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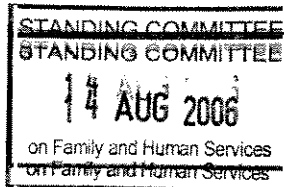


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Mr James Catchpole
Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Family and Human Services
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mr Catchpole

Thank you for your letter of 18 July 2006 requesting information about Jobs, Education and Training Child Care Fee Assistance (JETCCFA) as part of the parliamentary inquiry into balancing work and family responsibilities on behalf of the Committee Chairman, the Hon Bronwyn Bishop MP.

Please find attached responses to your specific questions.

If you require any further information, please contact Ms Gabrielle Phillips, Branch Manager, Child Care Performance Management Branch on **(02) 6212 9078**.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "J Harmer".

Dr Jeff Harmer

9 August 2006

Parliamentary inquiry into balancing work and family responsibilities by the Standing Committee on Family and Human Services

- 1. How many parents does the program assist and how many children are currently in care subsidised by the program?**

The Jobs, Education and Training Child Care Fee Assistance (JETCCFA) program assisted **18,188** parents and **28,945** children in 2005-2006.

- 2. The department's Portfolio Budget Statement 2006-07, under Performance Indicators for Outcome Three, estimates the number of parents assisted under JETCCFA at 35,000, and the number of children in care at 58,000. Are these figures correct?**

The Department's latest estimate is that around **33,700** parents and **53,600** children will be assisted in 2006-07.

- 3. How is the JETCCFA program promoted, particularly, to parents affected by the new Welfare to Work activity requirements?**

A range of strategies have been and continue to be developed to promote the availability of child care subsidies such as JETCCFA to parents affected by Welfare to Work participation requirements.

Employment Service Providers are encouraged to discuss with primary carers at their first interview, the need to look for child care. They are also encouraged to provide the application form and information about the availability of JETCCFA to income support recipients undertaking work related activities.

To ensure Employment Service Providers understood the needs of the new primary carer client group, the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) commissioned NESA and Diversity at Work to deliver Parenting Servicing Strategies Seminars (PSSS). The 993 Job network members attended these seminars, which took place around the country in May/June 2006.

The seminars included information about JETCCFA eligibility and how it can be used to help parents with child care costs. Each Job network member who attended received a workbook, which included information on useful websites, and links to JETCCFA information. The PSSS Workbook is posted on the Employment and Community Services Network (ECSN) site under the Welfare to Work module and will also be available through the DEWR Learning Centre shortly.

DEWR is currently developing an information package and a guide for best practice around child care for Employment Service Providers. This will shortly be available on the ECSN website for all Employment Service Providers to access.

4. There appears to be little information online that would be easy to find by clients not aware that the program existed. There are no prominent links to information about the JETCCFA program, for example, from the websites <http://www.movingintowork.gov.au/movingintowork/>, Centrelink's website under 'Services and programs for studying and training', at http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/individuals/st_specialist_services.htm, or the Job Network homepage (within [workplace.gov.au](http://www.workplace.gov.au)) under links to 'Work and family' or 'Helping people move into work', at <http://www.workplace.gov.au/workplace/CategorySchemesInitiatives/JobNetwork/>.

DEWR website

Information on JETCCFA including a link to the Family Assistance Office website is included in the DEWR Parents Toolbox (at www.toolboxes.dewr.gov.au). This is a public domain product but not easy to find unless you are a Job Network participant. To enable easier access to information for parents with participation requirements, DEWR is currently developing JobReturn, a website for parents, which will be accessed through www.workplace.gov.au. This site will contain information on child care, including JETCCFA, and links to the JETCCFA application form.

Centrelink website

The 'Request for JETCCFA' application form (SC320) form and other related JETCCFA information can be found on the Centrelink website at www.centrelink.gov.au by following the links from 'Forms' to the 'A-Z Forms Directory' under 'R'. Further information about JETCCFA is included in the website under 'Individuals' via the Life Events topics 'Are you a parent or guardian?' and 'Are you separated or divorced?' which link to 'Payments to help you raise children'.

JETCCFA is also promoted in several Centrelink Life Events products under the topic 'Helping you to return to work, education or training'. The Family Assistance Office product 'The What Why and How of Family Assistance' also includes information about JETCCFA, available on the Centrelink website at www.centrelink.gov.au by following the links from 'Publications' to the 'A-Z Publications Directory' under 'F'.

Family Assistance Office website

The Family Assistance Office website (managed by FaCSIA) also contains JETCCFA information under 'Payments' including a link to the JETCCFA fact sheet. The 'Request for JETCCFA' application form is also accessible from this website under 'Forms'. The website address is www.familyassist.gov.au.

FaCSIA website

The JETCCFA fact sheet produced by FaCSIA can be found on the FaCSIA website by following the links from the homepage to 'Child Care' and then to 'Jobs Education and Training Child Care' page. The website address is www.facsia.gov.au.

5. Is it the responsibility of individual Centrelink case officers to refer their clients to the program if they feel it could be useful to them?

Centrelink Customer Service Officers have been trained to provide a parent with information about JETCCFA when the need for child care is identified as part of a parent's activity agreement and participation requirements. Centrelink will also provide parents or services with information and a claim form for JETCCFA upon request.

6. Under the new time limits that apply to JET Assistance, clients must complete training courses in 12 months or less. If a parent is studying part-time for a course that would normally take 12 months full time to complete, will they continue to receive child care fee assistance for 24 months or however long it takes to complete the course?

From 1 July 2006 JET Child Care fee assistance will only support courses of study or training that are normally completed within 12 months by a person studying full-time. However, parents who undertake such courses part-time will still be assisted for the time it takes them to finish their course.