

Mental illness and disability

The Australian Government Departments of Family and Community Services (FaCS) and the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) are responsible for forming policy, and funding and providing payments and services to support people with a disability, their families and their carers.

- At a whole of government level, these responsibilities include carriage of the Commonwealth Disability Strategy, which aims to ensure that the needs of people with a disability are considered by government in its various roles as purchaser, policy developer, employer, service provider and regulator. The principles of the strategy also include meeting the needs of people with a mental illness who are seeking to access government services or information.

All Australian Government agencies are required to assess their performance and report against the reporting framework set out in the strategy in their annual reports.

The Commonwealth State Territory Disability Agreement administered by FaCS provides the national framework for the delivery, funding and development of specialist disability services for people with disabilities.

Under the three agreements signed to date (the first in 1991) parties are responsible for funding specialist services for people with disabilities:

- the Australian Government has responsibility for the planning, policy setting and management of specialised employment assistance;
- state and territory governments have similar responsibilities for accommodation support, community support, community access and respite; and
- support for advocacy and print disability is a shared responsibility.

Other Australian government support includes:

- **National Disability Advocacy Program** (FaCS) funds 73 advocacy organisations to help people with disabilities, their families and carers to get involved in community life as fairly and as fully as possible. Under the Commonwealth/State Disability Agreement, advocacy is a shared responsibility of the Australian Government and the state and territory governments. State and territory governments contribute approximately \$4 million towards advocacy services, and a small number of advocacy services receive both Australian Government and state and territory funding.
- **Business Services – Disability** are administered by FaCS and provides funding nationally for business services (previously known as sheltered workshops) that employ over 17,000 people with a moderate to severe intellectual disability.

While most people working in these services have an intellectual disability, the services also cater for those who have a mental illness as well as an intellectual disability.

- **Disability Open Employment Services** are administered by DEWR. Further detail on these services is provided under Section 3.2.3.
- **Supplementary Services Program (SUPS)** (FaCS) is available free of charge to approved (Australian Government funded) child care services and helps to build skills of centre staff and resources to assist the successful inclusion of children with additional needs. The target groups for SUPS support are:
 - children from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD) including refugee children;
 - children with ongoing high support needs including children with a disability; and
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (including Australian South Sea Islander children).

In 2003-04 it is estimated that the SUPS program assisted around 107,000 children with additional needs to participate in Australian Government funded child care services.

- **Disabled Supplementary Services Program (DSUPS)** (FaCS) is an extra payment to family day carers and in-home carers (only) who care for children with ongoing high support needs, including children with disabilities, in recognition of the additional care and attention that such children require.
- **Special Needs Subsidy Scheme (SNSS)** (FaCS) is a program offered to Australian Government approved child care services in recognition that some services need additional support to include children with ongoing high support needs. Child care services can apply for SNSS support which may be used in a variety of ways such as additional child care worker support to increase the staff-child ratio within the service, relief for staff to attend specialist training or planning and access to specialised equipment or resources. It is important to note that the focus of SNSS is to build service capacity, not to provide one-on-one support for any particular child. SNSS is available to children who have an ongoing need for a high level of support in a mainstream child care environment. The eligible groups are:
 - children with disabilities (diagnosed physical, sensory, neurological, intellectual or learning impairment) as assessed by a legally qualified medical practitioner or psychologist or families in receipt of Carer Allowance;
 - children undergoing continuing assessment for such disabilities or developmental delay; or
 - refugee children who have been subjected to torture or trauma either in their country of origin or during their refugee experience as assessed by a legally qualified medical practitioner or psychologist.

The combination of disability and cultural/language differences can be considered in determining the ongoing high support needs for children from culturally diverse backgrounds and indigenous children. Children with challenging behaviours are included where it is established that the behaviour is related to a disability.