Levels of Subsidies for all States & Territories and Foster Care Estimates 2000-2009

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Background

- Numerous enquiries into child protection matters
- Failures in child welfare systems have resulted in death of children ‘known’ to departments
- Inquires investigate all aspects of child protection systems including provision of OOHC
- Foster and kinship care main placement options
- Discussion on state of foster & kinship care
- Suggest recommendations to improve care provided to children & support carers.
2009 NSW Inquiry into child protection

- 2009 Wood Report (NSW) found:
  - Increasing numbers in care for longer periods
  - Children with increasingly complex needs
  - Decreasing pool of foster carers
  - Increasing numbers of kinship/relative carers.

- Report highlighted a need for:
  - Greater number & range of placement options
  - Placements with relatives & with siblings
  - Placements close to family/kinship networks
  - Foster & kinship carers to be better supported.
Carer Allowances & Payments

◆ Carer remuneration:
  ❖ Carer remuneration was inadequate
  ❖ Extensive delays in carer payments (e.g. reimbursements for additional expenses)
  ❖ Financial drain on carers disincentive to recruitment & retention
  ❖ Improved reimbursements would improved carer retention

◆ Carers’ financial circumstances:
  ❖ Many carers reliant on income support
  ❖ Kinship carers single older & poorer women
State of Australian OOHC

- 34,000 children & young people in OOHC
- Out-of-home care almost totally reliant on volunteer foster (47%) & kinship carers (45%)
- 8 Australian jurisdictions - legislation, policies
- Placements managed by NGO and/or Department
- Carers provided with allowance (e.g. TAS – board payments) to cover day-to-day costs of children
- Typical costs to be meet include the areas of: shelter, food, clothing/footwear, utilities, furniture, transport, leisure & personal care
Wood’s Recommendation (16.9)

- (16.9) Carer allowances should be reviewed periodically by an independent body & levels of allowance should more closely reflect carers’ actual costs
- Recommendation 16.9 **not** implemented
- NSW provides highest rate of carer allowances
- Allowance adjusted annually (CPI)
- Government to monitor rates
- Review if rates fall behind other states
What is known about the costs of children?

- BSU research on costs of children
- 2002 estimates of the costs of foster children developed: *Foster Care Estimates (FCE)*
- Estimates updated annually (CPI)
- Levels of carer allowances and FCE 2000-09
- Situates the various states according to the current levels of the FCE
Table 1: Weekly Levels of State Subsidies & FCE by Age of Child (December 2009) ($ per week)\(^{(1)}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of Child</th>
<th>TAS</th>
<th>WA</th>
<th>NT</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>FCE</th>
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<td>310/317(^{(2)})</td>
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### Table 2: Weekly Levels all States 2009 + 2010 (Tasmania)

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<th>Age of Child</th>
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<td>310/317 (2)</td>
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# Percentage Increase in Weekly Levels of State Subsidy 2000 and 2009

Table 3: Percentage Increase in Weekly Levels State Subsidy 2000 & 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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Percentages
Conclusion

◆ Budget standards approach - robust method
◆ Used in various countries to evaluate:
  ❖ adequacy of state benefits
  ❖ setting child allowances
  ❖ determining foster care allowances & maintenance payments
◆ Australian Costs Study methodology also used in the USA to estimate foster care costs
◆ National framework of care allowances?