

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



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- ◆ 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 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 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

- ◆ 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 met include the areas of: shelter, food, clothing/footwear, utilities, furniture, transport, leisure & personal care

## Wood's Recommendation (16.9)

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- ◆ (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?

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- ◆ 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

# Allowance levels all States + FCE 2009 (December)

**Table 1: Weekly Levels of State Subsidies & FCE by Age of Child (December 2009) (\$ per week)<sup>(1)</sup>**

| Age of Child | TAS | WA  | NT  | SA  | VIC | ACT | QLD | NSW | FCE                    |
|--------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------------------------|
| Age1         | 150 | 162 | 132 | 143 | 143 | 133 | 201 | 202 | 201                    |
| Age 3        | 105 | 162 | 132 | 143 | 143 | 133 | 201 | 202 | 200                    |
| Age 6        | 131 | 166 | 143 | 166 | 143 | 150 | 212 | 236 | 215                    |
| Age10        | 153 | 198 | 171 | 166 | 149 | 175 | 212 | 236 | 252                    |
| Age14        | 195 | 242 | 193 | 238 | 220 | 199 | 235 | 304 | 310/317 <sup>(2)</sup> |



## 2009 allowances (+ 2010 allowances) Tasmania

Table 2: Weekly Levels all States 2009 + 2010 (Tasmania)

| Age of | TAS        |            | WA  | NT  | SA  | VIC | ACT | QLD | NSW | FCE                    |
|--------|------------|------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------------------------|
| Child  | 2009       | 2010       |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |                        |
| Age1   | <b>150</b> | <b>175</b> | 162 | 132 | 143 | 143 | 133 | 201 | 202 | 201                    |
| Age 3  | <b>105</b> | <b>175</b> | 162 | 132 | 143 | 143 | 133 | 201 | 202 | 200                    |
| Age 6  | <b>131</b> | <b>201</b> | 166 | 143 | 166 | 143 | 150 | 212 | 236 | 215                    |
| Age10  | <b>153</b> | <b>201</b> | 198 | 171 | 166 | 149 | 175 | 212 | 236 | 252                    |
| Age14  | <b>195</b> | <b>232</b> | 242 | 193 | 238 | 220 | 199 | 235 | 304 | 310/317 <sup>(2)</sup> |

# Percentage Increase in Weekly Levels of State Subsidy 2000 and 2009

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

| Age of Child       | TAS        | WA         | NT | SA         | VIC | ACT | QLD        | NSW | FCE       |
|--------------------|------------|------------|----|------------|-----|-----|------------|-----|-----------|
| <i>Percentages</i> |            |            |    |            |     |     |            |     |           |
| 0-1                | <b>114</b> | 82         | 36 | 68         | 68  | 45  | <b>164</b> | 15  | <b>28</b> |
| 3                  | 50         | 82         | 36 | 68         | 86  | 45  | <b>116</b> | 15  | <b>28</b> |
| 6                  | 87         | 87         | 42 | 82         | 86  | 43  | 86         | 35  | <b>28</b> |
| 10                 | <b>113</b> | <b>104</b> | 43 | 69         | 60  | 42  | 86         | 35  | <b>28</b> |
| 14                 | <b>117</b> | 70         | 42 | <b>102</b> | 40  | 41  | 70         | 74  | <b>28</b> |

- ◆ 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 estimated foster care costs
- ◆ National framework of care allowances?