



Australian Government
Department of Social Services

Operational Guidelines

Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA)

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this document

This Operational Guidelines (Guidelines) document provides guidance for registered organisations and their caseworkers to support a young person exiting formal care to apply for the Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA).

1.2 Objective of TILA

The objective of TILA is to support young people transitioning from out-of-home care (OOHC) to independence by providing a contribution towards the costs involved in transitioning to independent living.

TILA can be received as a single payment of \$1,500 or in up to six instalments (minimum \$250 per claim). An application for TILA can be made for less than \$250 where the requested amount represents the remaining TILA balance. The use and timing of TILA is to be agreed by the young person and the caseworker, and align with the goals in any of the life domains outlined at [Section 1.4](#) and in [Transitioning from out-of-home care to independence: A nationally consistent approach to planning](#).

The Australian Government has funded TILA since it commenced in March 2003. In conjunction with other Australian and state and territory government supports, TILA helps young people who are leaving formal care to achieve independence and stability through enhanced engagement in employment, education, training and community life. In turn, TILA can help reduce reliance upon crisis intervention and other community services at a later time, and lead to positive community engagement in areas such as housing, education and employment.

Adequate and suitable support for young people leaving care is required for them to achieve long lasting positive outcomes. Linking TILA to a young person's transition to independence plan will assist to integrate support for young people leaving care and encourages a preventative and early intervention approach. This aligns with evidence showing that optimal outcomes for young people transitioning from out-of-home care (OOHC) to independent living are more likely to be achieved when the transition process is planned, gradual and well supported.

TILA continues to be one of the Australian Government's contributions to [Safe and Supported: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031](#), with children and young people in and leaving OOHC one of the key focus areas.

1.3 Eligibility

To be eligible for TILA, a young person must meet ALL of the following criteria:

- be an Australian citizen or permanent Australian resident who resides in Australia at the time of application for TILA
- be aged from 15 to 25 years (up to their 26th birthday) at the time of application
- either has been in, or is currently in, formal care on a court order

- left the care of the state or territory statutory department after the age of 15 years and was last in the department's care for a continuous period of at least 6 months
- either be approaching an exit from [formal care](#) (within twelve weeks of applying), experiencing an exit from formal care, or have exited from formal care
- have the transition to independence plan (also known as a leaving care plan)
- has not received the full amount of TILA assistance previously (i.e. can only receive up to a total of \$1,500)
- the young person and the caseworker have agreed that the proposed use and timing of TILA is appropriate.

Certain children entering Australia on a Refugee or Humanitarian visa without a parent or legal guardian are known as Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minors (UHM), and they are eligible for TILA. Contact the [Department of Home Affairs](#) for more information on UHMs.

Jurisdictions may have different terms for formal out-of-home care. For example, some jurisdictions might refer to formal care as permanent care orders and other jurisdictions might refer to this as guardianship orders. It is important to understand that in this context formal out-of-home care is where the responsibility for the young person has been transferred to the Minister or their nominated delegate.

Further information on some of the eligibility criteria can found at [Appendix 1 - Definitions](#). Examples of eligible and non-eligible TILA applications are available at [Appendix 2 - Examples of TILA Eligibility](#).

If a young person is in OOHC, is under the age of 18 and does not have a transition to independence plan, they must contact **either** a caseworker from the state or territory agency responsible for child protection **or** an organisation approved by the state or territory department to establish one.

If a young person re-engages with a service after the age of 18, and wishes to apply for TILA but does not have a care plan in place, a caseworker is to work with the young person to document the young person's goals and needs to meet the definition of a transition to independence plan. As a minimum, the caseworker is to discuss with the young person their needs through each of the life domains listed at [Section 1.5](#), identify and record the next steps to achieve the young person's goals, and decide if TILA is the appropriate way to meet the young person's support needs.

Young people who are exiting, or have exited from [informal care](#), such as staying with friends or family not their parents and **do not** have a court order in place, are not eligible for TILA. Information about other Australian Government services and supports can be found at:

- [Services Australia](#) for information on income support payments, support and payments for job seekers, support and payments for students, crisis and special help, and Medicare

- [Department of Social Services](#) for information on [Support services for young people moving to independent living](#), including education and training, employment, health, housing, managing money and community support
- [Department of Education, Skills and Employment](#) for information on programs to support young people disengaged or at-risk of disengaging from education, finding a job, skills and small and family business
- [Department of Health](#) for information on mental health services.

1.4 Appropriate uses of TILA

The young person and the caseworker must decide together on the **best** use of TILA and it must be used to support the young person’s transition to independence plan. TILA cannot be used to reimburse the young person for previous purchases prior to applying for the payment. Examples of appropriate and inappropriate uses of TILA are highlighted below:

Table 1 - Examples of appropriate use of TILA

Examples	Details
Housing	Support to enter accommodation, such as connecting utilities, moving expenses and bond payment, and pre-payment of rent.
Essential household items	Purchase of essential household items, including appliances, whitegoods, furniture and consumables.
Life skill programs	The cost of life skills programs to equip a young person with the skills for independent living. For example, financial/budgeting, nutrition/cooking, or maintaining a home.
Employment and education	Support to access employment, education or training opportunities includes items such as the purchase of books/computer, enrolment fees, internet connection, clothing for work or a work interview, transport to undertake studies or employment.
Transport	One-off transport expenses such as the purchase or part payment for a car, motorbike, or bicycle, driving lessons or vehicle registration.
Public transport	The purchase of public transport passes or other essential items that will support the young person in accessing accommodation, employment, education or training.
Counselling	The cost of counselling to address issues identified in the young person’s transition to independence plan.
Other items	Other items not on this list will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Table 2 – Examples of non-eligible use of TILA

Examples	Details
Reimbursement of moving costs	Cannot be used to reimburse moving costs such as bond and utilities connections that have already been paid prior to the application for TILA.

Examples	Details
Crisis assistance	Crisis assistance such as the payment of bills or fines, on an ad-hoc basis where the use of TILA has not been agreed as part of the transition to independence plan.
Rent-to-buy	Rent-to-buy schemes for furniture and whitegoods.
Overseas travel	Overseas travel.
Electronic games	Game consoles (such as Nintendo Wii or Microsoft Xbox).
Fixed housing items	Items that are not portable and are installed into a premises not owned by the young person. For example, a fixed air conditioner, garden shed or permanent garden.
Cash	A cash payment to the young person.
Gifts	Cannot be used to buy gifts for friends or family or for donations to charity.

Examples of eligible and non-eligible TILA purchases are available at [Appendix 2 – Examples of TILA eligibility](#).

TILA is not regarded as income for means test purposes under Part 1.2 – Definitions, section 8 paragraph (8)(c) of the [Social Security Act 1991](#).

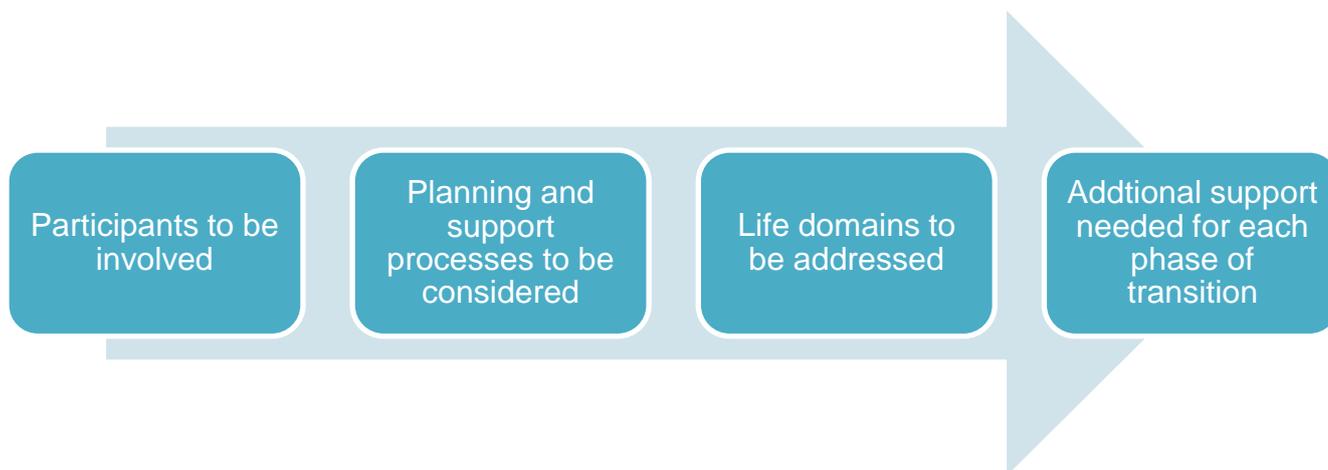
1.5 Transition to independence plan

A transition to independence plan is required as part of the eligibility for TILA. It is a record of a young person's plan commencing at 15 years of age, for their future independence, and it should identify their goals and the support needed to achieve these goals in each of the life domains.

The requirement for a transition to independence plan can be met through a document that meets the requirements of the [National Standards for Out-of-Home Care](#). The plan should be guided by and align with the guide [Transitioning from out-of-home care to independence: A nationally consistent approach to planning](#).

The plan is to be reviewed regularly and the caseworker is to assist the young person's engagement and participation in the planning process, including in the development and review of the transition to independence plan ensuring to consider each of the life domains, identify goals and recording the support needed to achieve the goals. This process would also be followed for young people who re-engage with a service at a later time and do not have a current transition to independence plan.

A transition to independence plan should include the following:



The life domains outlined in Table 3 must be considered as part of the planning process to access TILA.

Table 3 - Life Domains for TILA

Life domains	Details
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where is the young person living, is it stable and sustainable? • Where is the young person going to live, and how will they obtain a place to live?
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including physical, emotional (including self-esteem), mental, sexual and dental. • Are there any health concerns? • Has the young person got access to health services such as medical, dental, and other specialist services such as mental health?
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What type of job/career does the young person want? • What skills/training do they need to do it?
Education and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What qualifications has the young person achieved? • Does the young person want to stay at school, go to TAFE or University, and take up a course?
Financial security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do they have sustainable and adequate income?
Social relationships and support networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there people to support the young person? • Has the young person established connections in the community? • Is there benefit in engaging other services to support the young person?
Life (and after care) skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the young person look after themselves, e.g. wash, cook, clean, budget and pay bills, apply for a job, and learn about the services that can help?

Life domains	Details
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What's needed and how will they learn these skills?
Identity and culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the young person understand the information about their identification? • Is there secure storage for the information? • Are there any cultural needs to be addressed/supported?
Legal matters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the young person got personal and other documents for identification, independent living and citizenship (if applicable)? • Are there any outstanding legal matters to be attended to? • Is there secure storage for the information?

1.6 Funding of TILA

The annual TILA appropriation of \$3.512 million is capped for each financial year. Any unused TILA funding that does not get allocated in the relevant financial year does not carry over into the next financial year.

TILA is a demand driven appropriation. If TILA applications use the full appropriation prior to the end of a financial year, applications will not be approved for the remainder of the financial year and they will not be carried over to be approved at the start of the next financial year.

In the unlikely event that demand for TILA exceeds the full appropriation before the end of the financial year, DSS will advise the state and territory child protection network and other key stakeholders will work together to identify the most appropriate way to manage TILA applications for the remainder of the financial year.

A transition to independence plan may also be referred to as a 'leaving care plan', a 'transition from out-of-home care plan' and 'transitioning planning for young people leaving care'. It may be part of the case plan, rather than a separate document.

1.7 Registrations to process TILA applications

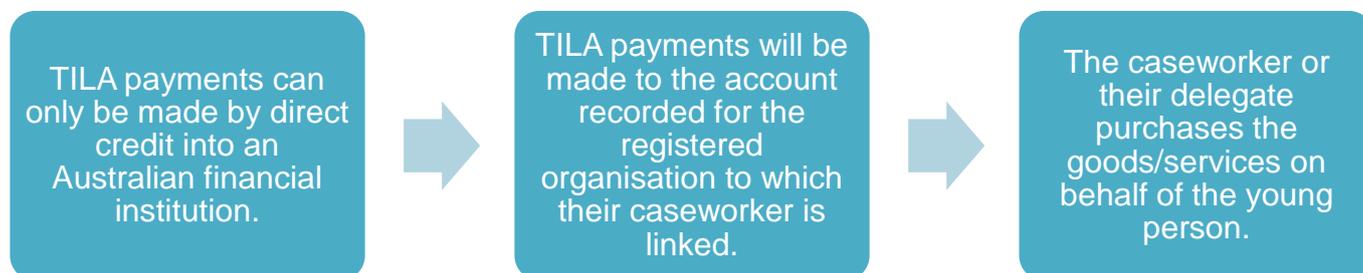
Services Australia are responsible for the registration in the Unified Government Gateway (UGG), the portal that is used for submitting applications for TILA payment, of caseworkers from approved agencies/organisations.

Agencies that are able to register for the UGG include the state or territory department responsible for child protection, or a non-government organisation, or community organisation approved by that state or territory department responsible for child protection.

An organisation must be registered before workers can be registered for TILA UGG access.

If a worker is already registered to use UGG for another purpose, they still need to register for the TILA claim service using the TILA registration spreadsheet.

Young people do not receive TILA payments directly by cash or into their bank account, therefore at the time of registration, the organisation must provide its account details for the receipt of TILA payments as:



Instructions for registering for TILA UGG access are at [Appendix 3 - Registration for access to the TILA UGG](#).

1.8 Applications for TILA

The Department of Social Services has policy responsibility for TILA. TILA applications can only be submitted via the UGG portal and can only be accessed by registered workers.

The young person applying for TILA must be working with a caseworker employed by a state or territory department responsible for child protection **or** an agency approved by a department for that purpose.

The agency and caseworker must be registered with the UGG to submit the TILA application. The caseworker is responsible to ensure the items being applied for in the TILA application are appropriate as listed in [Section 1.4](#) of these Guidelines.

If a caseworker is unsure if the goods or services are appropriate for TILA, contact the TILA Office at tila@dss.gov.au **before** an application is made through the UGG.

2. Application Process

2.1 Overview of the application process

Individual young people cannot apply for TILA directly to Services Australia and cannot access the TILA claim in the UGG.

In the first instance, a young person can contact an organisation that is/was responsible for their case management while in OOHC to discuss arrangements to apply for TILA. If a young person does not have a current caseworker, they can contact the department in the jurisdiction in which they were in care or, if applicable the Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, as listed in [Section 4](#). If a young person has moved interstate, they should contact the child protection department of the jurisdiction in which they currently reside.

Applications for TILA payment can only be submitted via the UGG by a registered caseworker working in an approved agency.

There are two steps in the TILA application process:

Step 1: Assessment

- The caseworker and the young person discuss the transition to independence plan.
- The caseworker will assess whether the young person is **eligible** for TILA, and if TILA is **suitable** for their needs.

Step 2: Claim lodgement

- The caseworker (or administrative staff in the organisation) will complete and submit an electronic claim for TILA payment via the UGG.

2.2 Assessment of the TILA application

To assess the TILA application, the caseworker must:

1. Complete the [Transition to Independent Living Allowance Application Form](#) in hardcopy.
2. Explain the privacy notification to the young person. More information on the privacy notification is in [Section 3.3](#).
3. Obtain the young person's signature on the TILA application form.
4. Sign the TILA application form themselves.
5. Keep the completed TILA application form on file at their organisation.

The TILA application form:

- is a record of the young person's consent to their information being used by Services Australia and to lodgement of the claim for payment by their caseworker.
- provides evidence that the young person was involved in the planning and decision making process in regards to their TILA application.
- is kept by the caseworker for auditing and reference purposes.
- will assist the caseworker in completing the TILA application in the UGG.

To endorse an application for TILA, the caseworker must be satisfied that the:

- young person meets all the eligibility criteria outlined in these Guidelines
- young person has not already accessed their full TILA entitlement
- proposed amount, use of, and timing of TILA funds requested is appropriate.

The caseworker must confirm in the TILA UGG online application they have sighted documentation that confirms the young person is:

- an Australian citizen or permanent Australian resident (e.g. birth certificate, citizenship certificate, or certificate of evidence of resident status)
- aged from 15 to 25 at the time of submitting the online application (e.g. birth certificate or driver's licence)

- has been in, or is currently in, formal OOHC as described in the eligibility criteria at [Section 1.3](#) has a transition to independence plan.

Incorrect text entries in UGG may cause significant delay in the online processing of the TILA application. Free text fields in the UGG are limited to 45 characters or less. Special characters, such as &@\$\$#! cannot be used.

If the date of birth entered indicates that the young person is not within the eligible age range for TILA on the date the application is being entered into the UGG, the system will prevent the application being submitted.

Caseworkers should consider the following when deciding when to use TILA:

- How will the proposed use of TILA support the needs and goals of the young person as identified in their transition to independence plan?
- How will the proposed support benefit the young person's transition to independence?
- Is this the best time for the young person to access the TILA payment?
- Can the young person receive the proposed support from another program, measure or scheme?

2.3 Confirmation of a young person's previous care experience

A young person might apply for TILA in a different jurisdiction to the one they were in OOHC in. Contact the state and territory contacts listed at [Section 4.2](#) to verify a young person's previous care experience in a different jurisdiction.

2.4 Approval of the TILA application by Services Australia

Once the TILA claim is submitted via the UGG, Services Australia will:

- Match the young person to their existing Services Australia record, or if no record exists, create a new Services Australia record for that person.
 - If Services Australia is unable to match the young person to an existing Services Australia customer record, staff from Services Australia may contact a caseworker for further information to assist them to make a match or to create a new customer record.
- Check whether the young person has already been paid \$1,500 for TILA.
- Check whether issuing the approved amount of TILA in the claim will exceed the TILA limit of \$1,500.
- Pay TILA into the account details provided by the organisation at the time registering for UGG access.

If the young person has received a full payment of \$1,500 of TILA by Services Australia, the claim will be rejected and no payment will be issued.

If a partial payment of TILA has been made, the UGG will show how much of the \$1,500 is available.

For example, Jack has previously been paid \$1,000 in TILA by Services Australia, and he has now submitted a new TILA application for \$800. This takes his total for applied TILA to \$1,800. Services Australia will only issue \$500 for this new TILA application as the overall TILA application total is \$300 over the limit of \$1500. This takes the total amount paid to Jack for TILA to \$1,500 only.

If the amount claimed by the young person will cause them to exceed their TILA limit, Services Australia will issue payment in the amount that is the difference between what the young person has previously been paid and the TILA limit.

Receipts as proof of purchase are not required to be submitted to the Australian Government. The caseworker supporting the young person is to monitor the use of TILA funds and maintain appropriate records. The Australian Government, in consultation with the state or territory government in charge of child protection, may conduct an audit to ensure that funds have been spent appropriately.

If you have any concerns on what information you should keep, please contact the department that oversees child protection in your state and territory. A listing of state and territory contacts is at [Section 4.2](#).

2.5 Outcome of the TILA application

Once a TILA application has been submitted via the UGG, the caseworker will be able to print a copy of the submitted details before exiting the UGG. This printed copy will include a reference number for the application claim. If there are any issues with the application, Services Australia will contact the caseworker on the contact information provided in the 'caseworker details' section of the UGG application.

Once the TILA application has been processed, Services Australia will issue a payment advice to the TILA applicant and the organisation to inform them of the outcome of the application. The young person's letter will be sent to the address provided in the UGG application. Advice to the organisation will be sent to their online mailbox within the UGG.

Please allow up to five (5) working days for the TILA application to be processed and longer for a response letter to reach the nominated mailing address. Letters to the young person are not sent via email, as their email address is not collected on the TILA application form.

2.6 Provision of credit cards with TILA funding

Some agencies might use a corporate credit card to purchase a young person's agreed goods and services. In these instances, an agency should not charge processing fees that reduce the amount of the approved TILA funding. For example, if a young person has applied for and is approved to receive \$800 of TILA, this full amount should be spent on the young person's items.

2.7 Surplus TILA funds held by the registered organisation

The TILA payment is to be used to pay for the approved category of goods or services. If there is a minor amount left from the TILA payment once the goods and services have been paid for, a caseworker may use those funds for another purchase for the same young person as long as the purchase is consistent with the TILA categories of goods or services. Amounts less than \$20 can be paid to the young person as cash.

For example, Jade has applied for \$1,500 in TILA in the home establishment category in order to buy furniture totalling \$1450. Jade's caseworker can use the remaining \$50 to buy Jade:

- public transport tickets (one-off transport expenses category)
- kitchen utensils (essential household items category), or
- clothing for an interview (employment, education and training expenses category).

Towards the end of the financial year an organisation may have surplus TILA funds from unused TILA applications. This can occur if the caseworker has lost contact with the young person for whom a TILA payment was received. TILA funds approved for one young person cannot be used for another eligible young person.

To repay surplus TILA funds, please contact the TILA Office at tila@dss.gov.au, who will send a debt recovery form for processing. This form will enable an organisation to pay the surplus funds to DSS as soon as practical.

3. Terms and Conditions

3.1 DSS rights

DSS reserves the right to amend the Guidelines by whatever means it may determine in its absolute discretion and will provide reasonable notice of these amendments.

3.2 Disclaimer

DSS and its officers, employees, agents and advisors:

- are not, and will not be, responsible or liable for the accuracy or completeness of any information in or provided in connection with the Guidelines
- make no express or implied representation or warranty that any statement as to future matters will prove correct
- disclaim any and all liability arising from any information provided to the applicant, including, without limitation, errors in, or omissions contained in, that information
- except so far as liability under any statute cannot be excluded, accept no responsibility arising in any way from errors or omissions contained in any information in this document and the TILA application form

- accept no liability for any loss or damage suffered by any person as a result of that person, or any other person, placing reliance on the contents of these documents, or any other information provided by the DSS.

3.3 The Privacy Act

Services Australia and the Department of Social Services are legally obligated to comply with the Privacy Act 1988 (Privacy Act). The Privacy Act regulates how both departments collect, store, provide access to, use and disclose personal information.

Personal information is information in any form that can reasonably identify an individual, such as a person's contact details, details about their foster care homes, or application forms that list such details.

The Privacy Act requires TILA applicants to be notified of certain matters when their personal information is collected. The caseworker and the young person will be required to sign a declaration on the TILA application form stating that the privacy notice has been provided to the applicant, and will have to repeat the declaration as part of the electronic TILA claim via the UGG.

Privacy Notice for Claimant

Your personal information is protected by law, including the Privacy Act 1988, and is collected by the Australian Government Department of Social Services and Services Australia for the assessment and administration of payments and services. This information is required to process your application or claim.

Your information may be used by the departments or given to other parties for the purposes of research, investigation or where you have agreed or it is required by law.

You can get more information about the way in which the Department of Social Services will manage your personal information, including the department's privacy policy at dss.gov.au/privacy-policy or by requesting a copy from that department.

You can get more information about the way in which Services Australia will manage your personal information, including the department's privacy policy at www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/privacy or by requesting a copy from that department.

Caseworkers should not email any young person's personal information to DSS. DSS does not accept or process TILA applications, and therefore does not collect the personal information of young people who are eligible or recipients of the TILA. DSS does not accept responsibility or liability for the secure storage of personal information that is sent to the TILA mailbox at tila@dss.gov.au and all emails to this mailbox that contain personal information, including applications for TILA will be deleted.

3.4 Freedom of Information

All documents in the possession of DSS including those in relation to TILA are subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act).

The *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act) gives any person the right to:

- access copies of documents (except exempt documents) held by the Australian Government
- ask for information held about you to be changed or annotated if it is incomplete, out of date, incorrect or misleading
- seek a review of a decision not to allow you access to a document or not to amend your personal record.

You can ask to access any document the Australian Government holds. We can refuse access to some documents, or parts of documents that are exempt. Exempt documents may include those relating to national security, documents containing material obtained in confidence and Cabinet documents, or other matters set out in the FOI Act.

For more information on FOI, go to:

- **Department of Social Services**

All FOI requests are to be referred to the DSS FOI Coordinator:

Mail: Freedom of Information Team
Government and Executive Services Branch
Department of Social Services (DSS)
GPO Box 9820
Canberra ACT 2601

Email: foi@dss.gov.au

Website: www.dss.gov.au/contact/freedom-of-information

- **Services Australia**

Mail: Freedom of Information
Services Australia
PO Box 7820
Canberra BC ACT 2610

Email: freedomofinformation@servicesaustralia.gov.au

Website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/organisations/about-us/access-information/freedom-information>

3.4 Complaints and Feedback

To make a complaint or provide feedback, TILA applicants or caseworkers can contact DSS by:

Online: [Online Feedback, Enquiry or Compliment Form](#)

Phone: 1800 634 035

Mail: DSS Feedback
GPO Box 9820
Canberra ACT 2601

Email: complaint@dss.gov.au

If a TILA applicant or caseworker is at any time dissatisfied with DSS handling of a complaint, they can contact the [Commonwealth Ombudsman](#) on 1300 362 072.

A young person can use the DSS complaints process instead of the caseworker's organisation if they have concerns about the application process and/or the caseworker.

3.5 Fraud

DSS is committed to the [Commonwealth Fraud Control Policy and Guidelines](#). Applicants and organisations registered to access the UGG in relation to TILA need to be aware of their respective fraud and risk minimisation responsibilities when dealing with DSS.

All [fraud concerns](#) can be reported by leaving an anonymous voicemail message on the DSS Fraud Hotline (1800 054 312) or by emailing: fraud@dss.gov.au

4. Contact Information

4.1 Australian Government

Department of Social Services

Contact DSS for information on TILA policy including interpretation of the Guidelines:

Mail Transition to Independent
Living Allowance Policy Team
GPO Box 9828
Canberra ACT 2601

Email tila@dss.gov.au

Services Australia

Contact the UGG Online Support Helpdesk for UGG password resets **only**:

Phone 131158 / Select Option 3

Email national.business.gateway@servicesaustralia.gov.au

For all other TILA UGG enquiries email tila@servicesaustralia.gov.au

Department of Home Affairs

For Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minors (UHMs) in the care of a Home Affairs service provider, please contact:

Phone UHM Contracts Team
Stacey Kerr – Assistant
Director
(02) 6275 6727

Email uhm.contracts.and.policy@homeaffairs.gov.au

Department of Social Services

For Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minors (UHMs) in the care of a relative or private individual in the Australian community, please contact the UHM Service Delivery Network Team at uhm.operations@homeaffairs.gov.au

4.2 States and territories

Australian Capital Territory Community Services Directorate

The young person can contact their caseworker and Youth Protection Services, or the agency caseworker who has been working with them. If the young person is unsure who to call they should telephone the Child and Youth Protection Services Operational Support Team:

Address	11 Moore Street Canberra City ACT 2601	Mail	GPO Box 158 Canberra City ACT 2601
Phone	(02) 6207 6956	Email	cypsfinance@act.gov.au

New South Wales Department of Family and Community Services

Southern Youth and Family Services (SYFS) administers all TILA applications in NSW. Caseworkers can support application and obtain more information by contacting:

Email	tilansw@syfs.org.au	Phone	1300 761 961
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Young people who are **in** or have left care can speak with their caseworker or contact the careleaversline@facs.nsw.gov.au or call 1800 994 686.

Northern Territory Department of Families (Territory Families)

Young people in care are to speak with their Territory, Families, Housing and Communities Caseworker regarding support in applying for TILA. For information on the TILA application process in the Northern Territory contact:

Email	Movingon@anglicare-nt.org.au
Phone	Alice Springs (08) 8951 8000 Darwin (08) 8946 4800

Queensland Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs

Young people who are either in care or who have left care may contact a [Child Safety Service Centre \(CSSC\)](#) for support in applying for TILA.

Freecall	1800 811 810 (Queensland only)	Phone	(07) 3224 8045
Email	info@childsafety.qld.gov.au	TTY	(07) 3012 8655

South Australian Department for Child Protection

For more information about TILA in South Australia, **please contact the Department for Child Protection:**

Phone (08) 8124 4185 **Email** DCPTILA@sa.gov.au

Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services

Young people who have a caseworker can contact the area service centre to speak to their caseworker:

Child Protection Services (North West)

Phone (03) 6434 6246 **Fax** (03) 6421 7821

Child Protection Services (North)

Phone (03) 6336 2376 **Fax** (03) 6336 2525

Child Protection Services (South)

Phone (03) 62307650 **Fax** (03) 6230 7653

If a young person doesn't have a caseworker they can call the After Care Support Program:

Phone (03) 6233 2273 or 1300 654 583 **Fax** (03) 6223 1343

Victorian Department of Health and Human Services

Call the Leaving Care Helpline or go to the Leaving Care website to find out about Leaving Care services that can help young people apply for TILA

Leaving Care Helpline 1300 650 172 **Website** <https://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/leaving-care>

Email leavingcare@dhs.vic.gov.au

Western Australian Department of Communities (Department of Communities)

For information regarding leaving care services, including TILA, contact one of the local Department of Communities district offices or one of the Department of Communities funded leaving care service providers. For policy enquiries or information on leaving care matters, contact the Community Services division by email at policycpcic@communities.wa.gov.au

More information on leaving care is available at the Department of Communities Child Protection and Family Support Leaving Care webpage at www.dcp.wa.gov.au/ChildrenInCare/Pages/Leavingcare.aspx

Young people who have been in formal care can contact any of the local CPFS district offices to speak with the Leaving Care Officer by calling:

Country Freecall	1800 622 258 Ask to be put through to a metropolitan or country district office or to the children in care policy team	Phone	(08) 9222 2555
Website	www.cpfs.wa.gov.au	TTY	(08) 9325 1232



Appendix 1: Definitions

Term	Definition
Approved agency	The state or territory department responsible for child protection or a non-government organisation or community organisation approved by state or territory department responsible for child protection or the Department of Home Affairs to be an organisation registered for the UGG for the purposes of TILA.
Australian citizen:	A person who is a citizen of Australia, either by birth or because they have been granted citizenship.
Australian financial institution:	Authorised Deposit-taking Institutions including banks, building societies and credit unions.
Caseworker:	A caseworker employed by an approved agency who works with the young person leaving care or post care to develop and implement their transition plan. Caseworkers can be registered to submit TILA applications via the UGG.
Court orders:	Court orders are defined according to the AIHW definitions in Child Protection Australia 2013-14. Court orders are legal orders or arrangements that give child protection departments some responsibility for a child's welfare and include finalised guardianship or custody orders, finalised third-party parental responsibility orders, finalised supervisory orders, interim and temporary orders, and administrative arrangements. If you are unsure if a particular order meets the eligibility requirements of 'formal care', contact the state/territory child protection department in the jurisdiction the order was implemented.
Formal care:	Formal care is defined according to the AIHW definitions in the Child Protection Australia 2018-19 report. Formal care can be referred to as out-of-home care or state care by other government agencies. A young person must be subject to a current state/territory government court order

Term	Definition
	<p>under the jurisdiction’s statutory care and protection provisions where the responsibility for the young person has been transferred to the Minister or their nominated delegate, or to another person or agency authorised within the jurisdiction. Formal care can include kinship, community or other care in line with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle.</p> <p>See also Types of out-of-home care or formal care.</p>
Guidelines:	Means the Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA) Operational Guidelines .
Home Affairs:	Department of Home Affairs.
Independent living:	<p>The term ‘independent living’ is defined according to the AIHW definitions in the Child Protection Australia 2019-20 report as “accommodation where the child lives independently, such as private board or being the lead tenant in a household”.</p> <p>Independent living can also be used in the context of Victoria’s Home Stretch program. In this situation, a young person continues to live with their home-based carer and/or receives support with an accommodation allowance up to the age of 21 while developing skills that will assist to successful transitioning to independence.</p>
Informal care:	<p>Informal care is defined as where a young person is in the care and custody of someone who is not their parent where there is no court order in place.</p> <p>Typically, the carer of a young person in informal care is not reimbursed by the state/territory for their care. This <u>does not</u> include where a financial payment/reimbursement has been offered to the carer by the state/territory for their care but has been declined by the carer.</p> <p>Examples of informal care include, informal out-of-home care (e.g. refuge, homeless, supported accommodation, staying with friends/relatives not their parents).</p>
Negotiated Placement Agreement (NPA):	Is a written voluntary agreement between the CEO (of WA Communities) and the parents of a child for whom the CEO is required to make a care arrangement? When a child is subject to an

Term	Definition
	<p>NPA, they are in the CEO's care, however parental responsibility remains with the child's parents or guardian.</p> <p>An NPA is an agreement between parties and not a formal court order, and therefore a young person is not eligible for TILA.</p>
Permanent Australian resident:	A person who is not an Australian citizen but who has been granted permanent residency status in Australia.
Registered worker:	An employee of an approved organisation who has been registered for TILA UGG access. This may be a caseworker or an administration officer.
Transition to independence plan:	A transition to independence plan for the purposes of TILA is a record of a young person's goals and the support needed to achieve the goals, based on individual needs after considering the life domains as listed at Section 1.5 .
Unified Government Gateway (UGG):	UGG – the Australian Government Services Australia portal for applying for the TILA payment.
Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minor (UHM):	For the purpose of TILA, a UHM refers to non-citizen children under the Minister for the Department of Home Affairs guardianship under the <i>Immigration (Guardianship of Children) Act 1946</i> . Not all UHMs are eligible for TILA, for further information please contact the Australian Government Department of Home Affairs (Home Affairs).
Young person:	Means a person aged 15 to 25 years inclusive.
15-25 years:	From the day a young person turns 15 until the day before they turn 26 years of age.
Types of out-of-home care or formal care as defined by the AIHW	
Residential care:	Where placement is in a residential building whose purpose is to provide placements for children and where there are paid staff.

Term	Definition
Family group homes:	Homes for children provided by a department or community-sector agency which have live-in, non-salaried carers who are reimbursed and/or subsidised for the provision of care.
Home-based care:	Placement in the home of a carer who is reimbursed (or who has been offered but declined reimbursement) for expenses for the care of the child. This is broken down into three subcategories: relative/kinship care, foster care and other home based OOHC.
Relative/Kinship care:	<p>A form of out-of-home care where the caregiver is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a relative (other than parents) • considered to be family or a close friend • a member of the child or young person’s community (in accordance with their culture) • reimbursed by the state/territory for the care of the child (or who has been offered but declined reimbursement). <p>For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, a kinship carer may be another Indigenous person who is a member of their community, a compatible community, or from the same language group.</p>
Other:	<p>Includes placements that do not fit into the above categories and unknown placement types. This includes boarding schools, hospitals, hotels/motels and the Australian Defence Force.</p> <p>Placements for the purpose of respite are included. Respite care is used to provide short-term accommodation for children and young people where the intention is for the child to return to their prior place of residence. This includes respite from birth family and respite from placement.</p>
National care and protection order types	
Finalised guardianship or custody orders:	<p>Guardianship orders involve the transfer of legal guardianship to the relevant state or territory department or non-government agency. These orders involve considerable intervention in the child’s life and that of their family, and are sought only as a last resort.</p> <p>Custody orders generally refer to orders that place children in the custody of the state or territory department responsible for child protection or a non-government agency. These orders usually</p>

Term	Definition
	involve the child protection department being responsible for the daily care and requirements of the child, while the parent retains legal guardianship.
Finalised third-party parental responsibility:	Orders transferring all duties, powers, responsibilities and authority parents are entitled to by law, to a nominated person(s) whom the court considers appropriate. The nominated person may be an individual such as a relative or an officer of the state or territory department.
Finalised supervisory orders:	Under these orders, the department supervises and/or directs the level and type of care that is to be provided to the child. Children under supervisory orders are generally under the responsibility of their parents and the guardianship or custody of the child is unaffected.
Interim and temporary orders:	Orders covering the provisions of a limited period of supervision and/or placement of a child. Parental responsibility under these orders may reside with the parents or with the department responsible for child protection.
Administrative arrangements:	<p>Agreements with child protection departments, which have the same effect as a court order of transferring custody or guardianship. These arrangements can also allow a child to be placed in out-of-home care without going through the courts.</p> <p>The following orders are <u>excluded</u>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • children on offence orders, unless they are also on a care and protection order (as defined above) • administrative and voluntary arrangements with the departments responsible for child protection that do not have the effect of transferring custody or guardianship.

Appendix 2: Examples of TILA eligibility

The following examples are to be used as a guide only and they do not refer to actual individuals or their circumstances.

Examples of TILA eligibility

Example 1:

Julie is a permanent Australian resident who is turning 18 in two weeks' time. Julie has been in formal care since the age of 14 years. When Julie turns 18 she will exit formal state care because of her age. Julie currently resides in specialist homelessness services accommodation and has high and complex needs. Julie's caseworker has assisted in drawing up a transition to independence plan that includes Julie seeking government housing and enrolling in TAFE to complete a Certificate III. Julie has applied for TILA to assist her to move from specialist homelessness services accommodation into independent living after her 18th birthday and to assist her to access training opportunities, as her caseworker believes that she is at risk of not successfully completing her transition to independent living.

Answer:

Julie is eligible for TILA assistance as she meets the eligibility criteria set out in [Section 1.3](#).

Example 2:

Dana is a 20-year-old Australian citizen who was in formal care from age 5 to 18 years. Dana's transition to independence plan includes undertaking a two-year TAFE course, and the caseworker determines that it would be appropriate for TILA to be used to cover TAFE fees and equipment required for the course at the start of each year.

Answer:

Dana is eligible for TILA. The caseworker will need to submit a separate TILA claim via the UGG at the start of each year in order for each TILA instalment to be paid at the appropriate time. The caseworker can apply for a TILA payment under the category of education or training support.

Examples of TILA eligibility

Example 3:

Kai is a 24-year-old who entered Australia as an Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minor at the age of 14 years. Kai's transition to independence plan includes undertaking an apprenticeship, and the caseworker determines that it would be appropriate for TILA to be used to cover tools, uniforms and equipment.

Answer:

Kai is eligible for TILA. Kai's caseworker should contact the Department of Home Affairs for more information.

Example 4:

Jessie is a 15-year-old Australia citizen who has been in formal state care from the age of 10. Jessie is about to transition out of state care into independent living and Janine's caseworker has submitted a TILA application for whitegoods, furniture and a Nintendo Wii to enable Jessie to interact with her friends.

Answer:

While Jessie is eligible for TILA the request for a Nintendo Wii is not consistent with the TILA Guidelines. The case manager should substitute the Nintendo Wii with another item consistent with the TILA Guidelines and apply for TILA under one of the applicable categories of goods and services.

Example 5:

Linda is a 24-year-old Australia citizen who has been in Indigenous kinship care through a court order from the age of 17. Linda is about to transition from her kinship care living arrangement into independent living and Linda's caseworker has submitted a second TILA application for university text books to the value of \$200.00

Answer:

Examples of TILA eligibility

Linda is eligible for TILA as she is in formal care and is transitioning to independent living. As Linda's first application for university tuition fees was \$1,300, the final TILA payment can be less than \$250.00. Her application will be approved and paid through the UGG.

Example 6:

Seb is a 17-year-old Australian citizen who has been in formal state care from the age of nine. Seb is about to turn 18 and will exit formal state care because of his age. Bob's foster care family have agreed that Seb can remain in the family home and Seb has expressed his desire to remain with his foster family. Seb has asked his caseworker for a bed, refrigerator and an air conditioner.

Answer:

Seb is eligible for TILA as he has been in formal state care. As long as the items purchased are portable (the air conditioner is not installed in the foster carer's home) then the items are eligible. The applicable category is home establishment.

Example 7:

Riley is a 17-year-old Australian citizen who has been living with his maternal aunt, as he is unable to return home due to a history of family violence. Riley is not the subject of a court order. Riley wishes to apply for TILA to move to the city to start university.

Answer:

Riley is not eligible for TILA assistance as he does not meet the eligibility criteria set out in [Section 1.3](#); specifically he is not in, or previously been in, formal care. Riley could check what other forms of assistance he could receive by reviewing the [Support services for young people moving to independent care](#) information.

Example 8:

Examples of TILA eligibility

Corey is a 22-year-old Australian Citizen who was in formal OOHC from age 2 to 13 years. Corey left formal care at 13 years of age and has not returned to any other type of formal OOHC such as kinship or community care, Corey has remained in informal care by living with his aunt and has applied for the TILA payment.

Answer:

Corey is not eligible for TILA assistance as he does not meet the eligibility criteria at [Section 1.3](#) as he has not been in formal OOHC since he was 13 years of age.

Example 9:

Blair is a 16-year-old permanent resident who has been residing in formal care with her uncle's family since she was 14. Blair wants to leave her uncle's home in a regional town and move to the city. Blair wants to apply for TILA but is not connected to a caseworker and does not have a transition to independence plan.

Answer:

To become eligible for TILA, Blair must have a transition to independence plan before she can apply for TILA. Once Blair connects with a caseworker and completes a transition to independence plan, she will meet all the eligibility criteria for TILA assistance set out in [Section 1.3](#).

Example 10:

John is a 22-year-old Australian citizen who was in formal care from age nine (9) to 17 years. John had a formal transition to independence plan in place at age 16, but since then has not engaged with the state child protection agency, or with non-government service organisations. John has recently re-engaged with a stated funded leaving care service and wishes to apply for TILA.

Answer:

Examples of TILA eligibility

To become eligible for TILA, John needs to have a document that meets the requirements of a transition to independence plan for the purposes of TILA. John's transition to independence plan is out of date and is no longer appropriate as he has already left care.

In the conversation that the caseworker has with John, the caseworker checks how things are going in each of the life domains, and together they identify John's future goals and make a record of what's needed to achieve them. Together, they will consider whether it is a suitable time to use TILA to implement next steps towards John's goals and if so, they will apply for TILA.

Example 11:

Noah is a 23-year-old Australian Citizen who was in formal state care from the ages of nine to 18. Noah is currently studying full time and was recently involved in a car accident, which has meant that he has had to make an insurance claim. The insurance claim excess is \$1000, and he cannot afford to pay this on top of his rent and he does not work due to his study commitments. Noah has contacted a caseworker to check if he can use TILA to pay for the excess.

Answer:

Noah is eligible for TILA as he has been in formal state care. As TILA can be used for one-off transport expenses such as driving lessons or vehicle registration, he can use of TILA to pay for the insurance excess to have his care car repaired as this would enable him to use his car for education, training and employment opportunities.

Appendix 3: Registration for access to the TILA UGG

General information

TILA UGG registration spreadsheets are available from Services Australia. The registration spreadsheet allows an organisation to provide the details of the workers who need TILA UGG access. An organisation must be registered before workers can be registered for TILA UGG access. Only the state or territory government department for child protection can register a new organisation to use the UGG.

If a worker is already registered to use UGG for another purpose, they still need to register for the TILA claim service using the TILA registration spreadsheet.

For all email requests for new registrations or to change or cancel existing registrations, please provide full details of the organisation (name, address, ABN) to ensure that Services Australia can identify the correct UGG record. Please include contact details for a person in the organisation in all emails to DSS and Services Australia, in case further information is required.

Requests for further information on the UGG registration process can be sent to tila@servicesaustralia.gov.au

Organisations

Each organisation must provide their:

- ABN and only one organisation can be registered per ABN
- BSB and account details in the registration spreadsheet as all TILA payments submitted by employees of the organisation will be made to that account.

If a new organisation needs to register for UGG access, the completed spreadsheet must be submitted by the state or territory government department or the Department of Home Affairs to Services Australia. This will ensure only approved organisations in each jurisdiction are registered for TILA UGG access.

If an entire organisation ceases to be involved in TILA, the state or territory government department is to advise Services Australia to arrange to cancel the registration for that organisation. If an organisation's registration is cancelled, all workers linked to that organisation will also have their TILA UGG registrations cancelled.

Workers

New or additional staff

If new or additional staff member/s require TILA UGG access, they are to complete the spreadsheet requesting access for those staff members and email it to national.business.gateway@servicesaustralia.gov.au

The registered organisation's full details will need to be included on the spreadsheet to ensure Services Australia link the worker to the correct organisation.

It is important that each organisation maintains current registrations for its staff, ensuring only staff who currently need TILA UGG access have that access.

Leaving or change of staff role

When a staff member moves to a different role or leaves the organisation their registration and access to the TILA UGG must be cancelled. The organisation is to send an email to national.business.gateway@servicesaustralia.gov.au to facilitate this.

Organisations must ensure their staff do not share User IDs or passwords for the TILA UGG.

Accessing the TILA UGG

When a worker's TILA UGG access has been set up, the worker will be sent an email containing their User ID and password, with instructions on how to access the TILA claim section of the UGG.

Within the UGG, the TILA claim contains help text to assist. Click the "HELP" button in the top right area on any page of the UGG for details about the fields on that page.

The questions in the UGG are listed in [Appendix 4 – TILA UGG application questions](#).

Financial account for TILA payments

An organisation can only nominate one financial account per ABN, and this is to be provided at the time of registering for access to the TILA UGG.

All TILA payments will be issued to the account of the organisation under which the caseworker submitting the claim is registered.

If the organisation wants to change the account into which TILA payments are deposited, it will need to submit a written request to Services Australia, using the registration spreadsheet which is available from the [local state or territory government department for child protection](#).

Other changes

If an organisation that is already registered for TILA UGG access wants to change any of its details, e.g. organisation name or postal address, it will need to submit a written request to Services Australia, using the registration form.

Advice of payment

Services Australia will issue a payment advice to the organisation and to the young person whenever a TILA payment is granted or rejected. The grant letter will be the only record the organisation receives from Services Australia to identify individual TILA payments.

Advice to the organisation will be sent to the organisation's online mail box within the UGG service. All TILA UGG registrations will automatically be set up so that the worker has access to their organisation's UGG online mail.

Caseworkers will be sent information about accessing the TILA UGG online mail when they are sent their individual Logon IDs and passwords.

The organisation's TILA online mailbox will contain mail for all caseworkers linked to that organisation, and all caseworkers registered under that organisation will be able to view all the advice emails.

The young person's letter will be sent via Australia Post to the postal address provided for the young person in the UGG claim.

Appendix 4: Communication materials for TILA

The following communication materials have been developed to assist you and your organisation promote TILA in:

- news items for your newsletters
- social media messaging and images for Facebook, Twitter etc.
- a web badge that can be added to your homepage and linked to the [TILA webpage](#)

Newsletter / article template

The following article has been designed to help you communicate general information about TILA. Please feel free to publish this article on your website, in your newsletters, on your notice boards and in your communications about TILA.

Please note: The information below has been checked for factual accuracy. Please contact the Department for approval if any amendments are made.

Young people leaving out-of-home care

We understand that leaving care and moving to independent living can be a positive time in a young person's life as well as a challenge. To help make it easier for you, if you are 15 to 25 years old and are leaving or have left formal out-of-home care, you may be eligible for up to \$1,500 of the Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA) to help you cover the basic costs to set yourself up. You may also be eligible for TILA if you decide to stay at home with your foster parents after your care order expires.

You will need to work with your caseworker on your leaving care plan and agree on what the payment will be used for and when. Your caseworker will apply for TILA on your behalf, manage the payment for you and help you buy the essential items or services you both agree on. These items can include a fridge, a couch, counselling, education and training courses, medical expenses, or a driver's licence or lessons.

If you don't have one, contact your [local state government department for child protection](#) for assistance.

If you think you might be eligible, talk to your caseworker or go to www.dss.gov.au/tila for more information or email the TILA Team at TILA@dss.gov.au

The Department of Social Services website also has links to a range of [support services](#) to help you find a place to live, get a job or find training, get financial advice, counselling or emotional support. Find out more at www.dss.gov.au/tila

Social media messaging

Facebook

The following message can be used on social media with the 238x238 graphic images:

Post 1

[Transition to Independent Living Allowance](#) is a payment of up to \$1,500 to help young people leave out-of-home care.

Post 2

[Transition to Independent Living Allowance](#) helps young people with leaving out-of-home care expenses.

Twitter

Tweet 1

Transition to Independent Living Allowance is a payment up to \$1,500 to help young people leave out-of-home care. Go to www.dss.gov.au/tila

Tweet 2

Transition to Independent Living Allowance helps young people with leaving out-of-home care expenses. Go to www.dss.gov.au/tila

Website and linkage guidelines

More information about TILA can be found at www.dss.gov.au/tila.

The website includes information for young people leaving out-of-home care, case workers and support services.

By including a link on your website, you can help young people leaving out-of-home care access much needed support as they transition to independent living. A graphic image is available to help you highlight the payment (please see below).

Web badge and banner

The Department can provide you with a web badge that you can use to link to the TILA information on the DSS website. To request a copy email us at TILA@dss.gov.au

Web badges and banner are available as a .jpeg and in the following formats:



Medium rectangle: 300x250



Square: 238x238



Web banner: 728x90

If you need an alternative format please contact us at TILA@dss.gov.au

Samples

Please upload graphics in combination with the text below, to provide your website visitors with more information about what they will see when they click through to the link.

Transition to Independent Living Allowance is a payment of up to \$1,500 to help young people cover basic costs as they leave formal out-of-home care. Go to www.dss.gov.au/tila for more information about TILA eligibility and other support services.

Version History

Version 2, 2 February 2022

Updates to contact information, website links and general information. Ensure consistency in terminology of transitioning from OOHC, inclusion of communication material previously located in the Caseworkers Communication Information Kit, removal of the Interstate Liaison Officer details and TILA UGG application questions.

Version 1, 1 April 2016

Release of document.