

Senate Committee: Education and Employment

**QUESTION ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2019 - 2020**

Outcome: Early Childhood and Child Care

Department of Education Question No. SQ19-000478

Senator Mehreen Faruqi provided in writing

Also refer to previous hearing Question No. SQ19-00019.

Additional Child Care Subsidy

Question

1. Please provide the number of children and families in each category of SCCB (i.e. At Risk & Temp Financial hardship & Grandparent) for each of the quarters of FY2017-18 and the comparable categories of ACCS for each quarter for FY2018-19.
2. What percentage of children were enrolled in SCCB in 2017-18 and ACCS in 2018-19 for: 13 weeks or less? 13-26 weeks, 26-39 weeks; more than 39 weeks? Please provide detail.
3. What do you put the increase in ACCS Child Wellbeing enrolments down to?
 - a. Does it have to do with broader criteria?
 - b. Does it have to do with increased numbers of foster years?
4. You've indicated that the ACCS Child Wellbeing numbers continue to increase, which is expected, given the extension of the subsidy to foster carers. How many children receiving ACCS Child Wellbeing are in out of home care, and how many received SCCB?
5. In the absence of data on how many children in out of home care are receiving ACCS Child Wellbeing, how does the Department determine whether the subsidy is supporting the country's most vulnerable children?
6. In FY 2018-19, how many ACCS applications have taken longer than 28 days to resolve?
 - a. What processes, if any, are in place to ensure such claims are dealt with quickly?
 - b. Does the Department collect data on why applications were taking longer than 28 days? (e.g. new info requests etc.). If yes, please provide details.
 - c. What process changes, if any, have been put in place to improve the processing of ACCS?
7. How many ACCS claims in the last year have had a deemed refusal due to the effluxion of time?

Answer

1. Data on previous Grand Parent Child Care Benefit (GCCB) and and Jobs, Education and Training Child Care Fee Assistance (JETCCFA) families and children is available from: <https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood-and-child-care-reports>. These reports did not separately identify Special Child Care Benefit (child at risk) and Special Child Care Benefit (temporary financial hardship) families and children. This information is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Number of families and children accessing Special Child Care Benefit payments by quarter, 2017–18 financial year

Payment type	Quarter							
	Sept 2017		Dec 2017		March 2018		June 2018	
	<i>Families</i>	<i>Children</i>	<i>Families</i>	<i>Children</i>	<i>Families</i>	<i>Children</i>	<i>Families</i>	<i>Children</i>
SCCB – Child at risk	5,800	8,820	5,870	8,920	5,600	8,530	5,460	8,220
SCCB – Temporary Financial Hardship	5,890	8,450	5,630	8,050	5,330	7,500	5,600	7,740

Source: Department of Education administrative data.

Data on Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) families and children is available from: <https://www.education.gov.au/child-care-australia>.

It should be noted that that ACCS does not have the same policy settings and eligibility requirements as the previous SCCB, GCCB and JETCCFA payments and is therefore not directly comparable.

2. To answer this question would require an unreasonable diversion of departmental resources.
3. The Department of Education has promoted ACCS (child wellbeing) through ongoing communication to the sector and stakeholder working groups, including state and territory government representatives.

In addition, the change in the eligibility criteria for ACCS (child wellbeing) has meant that for the first time foster carers could receive the additional subsidy for children in their care where previously, being in foster care, by itself, did not make a child eligible for Special Child Care Benefit (at risk).

4. The Department of Education does not collect data on the type of relationship between an individual eligible for Child Care Subsidy (or its predecessor Child Care Benefit) and a child in their primary care.
5. To receive ACCS (child wellbeing) the child must be considered 'at risk' of serious abuse or neglect. Evidence to support decisions that a child is considered 'at risk' is required. ACCS (child wellbeing) decisions are reviewable.
6. Refer to SQ19-000262 – ACCS applications.
7. Refer to SQ19-000262 – ACCS applications.