Review of the Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA)

An analysis of the 1 January 2014 reforms to TILA
Acknowledgements

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Review of the Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA)

An analysis of the 1 January 2014 reforms to TILA
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1. Background

1.1 Purpose of the review

The purpose of this document is to review the reforms to the Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA) which were implemented by the Department of Social Services (DSS) on 1 January 2014. This process evaluation aims to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of the operational arrangements to administer TILA. The primary research questions are:

1. Have the 1 January 2014 reforms lessened the administrative burden on caseworkers and young people?
2. Is the payment accessible to eligible young people and caseworkers supporting them?
3. What can be changed to ensure that the objectives of TILA can be met more effectively or efficiently?

The socio-economic outcomes for TILA recipients and the influence of TILA on broader child protection programmes and policy are considered outside the scope of this review.

1.2 TILA Background

1.2.1 Purpose of the payment

TILA provides up to $1,500 in financial assistance to eligible young people exiting statutory out-of-home care (formal care) to meet some of the costs associated with moving to independent living. Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minors are automatically eligible for TILA. Currently, TILA is delivered by the Department of Human Services (DHS) Unified Government Gateway (UGG). The use and timing of TILA must be agreed by the young person and the caseworker and align with the goals outlined in the young person’s transition to independence plan.

In conjunction with other Australian and state and territory government support mechanisms, TILA helps young people who are leaving formal care to achieve independence and stability through enhanced engagement in employment, education, training and community life.

1.2.2 History of the payment

The TILA payment was established in 2003 in response to the Prime Minister’s Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce Footprints to the Future report. The intent of the original payment was to support young people transitioning out of statutory care and to maximise their opportunities by contributing to the associated costs of leaving care. The original allowance of $1,000 was lifted to $1,500 in 2009.

TILA is a relatively small Australian Government administered payment with an annual capped appropriation of $3.512 million. TILA is perceived as very important by caseworkers, jurisdictions and young people and as making a positive contribution to successful transitions into stable living arrangements as well as supporting young people to positively engage in transition planning.
The eligibility has fluctuated over time to include different cohorts. The original policy intent in 2003 was to assist formal care leavers; however, in 2005 eligibility was extended to informal care leavers. The definition of informal care was broad and included all young people who had contact with a relevant service. Such services included housing and homelessness services, refuges, supported accommodation and transitional housing providers. As a result of this eligibility expansion, the payment was subject to major pressures on its limited appropriation. It was estimated that the potential number amount of eligible individuals exceeded 40,000, which is approximately 16 times greater than the appropriation was able to sustain.¹

1.2.3 The National Framework and 1 January 2014 reforms

The National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009-2020 (the National Framework) is a collaborative, long-term approach to ensuring a sustained reduction in levels of child abuse and neglect over time. Leaving care support and TILA fall under Supporting Outcome 4 of the National Framework: Children who have been abused or neglected receive the support and care they need for their safety and wellbeing.

The significance of TILA is supported by evidence that suggests that a sense of security, stability, continuity and social support are strong predictors of better long-term outcomes for young people after leaving care.² In a survey of 471 young people who were leaving or had left care, CREATE found that only 36 per cent knew they had a leaving care plan or that one was being developed.³ A third of this cohort reported they had little or no participation in the development of the leaving care plan. The majority of young people who had left care reported they felt unhappy, quite unhappy or very unhappy about the planning process. In the same study, only 23 per cent of the post-care cohort felt they had received enough information to adequately prepare them for leaving care.

The National Framework intersects with broader policy interest in this area, for example, The Road Home, the 2008 White Paper on homelessness, also recognised that poor transitions from out-of-home care are major contributors to homelessness and proposed a policy of “no exits into homelessness” from institutional care. The priority target group was named as young people leaving the child protection and juvenile justice systems.

In response to the evidence on poor transitions, the Community and Disability Services Ministers endorsed Transitioning from out-of-home care to independence: A nationally consistent approach to planning and standard 13 of the National standards for out-of-home care, which states that “Children and young people have a transition from care plan commencing at 15 years old which details support to be provided after leaving care.” Both of these initiatives are actions under the National Framework and set the stage for improvements in leaving care standards and processes for jurisdictions, many of which are undergoing reforms to wider out-of-home care (OOHC) leaving and after-care service provision.

¹ Australian Government Office for Youth, Review of the TILA Program, 2011, prepared by Colmar Brunton, Department of Social Services, 2016
On 1 January 2014, the TILA payment was reformed in response to a 2011 Office for Youth review of the payment in the context of the National Framework. The TILA payment is now linked to a young person’s transition to independence plan to integrate it with state/territory support for young people leaving, or who have left, formal care arrangements. This approach aligns with evidence showing that optimal outcomes for young people transitioning from out-of-home care to independence are more likely to be achieved when the leaving care process is gradual and well supported.

The changes to the TILA payment were implemented with the knowledge that improving transitions and outcomes for young people leaving out-of-home care cannot be addressed in isolation. The National Framework recognises the need to build positive foundations through the development of essential life skills during care, and to support positive outcomes when leaving care and after care.

Changes to the operational arrangements, which form the basis of the current analysis, are another major component of the reforms. The current process is outlined in section 1.3.

1.3. Description of Payment

1.3.1 Basic outline of process

Each state and territory applies its own procedures that work alongside the standard operational arrangements for TILA. However, three elements of the TILA payment are universal.

1. **Assessment**: The caseworker and the young person discuss the transition to independence plan. The caseworker assesses whether the young person is eligible for TILA, and if TILA is applicable at this stage of the transition.

2. **Approval**: The caseworker seeks DSS approval for expenditure via email.

3. **Claim lodgement**: The caseworker completes and submits an electronic claim for TILA payment via the UGG.

1.3.2 Role of the Department of Social Services

The Department of Social Services is responsible for TILA policy and coordination. Specifically, the DSS TILA office and helpdesk ([tila@dss.gov.au](mailto:tila@dss.gov.au)) manages and monitors TILA applications in each state and territory, liaises at a national level with DHS about the online functionality of the payment and communicates with caseworkers and young people about policy and payment issues.

1.3.3 Role of the Department of Human Services

DHS’ primary responsibility is to maintain and oversee the function of the online UGG. Those functions involve all technical aspects related to the running and maintenance of the online system.

When registration requests are received from the DSS TILA office, DHS emails the registrants their logon ID and password and instructions on how to access the UGG. DHS also communicates technical faults and password resets.
1.3.4 Role of jurisdictions and nominated organisations

State and territory departments, who coordinate the arrangements for care leavers, are responsible for integrating the TILA payment into their service delivery systems. This integration involves coordinating internal communications with caseworkers and overseeing the registration of non-government organisations (NGOs) to ensure the TILA payment is administered in accordance with the TILA Operational Guidelines. Access to the UGG is determined by the state/territory child protection departments who own the relevant legislation and associated programmes.

1.3.5 Detailed summary of payment arrangements

TILA organisations comprise government and non-government services that case-manage young people who are leaving, or have left, formal care. Different models of TILA implementation have developed in each jurisdiction to satisfy the individual needs and restrictions presented by the jurisdiction's service delivery and legislative framework. The figure below provides a summary of the organisations that were registered to the Unified Government Gateway as at 25 June 2015.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jurisdiction</th>
<th>UGG registered organisations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>ACT Community Services Directorate and Marymead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>Southern Youth and Family Services (SYFS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>Department of Communities, Child Protection and Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>Salvation Army, Wanslea, Mission Australia and the Department of Child Protection and Family Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>Anglicare NT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAS</td>
<td>Department of Health and Human Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>Melbourne City Mission(^4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>Department of Education and Child Development(^5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Department of Immigration and Border Protection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen from the table above, TILA organisations comprise a variety of state and territory government departments and NGOs as there is variation across jurisdictions in how TILA is administered. For example, in WA there are multiple

\(^4\) This organisation was registered after the review commenced.
\(^5\) ibid.
NGO and departmental caseworkers registered to apply through the UGG while in NSW there is only one registered organisation that carries out all administrative functions.

On the next page is a pictorial representation of the TILA arrangements. More information can be found in the DSS TILA Operational Guidelines.
Figure 1. Model of current arrangements

1. S/T approves caseworker to manage TILA
2. Caseworker and young person develop a transition from care plan including usage of TILA
3. Caseworker emails request for approval of TILA usage to DSS
4. DSS emails approval to caseworker
5. Caseworker applies through UGG for TILA payment
6. UGG emails approval to caseworker
7. UGG sends letter approving TILA to young person
8. UGG makes TILA payment to approved organisation
9. Caseworker buys goods or services for young person
2. Review Methodology

2.1 Evaluation process
The purpose of this analysis is to review the structure of the TILA payment to evaluate the effectiveness of the current operational arrangements. The qualitative and quantitative sources of information are outlined in this chapter.

2.2 Data and information

2.2.1. Consultations
In late 2014, the DSS conducted direct consultations with policy and programme managers in the state and territory departments. This process informed the structure of the caseworker survey and provided direct feedback on issues experienced on the ground.

2.2.2. DSS and DHS secondary data analysis
Secondary data on the demographic details of TILA recipients was collected from the DHS UGG and details of its TILA operations were sourced from DSS.

2.2.3. Caseworker survey
In March 2015, DSS recruited respondents to a caseworker survey to produce a cross-sectional representation of the views of caseworkers and administration officers involved in overseeing TILA applications. The recruitment involved direct contact with a list of caseworkers provided by state and territory officials, as well as caseworkers who applied for TILA approval during the period the survey was open. A full copy of the survey can be found at Appendix A. In total, 56 people responded to the survey; a breakdown of the characteristics of the survey participants is found below.

Characteristics of survey participants
The jurisdiction of survey participants broadly reflects the breakdown of participating jurisdictions (at the time of the survey). Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland are marginally overrepresented.
Breakdown of participating jurisdictions

Figure 2. Map of Australian states and territories showing participation in survey

Other caseworker information

The majority of caseworkers had used TILA under the old arrangements and one in five had contact with Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minors to access TILA.

Prior usage of TILA, UGG usage and UHMs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did you use TILA under the old arrangements (through Southern Youth and Family Services prior to 31 December 2013)?</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you used the Unified Government Gateway (UGG) for your TILA application?</td>
<td>59.3%</td>
<td>40.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you dealt with an Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minor (UHM) in accessing TILA?</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>80.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. Percentages of respondents who had dealt with the Old arrangements, the UGG and UHMs

Around half of the surveyed caseworkers have direct contact with young people. The other caseworkers are primarily involved with the administration of the payment.
3. Review Findings
The following section summarises the key findings of the review.

3.1 Demographics of participants
This section summarises the quantitative data extracted from the Department of Human Services through caseworker input to the UGG. All data in this section comprises all TILA applications between 1 January 2014 and 31 May 2015.

3.1.1 Age and stage of care
The majority of young people receiving a TILA payment are between the ages of 16-19 years with 76 per cent of all TILA recipients falling within this age bracket. As seen in the graph below, TILA is primarily used during the preparation or transition phase of leaving care, with 83 per cent of TILA recipients receiving their payment during this time. Seventeen per cent of young people receive their TILA payment post-care.
3.1.2. Indicators of vulnerability

The table below shows the breakdown of indicators of vulnerability. Twenty seven per cent of TILA recipients identified as Indigenous, 18 per cent identified as having a disability with only 10 per cent of TILA applicants identifying as being from a culturally and linguistically diverse background. Forty five per cent of applicants are classified as not having an indicator of vulnerability. The results shown in the table reflect the overrepresentation of vulnerable clients in the formal care cohort.

![Percentage identifying as in three categories of vulnerability: Indigenous, CaLD or with a disability](chart)

3.1.3 Education, training, and employment

The majority of TILA recipients (55 per cent) reported not being in any form of education or training, with only a quarter (26 per cent) reporting as being in full time education and/or training. Crossover between the two figures below has not been depicted; however, it should be noted that of the 23 per cent of participants who were unemployed and looking for work, almost all (>99 per cent) were not in some form of education or training. Also the majority (>99 per cent) of unemployed TILA participants who were not looking for work, were in education or training.

---

6 Those who have been classified as having no vulnerability comprise individuals who did not respond as either Indigenous, CaLD, or with a disability.
3.1.4 Living arrangements

Almost a third (29 per cent) of TILA recipients transition into private rental arrangements, 12 per cent into public housing and a further 18 per cent into boarding arrangements. Five per cent of recipients reported as living in crisis accommodation. These figures highlight continued housing vulnerability for TILA recipients by indicating housing affordability issues in the private rental market, potential lack of stability in boarding arrangements and the use of crisis accommodation.
3.2 The operation of TILA

This section will focus on the effectiveness of the TILA operational arrangements as perceived by caseworkers and financial officials who are involved with the payment. The data in this chapter is drawn from the caseworker questionnaire, as well as from the issues experienced by state and territory and Australian Government agencies.

3.2.1 General

**QLD Finance Officer**: Thank you for a straight forward, easy and efficient process.

The 1 January reforms to TILA were designed to reduce the administrative burden for caseworkers and young people. More than two thirds (67.3 per cent) of surveyed caseworkers who had experienced the old arrangements (61.1 per cent) said that the new TILA arrangements have reduced the administrative burden. As shown in Figure 11 over, 71 per cent said the process has improved either slightly (28 per cent) or greatly (53 per cent).
Figure 11. Percentages of respondents who stated that process improvements were More difficult, Stayed the same, Improved slightly or Improved greatly

**Length of application**

**ACT Caseworker/ Manager:** [The TILA process] is working very well and the time to process has reduced significantly over the past year.

Under the old arrangements, applicants would be informed of the outcome of a TILA application approximately 20 working days after the application. Further time was allowed for the manual processing of direct cheques to providers of goods.

The new arrangements have allowed for a faster processing time, with 82.9 per cent saying that the current arrangements are faster and 26.9 per cent stating that the process takes less than one week from start to finish. The most common reported timeframe for the whole process is between one to two weeks.

---


8 The current arrangements in NSW still involve processing SYFS cheques.
3.2 The New System

3.2.1 The旧系统

3.2.2 The Unified Government Gateway

This section examines the operational effectiveness of the Unified Government Gateway and outlines the issues for caseworkers and financial officers. Sixty per cent of surveyed respondents reported to have used the UGG in some capacity.

UGG ease of use

When asked if the UGG was easy to use for TILA applications, 73 per cent of surveyed caseworkers reported that the process was easy (21 per cent) or very easy (52 per cent). All (100 per cent) caseworkers who had used the old arrangements reported that the process was easy or very easy.

State/territory consultation

State and territory representatives reported that they agreed with the caseworker consensus that there has been a decrease in the administrative burden for TILA caseworkers and young people. Some jurisdictions welcomed the increased insight from state level coordination and some noted that there are teething and operational issues that impede the coordination of TILA funds. More detail of these issues is provided in the next section.

Figure 12. The average time for the whole TILA application process under the old arrangements compared with the most commonly reported time span for the current process

Average time under the old arrangements compared with the most commonly reported time span for the current process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Less than 1 day</th>
<th>Between 1 and 3 days</th>
<th>Between 3 days and 1 week</th>
<th>1 to 2 weeks</th>
<th>2 to 3 weeks</th>
<th>More than 3 weeks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The diagram shows the average time under old arrangements and the time span for the current process. The bars indicate the percentage of respondents who reported each time span.
When asked about the average length of time it took to process a TILA application within the UGG, most (56 per cent) of the applicants report that the online component of the process took one to three days. Eight per cent (three respondents) had experienced an UGG wait time of more than one week, which is longer than the expected one to five working days. This extended wait time is likely due to isolated issues associated with the UGG as outlined in the next section.
Figure 14. Responses to the question on the length of time taken to process an application through the UGG shows between 1 and 3 days is the most commonly reported time span.

Issues with monitoring and processing UGG applications

Caseworker WA: It [the UGG] is currently working well.

As expressed in the table below, around 20 per cent of financial officers and caseworkers have had an issue while monitoring or processing an UGG application. These issues range from computer glitches to more major ICT system issues.

Figure 15. Percentages of respondents who stated they had issues with monitoring or processing applications using the UGG.
3.2.3 Qualitative responses to issues

Processing Issues

If a respondent declared that they had experienced an issue with UGG processing, they were asked to provide a written response expanding on their specific situation. The nine responses (19.1 per cent of respondents) provided were categorised and summarised, with individual examples below.

Table 2. Responses to question on UGG processing issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue summary</th>
<th>Respondent Example</th>
<th>Number of similar responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limitations to UGG</td>
<td>“Young people with no CRN (Customer Reference Number) take longer to process. Another instance was where a young person turned 26 between the time the application was submitted to when it was entered into the UGG. The system would not allow the entry of this person.”</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matching eligibility</td>
<td>&quot;It was initially difficult to determine if a young person had previously accessed TILA”.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System crash/ offline</td>
<td>“Sometimes (the UGG is) off-line when (you) need to use (it)”.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant delay or glitch</td>
<td>&quot;I had a significant glitch with a young person’s application where an approval went missing”.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Monitoring issues

Similarly, if a respondent had declared that they had experienced an issue with monitoring an UGG application, they were asked to provide a written response. The 10 responses (20.8 per cent of respondents) provided were categorised and summarised, with individual examples below.

Table 3. Responses to question on monitoring issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue summary</th>
<th>Respondent Example</th>
<th>Number of similar responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Issue with the UGG mailbox</td>
<td>&quot;There is no list of applications entered or way of knowing the application status of a particular application”.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue summary</td>
<td>Respondent Example</td>
<td>Number of similar responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State issue</td>
<td>&quot;No response from head office regarding money being deposited&quot;.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notification Issue</td>
<td>&quot;Confirmation of approval is sent to our finance department instead of directly to person applying (Youth Worker)&quot;.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No reply/ not applicable</td>
<td>“N/A”</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**State consultation**

In the consultation phase, jurisdictions mentioned that the introduction of the Unified Government Gateway has decreased the TILA administrative burden and waiting times. Some issues with the system were outlined:

- There is no clear identifier between the UGG notification mailboxes and the bank notification. This can cause difficulty in coordinating payments.
- The young person letter notification is causing some young people to believe that the TILA money is being received in their bank account.

**Summary**

The evidence in this section suggests that the UGG provides an easy, user accessible, and efficient process for administering TILA funds to young people. There are a few established issues that have affected a minority of caseworkers, and some that provide regular minor obstacles, namely the bank payment and young person notifications provided by the UGG system. Although some of these issues have been somewhat resolved through communications, there is scope for improvement at an Australian Government level.

When asked if there were any changes needed to streamline the processing of TILA applications, caseworkers responded that overall they were pleased with the process, but would like slight improvements in the notification system. Administration officers, state contacts and financial officers do, however, face issues that slow down the process and further efficiencies in “back end” processes can still be explored.

**3.3 The targeting of TILA**

The following section analyses specific elements of the way TILA is targeted. It canvasses the views of government officials and caseworkers in order to discover whether improvements can be made in how TILA is targeted.

**3.3.1 Communications**

The communications about the TILA payment are split between DSS and individual jurisdictions. DSS coordinates the higher level TILA communications including messaging about the 1 January 2014 policy changes, the distribution of the guidelines and direct communication through the TILA hotline and mailbox.
Jurisdictions lead the communications relevant to their caseworker and organisation network, including the individual operational requirements and any information relevant to the coordination of TILA forms and funds.

The majority of caseworkers (71.4 per cent) knew about the TILA payment before the reforms of 1 January 2014, which means they had a general familiarity with the payment. The purpose of the TILA communication products is to promote an understanding of TILA eligibility and the requirements of the payment. A summary of the self-reported understanding of TILA communications by caseworkers is provided below.

**Understanding of eligibility**

When asked to rate their understanding of TILA eligibility, only six per cent described it as average or poor. None of the respondents were caseworkers involved in assessing eligibility.

![Figure 16. Percentages of respondents who rated their understanding of eligibility as Excellent, Very good, Good, Average or Poor](chart)

**Understanding of communication products**

The caseworkers also rated their understanding of particular resources provided by the various departments and organisations with involvement in the payment. The majority of caseworkers found the TILA documentation easy or very easy, with the exception of TILA information found on NGO websites.
Figure 17. Percentages of respondents who rated their use and understanding of five different TILA resources as Very hard, Hard, Neutral, Easy or Very easy

**Email communication between DSS, jurisdictions and NGOs**

The majority of emails received by DSS were from NSW and QLD where TILA has been operating for an extended period of time. This result suggests that communication between the government and the NGO sector is working well.

Figure 18. Number of emails about TILA received by DSS from each state/territory

Approximately 90 per cent of all correspondence to DSS was from NGOs and government departments. This result could imply that these organisations are
serving young people leaving care effectively as they are making enquiries on behalf of young people or that young people are unaware of the payment.

![Number of TILA emails by categories of correspondent: NGO, Government, Young person or Other](image)

### 3.3.2 Goods and services used

The payment’s primary objective is to assist young people in their transition to independent living. The goods and services TILA can be used for is intended to be varied and flexible enough to suit the specific situations surrounding the individual’s transition. The table over provides a breakdown of the goods and services TILA is used for.

Despite TILA being available for a wide variety of goods and services to assist in personal domains such as education, employment and health, TILA is primarily a payment that is used to set up a home. The most common TILA usage is for furniture and home appliances.
Figure 20. The figure shows the categories of appropriate use of TILA and numbers and percentages of use for each category.

3.3.3 Eligibility

The biggest policy issue facing the TILA payment is the targeting of the payment through its eligibility criteria. The payment eligibility has fluctuated between its initial intention of servicing young people leaving formal care, to assisting a broader and hard to define group of informal care leavers. The intention of the payment is to ensure the limited appropriation services the individuals who are most vulnerable, without risking its financial sustainability. When asked if the TILA appropriation is adequately targeted, 36 per cent said that the scope should be broadened. Fifty nine per cent agreed with the TILA scope of eligibility.

Figure 21. Percentages of respondents who reported that the scope of TILA should be Broader, Just right, and Narrower

Ten people gave qualitative answers to the question "If you think that the scope of TILA should be changed, please provide further details (please be as specific as
possible)” and each expressed the view that young people who experience alternative (mostly informal) care arrangements should be supported through the payment.

Table 4. Caseworker comments on eligibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of caseworker comments supporting TILA eligibility expansion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;TILA should be available to any young person that has a Community Services intervention. In many cases one sibling may have had formal orders when other siblings have had foster/respite placements without final orders. This creates another deeper level of disadvantage and can create tension and resentment between siblings.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;TILA should revert to the previous eligibility criteria allowing young people residing in informal care using a similar funding envelope.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;There are young people who were either not placed into the care of the minister or who were placed in guardianship/kinship care who are not eligible for a LCP (Leaving Care Plan) but have no familial support. We often work with young people who spent time in care, however are not entitled to an LCP through no fault of their own and are further disadvantaged by being prevented from accessing TILA. AfterCare services should have discretion to apply for TILA when they believe there is genuine need and appropriateness.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

State/territory consultations

Overall, state and territory representatives were happy with the change in eligibility. The Northern Territory noted the gap in TILA eligibility created by informal kinship care arrangements, as well as those in contact with territory housing properties. This is an important consideration for young people who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

3.3.4 Financial analysis

Related to the question of whether TILA is targeted appropriately is the demand for the payment, as expressed by the rate at which the financial appropriation is drawn down over time. The figure below describes the rate at which the TILA appropriation of $3.512m was drawn down until the end of April for the 2014-2015 financial year. It is clear that TILA is being used below its potential, as the drawdown is running at approximately a third of the total appropriation. There are some allowances to be made:

- With the introduction of the reforms, a lag in both understanding of and communicating the changes is to be expected. CREATE’s 2011 Report Card found that 58 per cent of 17 year olds, and 38 per cent of 15 year olds in formal care had received information about TILA, showing that knowledge of the payment was low. Previous reviews have found that information about TILA often comes from informal sources and information is not always correct.
- Some states did not have working arrangements for the entire financial year. To adjust to the lack of arrangements in some states, an “Adjusted Prediction”
regression line was created using the proportion of out-of-home care leavers in each state that did not have TILA access, shown as a dollar amount. The lack of working arrangements partly explains the underspend.

- Many states are undergoing individual reforms and changes to leaving and after care service arrangements. In this context, labour intensive transition planning and the new requirements to be met by services may add to the underuse of TILA.

![Graph showing 2014-2015 drawdown of TILA appropriation and predicted drawdown](image)

Figure 22. Figure shows the TILA appropriation, the predicted drawdown and the actual drawdown until end April 2015

### 3.4 Addendum at February 2016

Since the review and financial analysis were completed in mid-2015, some states have increased their demand for TILA and more data is available from the UGG.

The table over shows the actual number of applications for the first and second quarters of 2015-16 and, based on those numbers, the projected number of approvals and projected drawdown for all of 2015-16.
Table 5. First and second quarter approvals and projected drawdown for 2015-16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approvals and projected drawdown</th>
<th>No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of approvals July 2015</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of approvals August 2015</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of approvals September 2015</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total approvals 1\textsuperscript{st} quarter 2015-16</td>
<td>364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projected no. of approvals for 2015-16 based on 1\textsuperscript{st} quarter total</td>
<td>1,456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of approvals October 2015</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of approvals November 2015</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of approvals December 2015</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total approvals 2\textsuperscript{nd} quarter 2015-16</td>
<td>363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projected no. of approvals for 2015-16 based on 2\textsuperscript{nd} quarter total</td>
<td>363 x 4 = 1452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projected no. of approvals for 2015-16 based on 1\textsuperscript{st} and 2\textsuperscript{nd} quarter totals</td>
<td>727 x 2 = 1454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated projected drawdown for 2015-16 based on projected no. of approvals at average of $1,300 each (2015-16 average)</td>
<td>$1,890,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated projected drawdown for 2015-16 based on projected no. of approvals at average of $1,350 each (2014-15 average)</td>
<td>$1,962,900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Recommendations

In response to the findings of this review, the Department of Social Services recommends the following:

4.1 Adjustments to communications

The Department of Social Services, along with jurisdictions, adjust the suite of communications to reduce the barriers for engagement especially for those who are new to the payment.

4.2 Amend payment issues

Engage the Department of Human Services to make the long term adjustments to established payment issues, such as the caseworker notification, the letter to the young person and clearer references in bank deposits.
4.3 Further simplify arrangements
Explore long term arrangements that further remove administrative complexity for caseworkers and administration officers.

4.4 Drive demand for TILA
Analyse drivers for underspend of the payment, including eligibility criteria and existing coverage of OOHC cohorts in each jurisdiction.
Appendix A: Survey
Welcome to the TILA review survey

Thank you for participating in the Transition to Independent Living (TILA) review survey. Your views will help inform us on the progress of the 1 January 2014 reforms, and on how best to improve TILA in the future.

Please contact TILA@dss.gov.au if you have any questions.
Basic Information

1. In which State/Territory do you access TILA?
   a. Northern Territory
   b. Western Australia
   c. Queensland
   d. South Australia
   e. Victoria
   f. New South Wales
   g. Australian Capital Territory
   h. Tasmania

2. Have you dealt with an Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minor (UHM) in accessing TILA?
   a. Yes
   b. No

3. What is your involvement with the TILA programme?
   a. Case Manager / Case Worker
   b. Administration Officer
   c. Finance Officer

4. Have you used the Unified Government Gateway (UGG) for your TILA application?
   a. Yes
   b. No

5. Did you use TILA under the old arrangements (through Southern Youth and Family Services prior to 31 December 2013)?
   a. Yes
   b. No

6. If so, have you found that the process has improved since 1 January 2014?
   a. More difficult
   b. Stayed the same
   c. Improved Slightly
   d. Improved Greatly
   e. Not applicable
General Information

7. How did you find out about TILA?
   a. Word of mouth
   b. DSS online (Australian Government), state or territory government websites
   c. I have used TILA prior to 1 January 2014
   d. Other (please specify)

8. What do you primarily grant TILA for?
   a. Support to enter accommodation
   b. Purchase of essential household items
   c. The cost of life skills programs to equip a young person with the skills for independent living
   d. Support to access employment, education and training opportunities
   e. One off transport expenses
   f. The purchase of public transport passes or other essential items that would support a young person to access the above
   g. The cost of counselling to address issues identified in the young person’s transition to independence plan
   h. Other (please specify)

9. Which of the following resources did you use to find out about the TILA application process?
   a. Instruction / advice from State department (intranet, emails etc.)
   b. Instruction / advice from TILA@dss.gov.au
   c. DSS website
   d. NGO website content
   e. TILA Operational Guidelines (DSS)
   f. Other (please specify)

10. Rate your understanding of TILA eligibility.
    a. Excellent
    b. Very good
    c. Good
    d. Average
    e. Poor
11. How easy did you find the resources to use and understand?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Not easy</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Very Easy</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instruction / advice from</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State department (intranet,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>emails, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Instruction / advice from</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:TILA@dss.gov.au">TILA@dss.gov.au</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>DSS website</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO website content</td>
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<tr>
<td>TILA Operational Guidelines</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

12. Have you used the $250 minimum instalment payment?
   a. Yes
   b. No

13. Did you find this option useful?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Not applicable

14. Have the 2014 reforms reduced the associated administrative burden for young people applying for TILA?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Unsure

15. How accessible is the TILA programme for eligible young people?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Not very</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Very</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is TILA easy to find for young people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the requirements of the young person practical?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. Do you have any comments related to the ease of access and ease of use of TILA or young people?
   Answer: 

17. Have there been any issues processing applications using the UGG?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Not applicable
   d. If so, what issues?
   Answer: 

31
18. Have there been any issues monitoring applications using the UGG?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Not applicable
   d. If so, what issues?
   Answer:

19. Is the Unified Government Gateway (UGG) easy to use for TILA applications?
   a. Not easy
   b. Neutral
   c. Easy

20. How long did process take from start to finish (i.e. from creating the TILA plan to receipt of TILA goods/services)?
   a. Less than 3 days
   b. 3 days to a week
   c. 1 to 2 weeks
   d. Between 2 to 3 weeks
   e. More than 3 weeks

21. What is the average time taken for applications to be processed once entered on the UGG?
   a. Less than 1 day
   b. Between 1 and 3 days
   c. Between 3 days and 1 week
   d. More than 1 week

22. Are there any changes needed to streamline the processing of applications?
   Answer:

23. Financial officers only: How difficult is the management and tracking of TILA funds?
   a. Not easy
   b. Neutral
   c. Very easy
   d. Not applicable

24. How can the management and tracking of TILA funds be improved?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Unsure

25. In your opinion, is TILA targeted to the right young people?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Unsure
26. In your opinion, should the scope of TILA be changed?
   a. Broader scope
   b. Just right
   c. Narrower scope

27. If you think that the scope of TILA should be changed, please provide further details (please be as specific as possible).
   Answer: 

28. Are you from:
   a. Queensland
   b. New South Wales
   c. None of the above
Queensland Specific Questions

Please only answer these questions if you are from Queensland.

29. Have there been cases when you have not expended the TILA amount paid for (for example, an amount of $1,500 was applied for, however, only $1,350 was spent)?
   a. Yes
   b. No

30. Do you know how to access information identifying when the Department has received a young person’s TILA payment?
   a. Yes
   b. No

31. Do you think young people in Queensland find TILA useful?
   a. Yes
   b. No

32. Do you have any suggestions for improving the TILA process in Queensland?
   Answer: 


New South Wales specific questions

Please only answer these questions if you are from New South Wales.

33. How easy is the application process (i.e. completion of application form and submission to Southern Youth and Family Services)?
   a. Not easy
   b. Neutral
   c. Very easy

34. How easy is the payment process (i.e. receipt of payment and distribution to young people)?
   a. Not easy
   b. Neutral
   c. Very easy

35. To what extent do TILA support materials (fact sheets for case workers and young people and other procedural advice) assist the TILA process?
   a. Not very much
   b. To a small extent
   c. Unsure
   d. To some extent
   e. To a great extent

36. Do you have any further comments you would like to make?
   Answer: