

# **Your Guide to Caring**

*There is no better gift to give  
a child than a safe & settled home*



BIRIPI ABORIGINAL  
CHILDREN SERVICES

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# About Biripi Aboriginal Children's Services

Biripi Aboriginal Children Services (BACS) provides culturally informed Out-of-Home-Care (OOHC) services to Aboriginal children and young people.

Areas of operations include Mid-North Coast (Taree office) and the New England (Inverell Office). The New England services are delivered through Walanbaa Gaayili Children's services, a culturally approved trading name meaning "Strong Children" in the Gamilaroi language from that region.

BACS are committed to giving children and parents the opportunity to be connected and a meaningful part of each other's lives. When safe to do so, the goal is always to keep families together and through assessments and the implementation of supports, many children return to live with family. When returning to family is not possible, we support children to maintain connections to family through coordinating family contact that ensures children spend time with their family in a manner that is meaningful and strengthens the psychological bonds that are crucial to all aspects of healing.

Our practise is underpinned by a strong conviction that children do well when they can. It is therefore our core focus to position children and families to succeed by supporting children with education, health, family and community connections, counselling and any other supports that may be required.

As a proud Aboriginal organisation we acknowledge the impact of intergenerational trauma and advocate that healing can and will take place but only in the context of a safe, nurturing and responsive environment that is connected to family, culture and land.



# About Biripi Aboriginal Children's Services

## Our Mission

Aboriginal children in care will be actively connected to their Aboriginal culture through live connections with family and community. We demand recognition that living in safety and cultural connection are not to be separate realities but instead, a human right that must be upheld.

## Our Vision

To connect children and young people with committed carers who will nourish their development through connection to self, family, culture, community and above all, safety.

## Our Values

### Recognise the expertise of children and families

Children carry with them the context from which they came, none more important than family. Entry into care should not be an automatic exit from a family system even if returning to the family home is not an option. We will position children and their families to use their voice to express what they want and their need to remain connected in a manner that is **safe and considered**.

### Children are connected to culture through family and community

Aboriginal cultural traditions are crucial to the optimal raising of Aboriginal children. In Aboriginal family and community, child raising is a shared responsibility of all family members therefore connection to culture **is** a connection to family. Through connection to culture, children develop a sense of belonging, an understanding of where they have come from and where they are going.

### Cultural Respect

Through word, voice and action, we will uphold the Cultural Respect framework that demands "Recognition, protection and continued advancement of the inherent rights, cultures and traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people"

### Collaboration

We will work in partnership with families, carers, schools and government to position children to succeed in life. When we work together, we gain the benefit of a diverse range of expertise and experience with which to understand and respond to a child's needs. Through that process, we inherit a collective wisdom that will shape the manner in which we support the holistic needs of all children.

### Pursue social justice

As an Aboriginal organisation we do not forget the segregation and discrimination that our recent history has bestowed on Aboriginal people, families and the intergenerational trauma that has followed. We are committed to being the opposite of segregation, the opposite of racism and instead set the standard for how we treat people. This is a standard that is governed by respect, equity and care.

# Coverage & Contacts

Our service covers all of Biripi Boundaries but also extends to include Tuncurry, Forster and Bulahdelah to the South, inland across to Gloucester and North as far as Port Macquarie and inland to Wauchope and all small towns in between these boundaries. We also cover the New England area



## Biripi Aboriginal Children Services (BACS) Taree

102 Victoria Street, Taree, NSW, 2430, Australia

(02) 6591 2411 E: BacsReception@biripi.org.au

## Walanbaa Gaayili Children Services (Inverell)

15 Oliver Street, Inverell, NSW, 2360, Australia

(02) 6721 1600 E: BacsReception@biripi.org.au

## Out of Home Care (OOHC) Placement Type

- Relative or Kinship Care
- Emergency Care
- Respite Care
- Interim/Restoration
- Guardianship
- Short Term Care

## What do the kids & young people need from you?

Children who are separated from their families may include:

- ☐ Infants who have special feeding and medical needs
- ☐ Brothers and sisters who should stay together
- ☐ Newborns withdrawing from drugs who need to be specially cared for
- ☐ Children and young people with developmental or physical disabilities
- ☐ Children with emotional problems
- ☐ Children with complex medical and health issues
- ☐ Children who need families that are sensitive to and respectful of their culture and their family
- ☐ Teenagers who have not experienced a positive family life and now need extra patience and commitment

All children in care are affected by the separation from their family and show signs of stress, worry and insecurity. Their anxiety and fears are often expressed in the form of difficult behaviours, such as tantrums, withdrawal and running away. Some children have never learnt to live within the usual routines of family life and will need extra amounts of love, understanding and patience.

# Types of Care

## **RELATIVE OR KINSHIP CARE**

Relative or kinship care is a type of care that places a child or young person with a relative like a grandparent or someone they already know. Caring by relatives is a common practice across cultures, but the term kinship care can have different meanings for different cultural groups.

In Aboriginal communities, kin may be a relative of the child or young person or someone who shares a cultural or community connection.

## **EMERGENCY CARE**

Emergency placements are for children who need an urgent placement because there are concerns for their immediate safety. These placements can occur after-hours and on weekends. Emergency carers need to be able to provide care for very young children at short notice.

## **RESPIRE CARE**

From time to time, parents and carers need a break from their caring role. Respite care is for short periods of time, such as school holidays, weekends or for short periods during the week.

## **INTERM/RESTORATION**

**Restoration** means bringing children back to live with their parents, when it is safe to do so

## **GUARDIANSHIP**

The child or young person will remain in the care of their guardian until they turn 18 or until the Children's Court changes the order. Under a guardianship order, a child or young person is no longer considered out-of-home-care but in the independent care of their guardian

## **SHORT TERM CARE**

**Short to medium-term care** - this can last for anywhere from a few months to two years. Short to medium-term care has a strong focus on reuniting the child with their parents or extended family within two years of the child or young person coming to live with them. In some circumstances, a short-term carer may be caring for a child before they move to another carer who is a relative or kin.

# Who Can Be A Carer?

## You must be able to:

- Make a commitment to being a meaningful person in a child's life
- Provide a safe, loving and caring environment to a child
- Respect children and their primary attachment to their families
- Demonstrate that you are a creative problem solver, have listening skills, flexibility and a sense of humour
- Manage your family finances with the addition of another child and the organisation's reimbursement for the type of care you provide
- Participate in meetings, networks and training that involve your carer role
- Work as part of a larger team

## Specifically you will be asked to:

- Make a 'Prohibited Employment Declaration' that you have not been convicted of a serious sex offence, as this prohibits you from applying to be a carer
- Consent to allow screening of your criminal and work record in relation to sexual misconduct and acts of violence involving children (Working with Children Check)
- Agree to BACS seeking information from the Department of Communities & Justice (DCJ) to ensure you have had no previous significant concerning involvement with DCJ
- You will need to provide a 100-point identification check which *must include a Passport or Birth Certificate* plus Driver's Licence, Medicare Card, etc.

You will be informed of your carer status in writing at the completion of the assessment. Should your application be unsuccessful, a Biripi Carer Support Caseworker will be available to speak with you and outline the reason(s) why



# Carer Information

*Biripi believes strongly in acceptance, inclusivity and providing a safe space for all regardless of colour, race, religion, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical ability or education.*

*For each decision we make, we always focus on the needs of the child first and foremost.*

**What age can I be to be a Carer?** Each carer will be assessed on a case by case basis. However, we will take into consideration that you should be able to look after children until they are 18 years of age.

**I have a disability - can I still be a Carer?** BACS will look at your personal circumstances and make an assessment on a case by case basis.

**I am in a Same Sex Relationship – can I be a carer?** This isn't a problem as Biripi supports the placement of children with same sex couples.

**Can I Work Full/Part time?** BACS recommends that the primary/main carer is homebased for the children. However we will discuss your circumstances with you during the assessment process.

**How Healthy Do I Need To Be?** You need to be healthy enough (both physically & mentally) to make sure you're able to care for children. Keep in mind for long term care arrangements, this may involve raising the child to adulthood.

**What About Caring as a Couple?** As long as you can show you are in a stable relationship, this is fine.

**What Should my House be Like?** You need to have adequate, safe accommodation for a child. It's OK to be renting a home. BACS undertake a home inspection of where you are living which includes making sure a bedroom is available for a child, though this can be shared with other children when appropriate.

**Caring Skills?** You must be able to show you can undertake the special responsibilities involved in caring for a child. Carers must be able to:

- Show attitudes and connections consistent with being a good carer
- Demonstrate personal resilience
- Show and understand personal teamwork
- Provide child focused care; and
- Provide a safe environment that is free from abuse.



# Carer Information

**Will the Children see their Family?** Yes, as long as it is safe to do so. You will need to demonstrate an understanding of the importance of the origins, culture and past experience of the child or young person in your care. You must show understanding and accept BACS's commitment to ongoing contact between the child and his/her parents and other family and be willing to facilitate such contact

**What about My/Children's Religious and Cultural Beliefs?** You do need to be able to support the cultural and religious belief of the child or young person in your care as this is important for them.

**How Do I Deal with Behaviour of Children or Young People?** You are expected to work closely with BACS staff in developing appropriate behaviour management strategies for children and young people in your care.

You aren't allowed to use any physical discipline for children who have been placed in your care.

BACS has a behaviour management policy which will show you how you can appropriately discipline children. Where appropriate, your child may be prescribed medication by a treating medical professional if there is an assessed need or diagnosis. When it is part of a planned response to specific challenging behaviour, it must be documented as part of the behaviour support/management plan.

**What are Your Health and Hygiene Standards?** Carers are expected to conform to guidelines designed to ensure that children are being cared for in a healthy environment. Such guidelines include practicing of universal infection control and ensuring that there is no smoking in your home.



# Caring from a Carer's Perspective

## What is it like to be a carer?

Being a carer for kids in out of home care can definitely be very challenging at times. Each child will be dealing with their own trauma and the emotional fallout from that, can be overwhelming for yourself and the child.

As a carer you will receive the appropriate training to work through these challenges but each child is different and it can be a lot of trial and error. You need to be very understanding and patient; there are reasons behind behaviours that these kids display.

The best advice I could give as a carer is to simply love the children like they are your own.

## What do you get out of it?

Knowing that my help and support can have such a big effect on a child's life gives me a sense of pride every day. When I am able to see where these children have ended up and the things they have gone on to accomplish, it definitely makes it all worth it.

Even years later the children that you have supported will continue to love and hold so much respect for you.

As a carer, you will also receive support from Biripi Aboriginal Children's Services throughout the whole process.

## What impacts does it have on the children you care for?

Providing care for a child can help ensure they feel safe and secure. It can give them a sense of belonging within a family and to community.

Working with an Aboriginal organisation is vital to ensuring the kids have a cultural identity and feel connection to their community.

Working with the children to overcome issues can build their resilience and the connection you form with them can make them feel loved and know that they are cared for.

## Why would you recommend becoming a carer?

There is still a big need for carers to support our beautiful children and help them reach their full potential. BACS are always there to support you through the challenging times and the rewards far exceed the challenges.

As a proud Biripi woman I know that I am making a difference in my community, I have and always will do it for the children. The appreciation I get from them inspires me to continue.

Kyla

# Caring from a Child's Perspective

## What ways did Biripi Aboriginal Children's Services help with placement?

When I was 17 years old I had an incident with my old carers and had to leave the placement as soon as possible.

The day that the placement was breaking down with my previous carers BACS was ringing around and trying to organise another placement that would suit me. They managed to organise a placement I was happy with by that afternoon and I've been in the placement ever since.

## What was your carer like?

He is very understanding and always gives me space and time when I needed it. It made it easier to deal with issues as they came up and prevent a placement breakdown happening again.

He is also very caring and has continued to support me even after I'd turned 18 and my leaving care plan was complete.

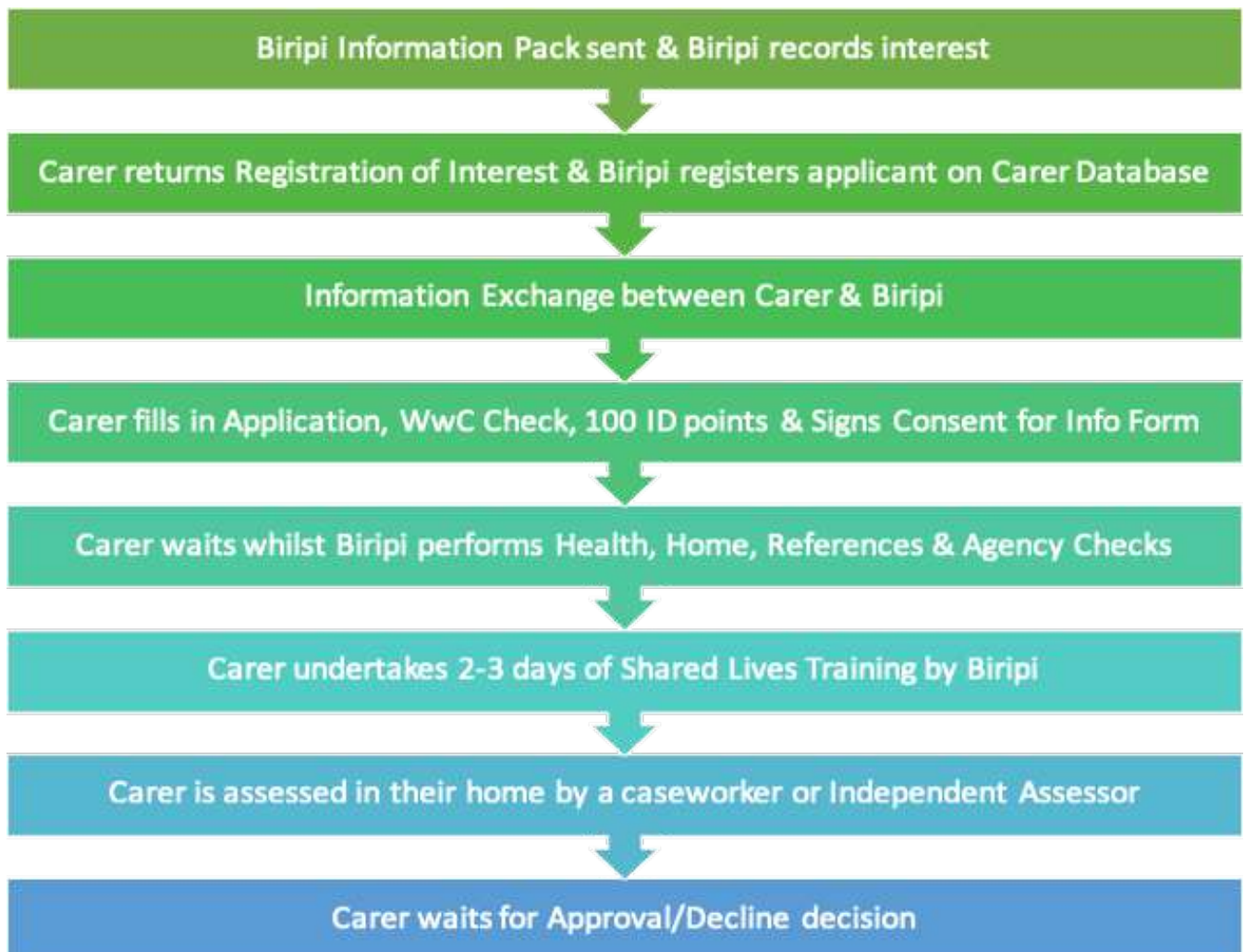
## How did Biripi Aboriginal Children's Services support you to stay in the placement?

I was happy and comfortable in the placement and I basically just asked BACS if I could stay with the carer and they worked around that. I also got a lot of support in getting a good job and was able to remain employed for about 9 months before I moved on.

*Dallas*

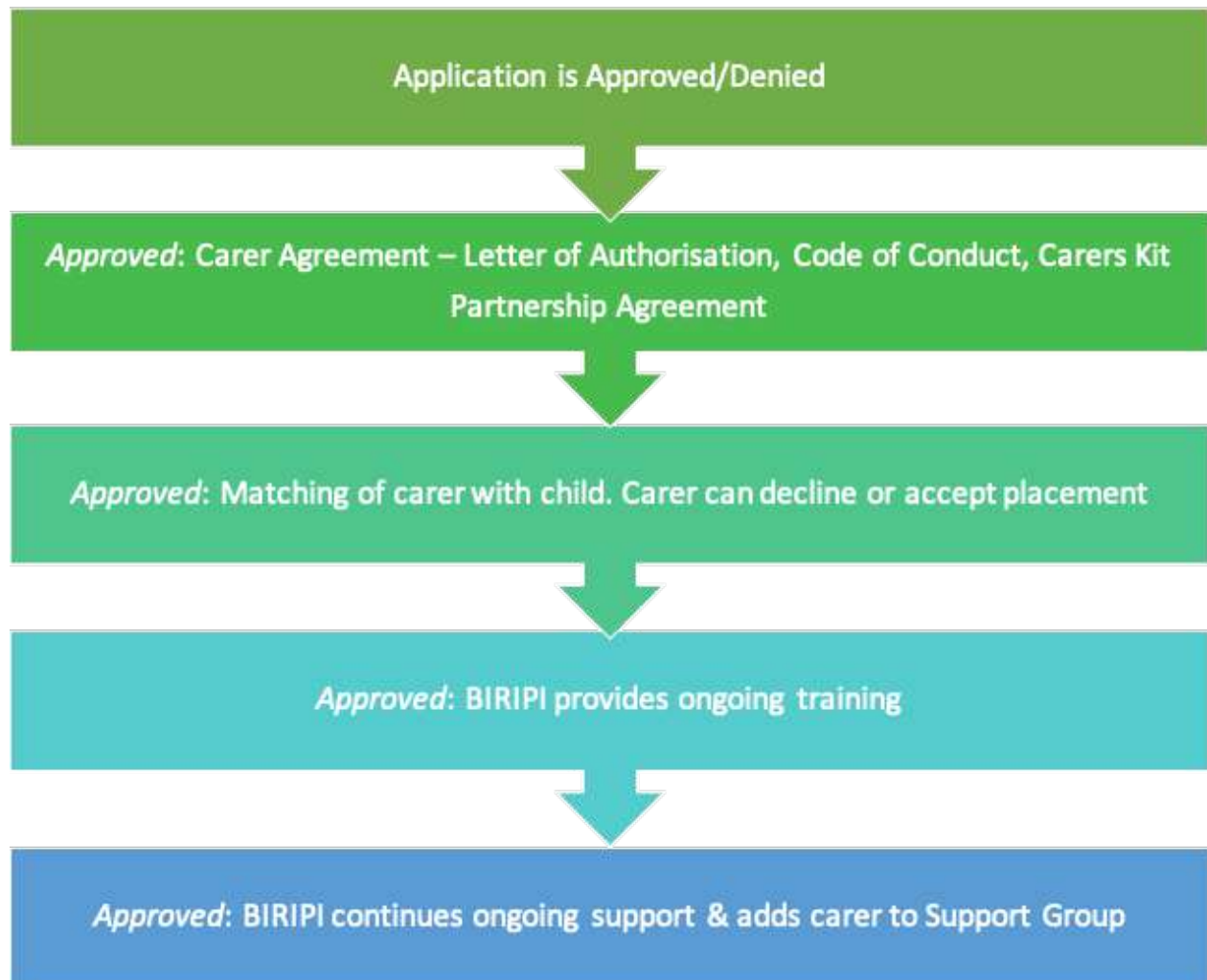


# The Assessment Process





# The Assessment Process con't



# Carer FAQ's

**Are separate bedrooms needed for each child?** This will depend on the child or young person's needs when being placed. For example a child with special needs may require a separate bedroom. It will need to be determined on a case by case basis.

**Can I get Respite Care?** It is possible that carers may be able to choose their own respite carer for children in their care; each individual situation will be taken into consideration.

**When will I be matched?** Once you have been authorised as a carer, you will be approached when a child or young person is matched with the type of care you can provide. You will have the opportunity to discuss any issues that may be raised for you and your family if you accept the placement of that child or young person. Sometimes it is possible for you to meet the child or young person before you make the decision about taking the child(ren) into care.

**Are there limits on the number of children I can care for?** The number of children BACS will place with a carer is assessed on a case by case basis. For example a child with special needs will involve a much higher level of care. If you would like to increase the number of children you have in your care, a reassessment will occur to determine your capacity to meet the needs of any additional child whilst not compromising the quality of care being received by the children already in placement with you.

**Can I be a carer if I have my own children already?** Essentially, yes. All members of the family are assessed and included in the process. Any children of your own over 16 years of age will need to undergo a Working with Children check.

**Do I need to be Aboriginal to be a carer with Biripi?** No you don't. We will offer appropriate cultural support to you and your child/ren. Our ultimate goal is to have the best, loving carers without race being a deciding factor.

**Will I be expected to arrange family contact?** Family contact occurs according to the child or young person's case plan. It is the role of the caseworker to arrange venue and transport, and to support the contact visit. Where it is possible, carers can assist with transport. Contact visits between siblings in care are often unsupervised, and are usually arranged with carers attending and providing transport.

**What respite opportunities are available?** BACS is always looking to increase our Respite Carer Pool. We always attempt to provide respite, when the needs of the child and carer indicate this is necessary.

# Carer FAQ's cont

**Is respite compulsory?** No however, BACS does encourage carers providing Intensive Care to take regular respite breaks.

**Will I continue to receive an allowance when my child is in respite?** Carer payments usually continue unchanged for weekend respite, however, this is determined on a case-by-case basis.

**Who investigates allegations and what supports are available to me?** BACS investigates any reportable conduct matters and will refer to independent professional bodies if required. Debriefing is offered along with clinical support and additional external counselling is available for all carers on an individual basis.

**Will I be included in the decision making process for issues related to children I care for and my family?** Carers participate in case reviews and other meetings to coordinate services and case plans for the child in their care. Caseworkers may liaise on a carer's behalf with other services so that the child has access to the services they need.

**What supports can you offer if my child comes from a different background to me?** Children, who require a cultural support plan, will have their Case Worker consult other key stakeholders to develop the plan that meets the child or young person's cultural needs.

# Support from Biripi

**How often will we be asked to meet with agency staff?** BACS carers work in partnership with case workers, communicating regularly about a child or young person's ongoing needs and any concerns. This is a flexible arrangement that meets the needs of the child or young person. Carers are involved in reviews and are invited to attend annual case conferences.

Caseworkers will visit children/young people in the home on a regular basis, usually monthly.

## **What kind of support can I expect from Biripi?**

- ☐ 24/7 support (out of hours support provided for critical incidents and emergencies)
- ☐ Allocated case worker for each child/sibling group
- ☐ The same case worker will provide support to the carers of that child
- ☐ Case workers provide regular home visits, phone calls and emails and access to after-hours support
- ☐ Initial and ongoing carer training is provided
- ☐ A carer debrief is done at the end of placements
- ☐ Support liaising with other services and professionals e.g. schools, medical practitioners, counselors etc
- ☐ Carer support groups, social activities (e.g. Foster Care Week)
- ☐ Facilitation, supervision and support for a child's contact with their family and significant others



# Support from Biripi con't

## Is There a Complaints Resolution Process?

**If I disagree with a decision what is the process of appeal?** BACS has a complaints procedure which will be given to you at the time of your authorisation.

**What is your complaints policy and procedure? Is there an independent body?** Carers are provided with the policy and procedure when they are authorised by the agency. Carers also have access to the NSW Ombudsman to lodge a complaint if you feel your complaint has not been resolved by the agency.

**Can I choose my own support person?** Yes.

**What if I move to another area and your agency does not cover this area?** BACS will assist in supporting a move. Where the move includes a child in care, the agency will support and facilitate case management transfer of the child or young person if it is seen to be in the best interests of the child and supported by BACS and DCJ.



# Allowances

Child's Age Range	Weekly Standard Care	Weekly Care + 1	Weekly Care + 2
0 - 4	\$503	\$756	\$998
5 - 13	\$567	\$850	\$1119
14 - 15	\$761	\$1139	\$1502
16 - 17	\$507	\$885	\$1252

Child's Age Range	Respite Daily Standard Care	Respite Daily Care + 1	Respite Daily Care + 2
0 - 4	\$35.93	\$54	\$71.29
5 - 13	\$40.50	\$60.71	\$79.93
14 - 15	\$54.36	\$81.36	\$107.29
16 - 17	\$36.21	\$63.21	\$89.45

Correct as of May 2020

☐ Allowances are paid fortnightly ☐

# What do the Allowances Cover?

## What am I expected to pay for as a carer?

Carers receive a fortnightly allowance to meet the day to day expenses in caring for a child or young person.

For example expenses such as:

- ☐ General clothing
- ☐ Footwear
- ☐ Basic medical needs
- ☐ Toiletries
- ☐ Recreational activities
- ☐ School camps
- ☐ Sporting activities
- ☐ Education costs
- ☐ Uniforms
- ☐ Textbooks
- ☐ School excursions
- ☐ General medical needs and dental needs
- ☐ Pre-school fees
- ☐ Food

