



HealthyStart

A national strategy for children of
parents with learning difficulties

The number and characteristics of parents with intellectual disability from Centrelink income support administrative data

Technical report 2

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THE UNIVERSITY OF
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Parenting Research Centre
raising children well

The number and characteristics of parents with intellectual disability from Centrelink income support administrative data: Technical report 2



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The results or views expressed are those of the authors, and not necessarily those of the members of the reference group or of the data custodians or the data-collecting agencies and institutions.

Ethics approval

This study on the prevalence and characteristics of parents with intellectual disability in Australia is approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Sydney (Protocol No.: 15293).

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Amendments

Please note that there is the potential for minor revisions of data in this report. Please check the online version at < www.healthystart.net.au > for any amendments.

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List of abbreviations

CA	Carer Allowance
CI	confidence interval
CP	Carer Payment
DSP	Disability Support Pension
DSS	Australian Government Department of Social Services
FTB	Family Tax Benefit
NSA	Newstart Allowance
OR	odds ratio
PP	Parenting Payment

Executive summary

This technical report details the processes undertaken to estimate the number of parents with intellectual disability on social security payments in Australia and their characteristics at a given time period.

Method

We conducted an investigation of national administrative data sources in which both intellectual disability and parenthood could be identified. This investigation is part of a larger project funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS) as part of *Healthy Start. A national strategy for children of parents with learning difficulties* (www.healthystart.net.au). At the request of DSS, a dataset was built from Centrelink administrative databases by extracting records of clients on Disability Support Pension, Parenting Payment and Carer Payment, as well as clients on Newstart Allowance who have Family Tax Benefit qualifying children. Parenthood was determined as 'having one or more Family Tax Benefit qualifying children'. The built dataset (referred to hereafter as 'the Centrelink dataset') permitted investigation of the number and characteristics of Family Tax Benefit qualifying parents with intellectual disability among Centrelink social security payment recipients on Disability Support Pension and Parenting Payment.

Findings

A total of 5,160 parents with intellectual disability were identified in the Centrelink dataset in the selected fortnight ending 24 June 2011. A further 52,690 parents with other disabilities on Disability Support Pension and 429,290 non-disabled parents on Parenting Payment were identified. Parents with other disabilities and non-disabled parents formed two groups for comparison with the group of interest, that is, parents with intellectual disability.

Demographic characteristics of parents with intellectual disability

Parents with intellectual disability were:

- less likely to be female compared with non-disabled parents, but more likely to be female when compared with parents with other disabilities
- similar in age to that of non-disabled parents, but significantly younger than parents with other disabilities
- more likely to be Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander compared with parents with other disabilities and non-disabled parents
- more likely to be born in Australia compared with parents with other disabilities and non-disabled parents.

Partnership status of parents with intellectual disability

Parents with intellectual disability were:

- more likely to declare that they had a partner compared with non-disabled parents
- among those with partners, more likely to have a partner with intellectual disability compared with parents with other disabilities and non-disabled parents.

- among those with partners, more likely to have a partner with other disabilities compared with non-disabled parents.

Care of children with disability by parents with intellectual disability

Parents with intellectual disability were more likely to receive Carer Allowance for the care of a child or children with disability compared with parents with other disabilities and non-disabled parents.

Home-tenure status of parents with intellectual disability

Parents with intellectual disability were:

- less likely to be home owners (solely or joint with someone else) compared with parents with other disabilities and non-disabled parents
- more likely to be in government housing compared with non-disabled parents.

State of usual residence of parents with intellectual disability

Parents with intellectual disability were more likely to reside in the Northern Territory than in any other state or territory in Australia, compared with parents with other disabilities and non-disabled parents.

Summary

Compared with other Australian parents, parents with intellectual disability were more likely to be caring for a child with disability, more likely to be in public housing and more likely to live in the Northern territory. This investigation has demonstrated the utility of interrogating administrative data sets to gain insights into the comparative number and characteristics of particular sub-groups in the parent population.

Main report

Background

The investigation reported here forms part of a larger study on the prevalence and characteristics of parents with intellectual disability in Australia. The larger study is being conducted under the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS) funded *Healthy Start. A national strategy for children of parents with learning difficulties* (www.healthystart.net.au).

In Technical report 1 we reported on the prevalence and characteristics of parents with intellectual disability in Australia, using national survey data (Man et al., 2014). In this technical report, we report on prevalence and parent characteristics using national administrative data, specifically, social security payments.

A particular challenge in using routinely collected administrative data is that data on disability is rarely collected in a detailed manner, and the way in which disability is defined may vary according to the purpose of data collection and the process used. Data fidelity can also be a problem, unless there are clear specifications and standard rules for data collection.

That said, administrative datasets may be particularly useful for providing detailed information on the situation of people with disabilities. They enable comparisons between people with and without disabilities and typically also permit comparisons according to demographic characteristics such as age, gender, and ethnicity and Indigenous status. This approach is relevant for gaining information on diverse and disadvantaged groups of people with disability and for developing disability-inclusive policy in line with Australia's National Disability Strategy 2010–2020 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011; Disability Policy and Research Working Group, 2011).

An advantage of social security payment administrative data is that it relates to the whole population in the database, thus permitting a robust sample size. Using administrative data from social security payment recipients allows investigation of specific groups eligible for these payments. An additional benefit is reduced cost, because the data is routinely collected, although costs remain for data extraction and, in the case of this study, the creation of a purpose-built dataset.

Method

Extracted Centrelink administrative data

To create the Centrelink dataset for this study, the point-in-time data for the fortnights ending on the last Friday of June for the period 2009–2013 (26 June 2009, 25 June 2010, 24 June 2011, 29 June 2012 and 28 June 2013) were extracted from Centrelink administrative data records by the DSS Data Unit.

The records of the following clients were extracted:

- all clients on Disability Support Pension (DSP)
- all clients on Parenting Payment (PP)
- all clients on Carer Payment (CP) and
- clients on Newstart Allowance (NSA) identified as parents with Family Tax Benefit (FTB) qualifying children.

These payments cover the majority of clients who are on social security payments as a form of main income support and who have FTB-qualifying children. (See below on definition of parents.) Youth Allowance, Austudy and ABSTUDY are the other forms of main income support payments where parents aged 16–64 years may be identified. A person may receive only one of the main income support payments at a given point in time. Individuals may, however, transfer from one payment type to another depending on their circumstances and Centrelink approval. (See Appendices for eligibility criteria and explanation of payments related to data in the extracted dataset.)

Definition of parents

Parents can only be identified in the Centrelink dataset by having one or more FTB-qualifying children. An FTB-qualifying child must be:

- aged 15 years or under, or
- aged 16 to 19 years and still dependent as a full-time student.

The child must be in full-time study or exempt from this requirement by the state or territory education authority, and in the parent's primary care for at least 35% of the time (Australian Government Family Assistance Office, 2011).

Definition of disability and intellectual disability

Disability is identified in the dataset by the person being a recipient of DSP. The disability assessment criteria for receiving DSP in 2011 were as follows:

- must have a physical, intellectual or psychiatric impairment assessed at 20 points or more under impairment tables (Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 1997), and
- inability, as a result of impairment, to work for 15 hours or more per week for the next two years, and
- inability, as a result of impairment, to undertake training activity which would equip the person for work within the next two years, or
- be permanently blind (Australian Government Family Assistance Office, 2011; Daniels, 2011).

Intellectual disability was identified by being a primary disability or a manifest condition. For the purposes of this study, all DSP recipients in the dataset who were not identified as having intellectual disability were defined as people with other disabilities.

Comparison groups

To understand the situation of parents with intellectual disability relative to other parents on income support payments from Centrelink, two comparison groups were selected from the dataset, as follows:

- parents with other disabilities, i.e., all DSP recipients not identified with intellectual disability
- parents on PP without any identified disability. These formed the comparison group of non-disabled parents. Age criterion was kept consistent with DSP by including only PP clients who were aged 16 years and over, and parenthood definition was kept consistent by only including those parents who reported having one or more FTB-qualifying children. People on NSA were not used for comparison, because only people aged 21 years and over were eligible for NSA in

June 2011, which was different from the age eligibility criteria of 16 years and over for DSP (see Appendix 2). We decided to also exclude people on CP, so that differences due to policy changes may be more easily explained. An advantage of using parents on PP as a comparison group is that their age distribution was most similar to parents with intellectual disability, compared with non-disabled parents on the other two payment types (CP and NSA).

The derivation of these groups is shown in Figure 1. The numbers in each group are in square brackets.

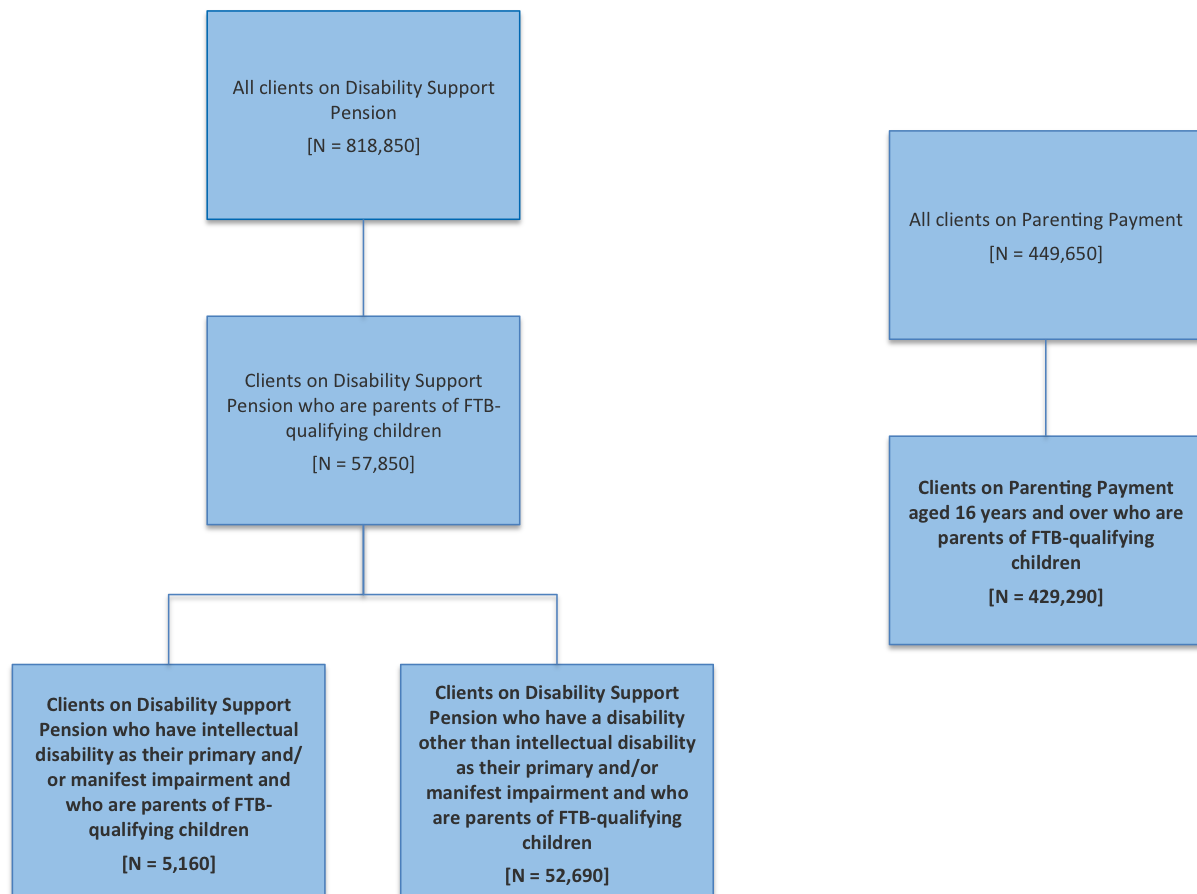


Figure 1: Operational definition of the three groups of parents (in bold) under analysis. Number of clients (N) is rounded to the nearest ten.

Statistical analysis

The data from 24 June 2011 were analysed for demographic characteristics and living circumstances of parents with intellectual disability in comparison with parents with other disabilities and non-disabled parents (that is, parents on PP).

Analyses were conducted to answer the following questions:

1. How many parents with intellectual disability are there in the Centrelink administrative database?
2. What are the demographic characteristics of parents with intellectual disability, compared with parents with other disabilities and non-disabled parents?
3. What is the partnership status of parents with intellectual disability, compared with parents with other disabilities and non-disabled parents?
4. What proportion of parents with intellectual disability has children with disability under their care, compared with parents with other disabilities and non-disabled parents?
5. What is the home-tenure status of parents with intellectual disability, compared with parents with other disabilities and non-disabled parents?
6. In which state or territory do parents with intellectual disability reside, compared with parents with other disabilities and non-disabled parents?

In examining group differences, a p -value of less than 0.05 was used as the threshold for statistical significance. As the dataset comprises a large number of client records, the majority of group comparisons were statistically significant. Therefore, an odds ratio (OR) greater than 1.5 or less than 0.67 was used as the threshold for determining practical significance of group differences. ORs are used to assess the extent of differences between parents with intellectual disability and other parents, with 95% confidence intervals (CI) estimated as an indicator of the extent of error in corresponding estimates.

Results

Question 1. *How many parents with intellectual disability are there in the Centrelink administrative database?*

A total of 5,160 parents with intellectual disability was identified in the Centrelink dataset in the fortnight ending 24 June 2011. In the comparison groups, 52,690 parents with other disabilities and 429,290 non-disabled parents were identified (Figure 1).

Question 2. *What are the demographic characteristics of parents with intellectual disability, compared with parents with other disabilities and non-disabled parents?*

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of parents in the dataset in June 2011 and addresses Question 2.

- While parents overall were predominantly female, parents with intellectual disability were less likely to be female compared with non-disabled parents, but more likely to be female when compared with parents with other disabilities (even among parents who had a partner).

- The age distribution of parents with intellectual disability was similar to that of non-disabled parents, but parents with other disabilities were significantly older than parents with intellectual disability.
- Parents with intellectual disability were more likely to be of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background, compared with parents with other disabilities and non-disabled parents.
- Parents with intellectual disability were more likely to be born in Australia compared with parents with other disabilities and non-disabled parents.

Table 2 shows the living circumstances of parents in the dataset in June 2011 and it addresses questions 3, 4 and 5.

Question 3. *What is the partnership status of parents with intellectual disability, compared with parents with other disabilities and non-disabled parents?*

- Parents with intellectual disability were more likely to declare that they had a partner compared with non-disabled parents.
- Parents with intellectual disability with partners were more likely to have a partner with intellectual disability identified as a primary or manifest condition compared with parents with other disabilities and non-disabled parents.
- Parents with intellectual disability were more likely to have a partner with other disabilities compared with non-disabled parents.

Question 4. *What proportion of parents with intellectual disability have children with disability under their care, compared with parents with other disabilities and non-disabled parents?*

- Parents with intellectual disability were more likely to receive CA for the care of children with disability compared with parents with other disabilities and non-disabled parents.

Question 5. *What is the home-tenure status of parents with intellectual disability, compared with parents with other disabilities and non-disabled parents?*

- Parents with intellectual disability were less likely to be home owners (solely or joint with someone else) compared with parents with other disabilities and non-disabled parents.
- Parents with intellectual disability were more likely to be in government housing compared with non-disabled parents.

Table 3 shows the state or territory of usual residence of parents in the Centrelink dataset in June 2011 and addresses Question 6.

Question 6. *In which state or territory do parents with intellectual disability reside, compared with parents with other disabilities and non-disabled parents?*

- Parents with intellectual disability were more likely to be in the Northern Territory than in any other state or territory in Australia, compared with parents with other disabilities and non-disabled parents.

Limitations of the extracted Centrelink social security payment dataset

Although there are advantages in using a Centrelink payment dataset, it is unlikely that the purpose-built dataset included all parents with intellectual disability in Australia, for the following reasons:

- Only people receiving the selected Centrelink payments were included in the purpose-built dataset. Findings from Technical report 1 for this study, using 2010 data from Australia's nationally representative General Social Survey, indicated a proportion of parents (including parents with intellectual disability) do not receive Centrelink payments as their main source of income (Man et al., 2014). Therefore, findings from the current analysis may not be generalisable to the entire population of parents with intellectual disability.
- Only recipients of DSP were identified as having a disability. There may be parents in the dataset who have disabilities but who have not applied, or have been rejected for DSP. This means that in the dataset there may be parents with intellectual disability or other disabilities not receiving DSP who were included in our non-disabled parents group.
- Only one disability is recorded as the primary disability. Therefore, in the dataset there may be parents with intellectual disability receiving DSP based on a condition other than intellectual disability because their intellectual disability is not their primary disability or manifest condition (e.g., physical disability is recorded as their primary disability).

It is also possible that the purpose-built dataset did not include all parents, for the following reasons:

- Only those parents who received FTB fortnightly were identified in the dataset. Parents were able to claim an annual payment at or up to one year after the end of each financial year. As the dataset did not identify parents who claim FTB annually, findings from the current analysis may not include every parent receiving social security payments in the extracted Centrelink dataset.
- Because FTB is a family-based payment, the amount of which is determined on a per child basis, only one member of a couple needs to be identified as the main FTB claimant in the dataset for the full amount to be claimed. This means that the other member of the couple may not be directly identified as a parent.

Furthermore, not all FTB-qualifying parents were actually parents. Guardians who had care of children 35% or more of the time (e.g., grandparent or foster carer) may be identified as an FTB-qualifying parent.

A final limitation of the dataset is that, although random error is minimal due to the large sample size some degree of error may remain due to reporting bias. For example, Centrelink clients may not report having a partner because eligibility requirements are more stringent and the amount of benefit paid is lower when a client has a partner.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of parents with intellectual disability, compared with parents with other disabilities and non-disabled parents, from the Centrelink dataset for 24 June 2011

Characteristic	Estimated % within each parent group			p-value [OR (95% CI)]	
	Parents with intellectual disability (N = 5,160 ^a)	Parents with other disabilities (N = 52,690 ^a)	Non-disabled parents (N = 429,290 ^a)	vs. parents with other disabilities	vs. non-disabled parents
Gender				< 0.001	< 0.001
Male	10.4	18.3	4.5	[Ref]	[Ref]
Female	89.6	81.7	95.5	[1.94 (1.77–2.12)]	[0.41 (0.37–0.45)]
Age				< 0.001	0.93
Under 20 years old	1.9	0.1	2.5	--	--
20–29 years old	36.5	6.0	33.2	Linear OR ^b	Linear OR ^b
30–39 years old	36.3	27.6	39.3	[0.32 (0.31–0.33)]	[1.00 (0.97–1.03)]
40–49 years old	20.2	42.8	21.5	--	--
50 years old and over	5.2	23.5	3.6	--	--
Indigenous status				< 0.001	< 0.001
Not Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	85.7	91.8	90.2	[Ref]	[Ref]
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	14.3	8.2	9.8	[1.87 (1.72–2.04)]	[1.54 (1.42–1.66)]
Birth country				< 0.001	< 0.001
Born in Australia	94.3	74.8	77.2	[5.57 (4.94–6.29)]	[4.89 (4.34–5.50)]
Not born in Australia	5.7	25.2	22.8	[Ref]	[Ref]

Notes: ^a Rounded to the nearest ten.

^b Linear OR is the OR of being in the next higher age category (of parents with intellectual disability versus non-disabled parents and parents with other disabilities).

Table 2: Living circumstances of parents with intellectual disability, compared with parents with other disabilities and non-disabled parents, from the Centrelink dataset for 24 June 2011

Characteristic	Estimated % within each parent group			<i>p</i> -value [OR (95% CI)]	
	Parents with intellectual disability (<i>N</i> = 5,160 ^a)	Parents with other disabilities (<i>N</i> = 52,690 ^a)	Non-disabled parents (<i>N</i> = 429,290 ^a)	vs. parents with other disabilities	vs. non-disabled parents
<i>Having a partner (married or de facto)</i>				< 0.001	< 0.001
Has a partner	40.9	38.4	23.8	[1.11 (1.05–1.18)]	[2.22 (2.10–2.35)]
Does not have a partner	59.1	61.6	76.2	[Ref]	[Ref]
<i>Partner had a disability (identified via DSP data)^b</i>				< 0.001	< 0.001
Partner had intellectual disability	16.6	1.3	1.1	[15.5 (13.0–18.5)]	[20.7 (18.07–23.62)]
Partner had other disabilities	14.9	15.5	8.0	[1.17 (1.03–1.33)]	[2.47 (2.19–2.80)]
Partner not identified with a disability	68.5	83.2	91.0	[Ref]	[Ref]
<i>Carer Allowance (CA) for child(ren) with disability</i>				< 0.001	< 0.001
Receives CA for child(ren)	21.5	13.7	7.3	[1.72 (1.61–1.85)]	[3.47 (3.24–3.71)]
Does not receive CA for child(ren)	78.5	86.3	92.7	[Ref]	[Ref]
<i>Home-tenure status</i>				< 0.001	< 0.001
Home owner ^c	10.2	28.3	19.0	[0.29 (0.26–0.32)]	[0.61 (0.55–0.66)]
In government housing ^d	28.0	22.5	11.2	[0.99 (0.92–1.05)]	[2.82 (2.65–3.00)]
All others	61.8	49.1	69.8	[Ref]	[Ref]

Notes: ^a Rounded to the nearest ten.

^b This is reported within the subset of those who have a partner.

^c This includes those with life tenancy rights (i.e., those having a legal right to live on a property for the duration of his/her life, e.g., in a granny flat), and those who are purchasing or own a home, whether solely or with someone else.

^d This includes a small proportion of parents (< 0.01%) in government-funded nursing homes.

Table 3: State or territory of usual residence of parents with intellectual disability, compared with parents with other disabilities and non-disabled parents, from the Centrelink dataset for 24 June 2011

Characteristic	Estimated % within each parent group			p-value [OR (95% CI)]	
	Parents with intellectual disability (N = 5,160 ^a)	Parents with other disabilities (N = 52,690 ^a)	Non-disabled parents (N = 429,290 ^a)	vs. parents with other disabilities	vs. non-disabled parents
<i>State/territory of usual residence^b</i>				< 0.001	< 0.001
Northern Territory	5.1	1.6	1.6	[Ref]	[Ref]
Australian Capital Territory	0.5	1.0	0.9	[0.15 (0.10–0.24)]	[0.18 (0.12–0.27)]
New South Wales	27.1	32.2	32.9	[0.26 (0.22–0.30)]	[0.27 (0.23–0.31)]
Victoria	23.0	24.8	22.7	[0.28 (0.24–0.33)]	[0.33 (0.29–0.38)]
Queensland	23.8	19.5	22.0	[0.37 (0.32–0.43)]	[0.35 (0.31–0.40)]
South Australia	8.5	9.6	7.7	[0.27 (0.23–0.32)]	[0.36 (0.31–0.42)]
Western Australia	7.1	7.7	9.3	[0.28 (0.24–0.34)]	[0.25 (0.21–0.29)]
Tasmania	4.9	3.7	3.0	[0.41 (0.33–0.49)]	[0.53 (0.45–0.64)]

Notes: ^a Rounded to the nearest ten.

^b State/territory assignment is based on postcode information from Australia Post (www.postconnect.com.au/postcode-data, accessed 14 April 2014). Note: certain postcodes (namely 0872, 2540, 2618, 2620, 3585, 3644, 4383, 4825) span two or more states or territories. For example, the area defined by postcode 0872 (which is the postcode with the largest geographical area) is mainly in the Northern Territory and is assigned as such in our analysis, but it also has parts in South Australia and Western Australia. All FTB-identified parents with intellectual disability had postcode data, but a small proportion of other FTB-identified parents on PP or DSP (< 0.1%) did not have postcode data. For those with a post office box as their address, it is assumed that they resided in the state in which their post office box was located.

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Appendix 1. Eligibility criteria

Table A1: Age eligibility criteria for payments with data items in the extracted Centrelink administrative data

Table A1 below shows the age eligibility criteria for the various payment data items in our extracted Centrelink data (refer to Appendix 2 for a brief explanation of the four payment types relevant to our analyses). Data on receipt of Carer Allowance is also analysed in this report. This is not considered as a main income support payment in this report, and a person on a main income support payment may also receive Carer Allowance. The Carer Allowance data is used to identify Centrelink clients in our dataset who had children with disabilities. Data on FTB is used to define parenthood. FTB is not considered as a main income support payment, but as a form of financial assistance for families raising children.

Extraction period	Main income support payments			Income assistance payments		
	Disability Support Pension (DSP) ^a	Parenting Payment (PP)	Carer Payment (CP)	Newstart Allowance (NSA)	Carer Allowance (CA)	Family Tax Benefit (FTB)
June 2009	≥ 16 years and < 63.5 years for women or < 65 years for men	None	None	≥ 21 years and < 63.5 years for women or < 65 years for men	None	None
June 2010	≥ 16 years and < 64 years for women or < 65 years for men	None	None	≥ 21 years and < 64 years for women or < 65 years for men	None	None
June 2011	≥ 16 years and < 64 years for women or < 65 years for men	None	None	≥ 21 years and < 64 years for women or < 65 years for men	None	None
June 2012	≥ 16 years and < 64.5 years for women or < 65 years for men	None	None	≥ 21 years and < 64.5 years for women or < 65 years for men	None	None
June 2013	≥ 16 years and < 64.5 years for women or < 65 years for men	None	None	≥ 22 years and < 64.5 years for women or < 65 years for men	None	None

Notes: ^a DSP claimants must not have reached the minimum age for Age Pension at the time of claiming, but can continue to be paid DSP after reaching Age Pension age. The Age Pension is the main income support payment administered by Centrelink for senior Australians to ensure they have adequate means of support.

Appendix 2. Payment types

Text Box A2: Social security payment types in our dataset

The Text Box below briefly explains each payment type relevant to the analyses presented in this technical report (Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2009, 2011, 2012; Australian Government Family Assistance Office, 2009, 2010, 2011; Daniels, 2011; Ey, 2012). This information also applies to Appendix 1.

Text Box A2: Social security payment types in our dataset

The majority of social security payments are subject to income and asset tests, which are continually changed and updated. For details, please refer to the payment guides for the relevant period of data (Australian Government Family Assistance Office, 2011).

Disability Support Pension (DSP)

DSP was introduced in 1991 and is intended to ensure an adequate income for people who have a reduced capacity for work because of impairment. To be eligible for DSP a person must be permanently blind or have a permanent physical, intellectual or psychiatric impairment of at least 20 points under the impairment tables (Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 1997). An impairment is defined as permanent under the Social Security Act 1991 if it is fully diagnosed, treated and stabilised and likely to last for at least two years without significant functional improvement.

To be eligible as from 1 July 2006, new DSP applicants must be unable to work for at least 15 hours per week at or above the relevant minimum wage for the next two years or be retrained for such work within the next two years because of that impairment. For a person who became eligible for DSP prior to 1 July 2006, he/she must be unable to work for at least 30 hours per week at or above the relevant minimum wage for the next two years or be retrained for such work within the next two years because of that impairment, and he/she continues to remain eligible under the 30-hour rule so long as DSP payment has not been terminated (Daniels, 2011).

Parenting Payment (PP)

PP was introduced to help people with children, particularly low-income families, by providing an independent income. It is available to people with sole or primary responsibility for the care of a child and is payable to single and partnered parents, although to only one member of a couple.

To be eligible as from 1 July 2006, new PP applicants who were single parents must have principal care of a child or children under the age of eight years. When the youngest qualifying child is aged six years or over, the single parent must enter into an Employment Pathway Plan and satisfy part-time participation requirements. Single parents in receipt of PP prior to 1 July 2006 may continue to receive this payment until their youngest child turns 16 years old, as long as they remain eligible. This reflects the eligibility criteria that were in place before 1 July 2006. These parents must meet participation requirements when their

youngest child turns seven years old. A partnered parent must have principal care of a child or children under the age of six years regardless of when they became eligible (Australian Government Family Assistance Office, 2011).

Carer Allowance

The Carer Allowance is an income supplement paid to someone who provides daily care and attention at home to a person with a disability or medical condition. This allowance is neither income-tested nor assets-tested. For dependent children aged under 16 as a care receiver, they satisfy the eligibility requirement if:

- they have a disability or medical condition that appears on a list of disabilities/conditions that result in automatic qualification, or
- they are assessed using the Disability Care Load Assessment (DCLA) as functioning below the standard expected for their age (Daniels, 2011).

The child and the carer must live together in the same private residence or, if the child is hospitalised at the time of the claim, there must be an intention for the child to return home to live with the carer (Australian Government Family Assistance Office, 2011).

Family Tax Benefit (FTB)

FTB was introduced to help with the cost of raising children. It can be paid to a parent, guardian or an approved care organisation. FTB part A is the most common payment to help with the cost of raising children and is paid per child. It includes a supplement per child that becomes payable after the end of the financial year. To be eligible for FTB part A, the claimant must have:

- a dependent child aged under 16, or
- a dependent child aged 16 to 20 years who has completed a Year 12 or equivalent qualification, or who is undertaking full-time education or training leading to a Year 12 or equivalent qualification, or is exempt, or
- a dependent full-time student aged 21 to 24, and
- care for at least 35% of the time, and
- family income under a certain amount (this varies depending on number and age of children) (Australian Government Family Assistance Office, 2011).

FTB part B is intended to give extra assistance to single-parent families and to two-parent families with one main income where one parent chooses to stay at home or to balance some paid work with caring for their children. Families with one or both parents on a main income support payment would have a level of income that qualifies them for FTB part B and for at least the base rate of FTB part A.



HealthyStart

A national strategy for children of
parents with learning difficulties

Healthy Start is an initiative of the Australian Supported Parenting Consortium. The Consortium is a partnership between the Centre for Disability Research and Policy at the University of Sydney and the Parenting Research Centre.

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