

# Child Safety POLICY

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**Title:** Expenses – Fortnightly caring allowance and interstate foster payments

**Policy No:** 365-17

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## Policy Statement:

The Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services (Child Safety) will pay the fortnightly caring allowance to foster and kinship carers approved under the *Child Protection Act 1999* (the Act) and long-term guardians and permanent guardians under the Act to assist with the costs of caring for a child subject to intervention under the Act.

Child Safety will provide the Fortnightly caring allowance to approved foster and kinship carers and provisionally approved carers (“eligible carers”) when they are providing direct care for a child who is subject to a signed assessment or child protection care agreement, an assessment order, a temporary custody order, a child protection order granting custody to the chief executive, a child protection order granting guardianship to the chief executive, a transition order, an adoption care agreement or adoption consent or dispensation of consent.

Child Safety will provide the fortnightly caring allowance to long-term guardians and permanent guardians under the Act (“eligible guardians”), when they are providing direct care for a child who is subject to a long-term guardianship order or permanent care order.

The Fortnightly caring allowance cannot commence until the carer is approved or provisionally approved in accordance with the Chapter 4 of the Act, except where the person is an eligible guardian.

The Fortnightly caring allowance can only be provided to one placement at any given time unless one of the following circumstances exists:

- dual payment of the Fortnightly caring allowance has been approved (refer to policy and procedure 289 *Dual payment of carer allowances*)
- the child or young person is changing placements and the minimum payment or final day of placement rule apply.

Where a child or young person subject to an order under the Act is placed with an eligible carer or eligible guardian living inter-state, responsibility for the child remains with Child Safety and the foster payment or equivalent in that state or territory is provided at a higher rate, Child Safety will provide an interstate foster payment at the equivalent rate to that state’s or territory’s foster payment.

It is expected the carer or guardian will cover all maintenance costs for the dwelling, vehicle and household goods and the Fortnightly caring allowance will cover all direct care costs for the child

or young person, general wear and tear on household items and as pro rata costs for utilities and appliances.

The Fortnightly caring allowance is a reimbursement for costs incurred and so is not affected by any Commonwealth or State government payments or benefits. The Fortnightly caring allowance is not subject to tax and is not to be cited as income for any purpose, including yearly tax returns, applications for Commonwealth benefits, or when applying for loans from financial institutions.

Carers and guardians are not required to produce receipts or other evidence of expenditure of allowances.

Carers and guardians are not required to provide part of the allowance to a third party, for example, to a parent or another carer.

Where a child is in receipt of a wage, Commonwealth or State government benefit they will not be expected to contribute to the cost of their care.

### Principles:

- The safety, wellbeing and best interests of a child, now and throughout the child's life, are paramount in decisions about the child.
- Children and young people placed in care under the Act will receive a quality of care that is consistent with the Statement of Standards (*Child Protection Act 1999*, section 122).
- Carers have the right to receive support that will ensure a safe and caring environment in which the needs of the child or young person are met.
- Eligible guardians have the right to receive support that will contribute towards the ongoing stability of the guardianship care arrangement.
- Carers are volunteers who care for children and young people subject to statutory child protection intervention in the carer's own home without expectation of remuneration.
- Carers are entitled to financial assistance, paid in the form of allowances, as reimbursement towards the real financial costs of responding to the direct care needs of children and young people placed in their care.
- Payment of carer allowances will be in accordance with the appropriate financial delegations.
- Child Safety staff will act and make decisions in a way that is compatible with human rights and obligations under the *Human Rights Act 2019*.

### Objectives:

The objective of this policy and associated procedure is to define the eligibility criteria and set out processes for the payment, and recovery of overpayment (where applicable), of the Fortnightly caring allowance.

## Scope:

The Fortnightly caring allowance will be provided for children subject to a signed assessment or child protection care agreement, an assessment order, a temporary custody order, a child protection order granting custody to the chief executive, a child protection order granting guardianship to the chief executive or another person, a transition order, an adoption care agreement or adoption consent or dispensation of consent.

The Fortnightly caring allowance covers the following costs associated with a child in care:

- Medical:
  - including costs incurred for consulting a general practitioner and basic medical, all one-off or initial specialist visits, all one-off prescribed and non-prescribed pharmaceuticals (for example, a course of antibiotics prescribed to treat tonsillitis, lice treatments) but
  - excluding extraordinary or ongoing pharmaceutical expenses, all costs for the child health passport initial health assessment or health appraisal, and subsequent health assessment/s
- energy – including pro rata utility costs such as electricity, water, gas, and oil
- food – including all food items for the child including excursions and holidays
- household goods for children – including furniture (bed, wardrobe), prams, linen/towels, bedding, mattress protectors, washing powders, laundry soap, bleach, disinfectant
- clothing – including all clothing for child
- all general travel – including local transport i.e. bus and train fares, travel to and from day/vacation care and school. This also includes all fuel costs up to 250 kilometres per child per week. The 250 kilometre threshold is pro rata if more than one child in care is being transported
- school costs – including school lunches, travel to and from school, school excursions, school stationery, school uniforms, school related sporting activities and school fees
- safety equipment – including baby capsules, child seats, bike helmets, knee and elbow protectors
- leisure – including ongoing costs associated with a recreational activity (for example, weekly fees), toys, pocket money, purchase of gifts for Christmas and birthday for significant
- persons etcetera, entertainment, hobbies, holiday expenses
- personal care – including toiletries, haircuts, general hygiene items, nappies.

## Roles and Responsibilities:

Roles and responsibilities related to the Fortnightly caring allowance and inter-state foster payments are outlined in the associated procedure and the Child Safety Practice Manual.

## Authority:

*Adoption Act 2009*

*Child Protection Act 1999*

*Financial Accountability Act 2009*

*Human Rights Act 2019*

## Delegations:

The officers delegated to make decisions regarding the payment of the Fortnightly caring allowance and inter-state foster payments are outlined in the associated procedure.

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**Office:** Investment and Commissioning

**Help Contact:** Tertiary Care and Support

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## Links:

### Procedures

Expenses – Fortnightly caring allowance and inter-state foster payments (365)

### Related Legislation or Standard

*Adoption Act 2009*

*Child Protection Act 1999*

*Child Protection Regulation 2023*

*Human Rights Act 2019*

Statement of Commitment between the Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services and the foster and kinship carers of Queensland.

**Related policies**

- Child Related Costs (645)
- Child related costs – Placement funding (628)
- Complex support needs allowance (612)
- Dual payment of carer allowances (289)
- High support needs allowance (296)
- Regional/remote loading for carers (379)

**Forms, Standard Letters of Memorandum**

- Carer overpayment Letter 1
- Carer overpayment Letter 2

**Recinded policies**

- 365-15 Expenses – Fortnightly caring allowance and inter-state foster payments

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Director-General