

Special childcare help for parents on irregular hours under Turnbull plan ^[1]

Author: Gartrell, Adam

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EXCERPTS

Special arrangements will be put in place to ensure parents who work irregular hours – such as shift workers and fly-in, fly-out workers – don't miss out on the Turnbull government's new childcare subsidy.

Fairfax Media understands the government is finalising work on protections to make sure that these sectors aren't short changed under the \$3.5 billion Jobs for Families package.

Both cabinet and the Expenditure Review Committee have recently approved the package, which has undergone some fine-tuning since it was unveiled by the Abbott government in the May budget. The package is expected to go to the Coalition joint party room and then be introduced into Parliament this week.

The government wants the package passed next year so the new system can begin in 2017.

Under the package, family eligibility for the new subsidy will be determined by a three-tiered "activity test". Parents will need to work, train or study between eight and 16 hours a fortnight to be eligible for up to 36 hours of subsidised childcare, between 17 and 48 hours to be eligible for 72 hours of subsidies and more than 49 hours to be eligible for up to 100 hours.

It's believed the government is considering special administrative arrangements that would allow some families working irregular hours to average their activity over a three-month period, rather than over a fortnight.

Originally the brainchild of Treasurer Scott Morrison, when he was responsible for the social services portfolio, the government's package is now spearheaded by Education Minister Simon Birmingham.

"We are focused on ensuring all those Australians who are working irregular hours in a number of different full, part time or casual roles are not disadvantaged," Senator Birmingham told Fairfax Media.

"There are a number of Australians who might work significant hours one fortnight and then much reduced the following fortnight and we will ensure that this work is recognised and these families supported with regular hours of subsidised care.

"Similarly, those in regular fly-in, fly-out work arrangements would be expected to be treated as ordinary full-time workers, ensuring regularity of care and learning experiences for their children."

Parents can currently access 24 hours of the means-tested Child Care Benefit per child per week with no activity test.

To access the non-means tested Child Care Rebate, both partners need to work or train "at some time" during the week – but there is no minimum number of hours.

-reprinted from The Sydney Morning Herald

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