 2005–06 tax return. Child care fees you had to pay in 2005–06 can be claimed in your 2006–07 tax return. The rebate is not a 'cash in hand' refund. It is a tax offset used to reduce your tax.

Further information about the rebate is available from the Tax Office website, [www.ato.gov.au](http://www.ato.gov.au) or by calling on **13 2861**.

## How do I find an approved child care service?

The Child Care Access Hotline is a telephone service that provides you with information to help you choose a child care service that meets your needs.

The hotline will provide you with information about:

- child care services in your area
- types of child care available
- vacancies
- quality issues, **and**
- the financial assistance available to help with the cost of child care.

You can contact the Child Care Access Hotline on **Freecall™ 1800 670 305** (TTY Service **Freecall™ 1800 639 327**) between 8.00 a.m. and 9.00 p.m. (EST) Monday to Friday.

You can also find out information about child care services and which ones are most likely to have vacancies in your local area from the Family Assistance Office or your employment service provider.

## What should I look for when choosing a child care service?

When choosing quality child care, there are a number of factors to consider. These include the service location, hours of operation, availability of places and cost. Equally important is the quality of care provided—relationships between staff and children, the program, the physical environment and equipment.

The National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC) administers the Australian Government's Child Care Quality Assurance systems. Child care services must participate in Quality Assurance to be eligible for Child Care Benefit approval and other government funding.

Services that meet quality standards are Accredited by NCAC. Information about the Accreditation status of child care services and questions to ask when looking for care is available on the NCAC website [www.ncac.gov.au](http://www.ncac.gov.au) or by calling **1300 136 554**. NCAC also handles complaints about child care services related to quality.

Contact the Family Assistance Office on **13 6150** or [www.familyassist.gov.au](http://www.familyassist.gov.au)