Inclusion Support Program Fact Sheet

The Inclusion Support Program (ISP) provides $133 million per year to support mainstream Child Care Subsidy approved early childhood education and care (ECEC) services to build their capacity and capability in providing quality inclusive practices for all children and address participation barriers to *support the inclusion of children with additional needs* alongside their typically developing peers. The ISP is available to give the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children a strong start, while supporting parents into work.

Children with additional needs may include those who have a disability or developmental delay, are presenting with challenging behaviours, have a serious medical or health condition, including mental health or are presenting with trauma-related behaviours.

The ISP is not a disability program but an inclusion program, which prioritises support for children with additional needs, particularly those with disability. Primary support is from Inclusion Agencies (IAs) to build inclusion capacity and capability so all children have genuine opportunities to access and participate. Financial support may also be available under the Inclusion Development Fund (IDF) to build service inclusion capacity/capability and to support the inclusion of a particular child or children.

What is inclusion?

Inclusion, as set out in the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) (and similarly in My Time, Our Place - Framework for School Age Care in Australia), involves:

taking into account all children's social, cultural and linguistic diversity (including learning styles, abilities, disabilities, gender, family circumstances and geographic location) in curriculum decision-making processes. The intent is to ensure that:

- *all children's experiences are recognised and valued*
- *all children have equitable access to resources and participation, and opportunities to demonstrate their learning and to value difference.*

Inclusion underpins how services operate across all Quality Areas of the National Quality Standard (NQS), with a particular focus in Quality Area 6, "Effective partnerships support children's access, inclusion and participation in the program".

How does ISP operate?

IAs are contracted by the department in each state and territory to work with eligible ECEC services to build their skills to provide and embed inclusive practice and address barriers to inclusion

experienced by children with additional needs. ISP support is underpinned by a Strategic Inclusion Plan (SIP), which is an assessment and planning tool, developed by each ECEC service with assistance from the IA. The SIP is a living document, which includes short and longer-term strategies for improving and embedding inclusive practice.
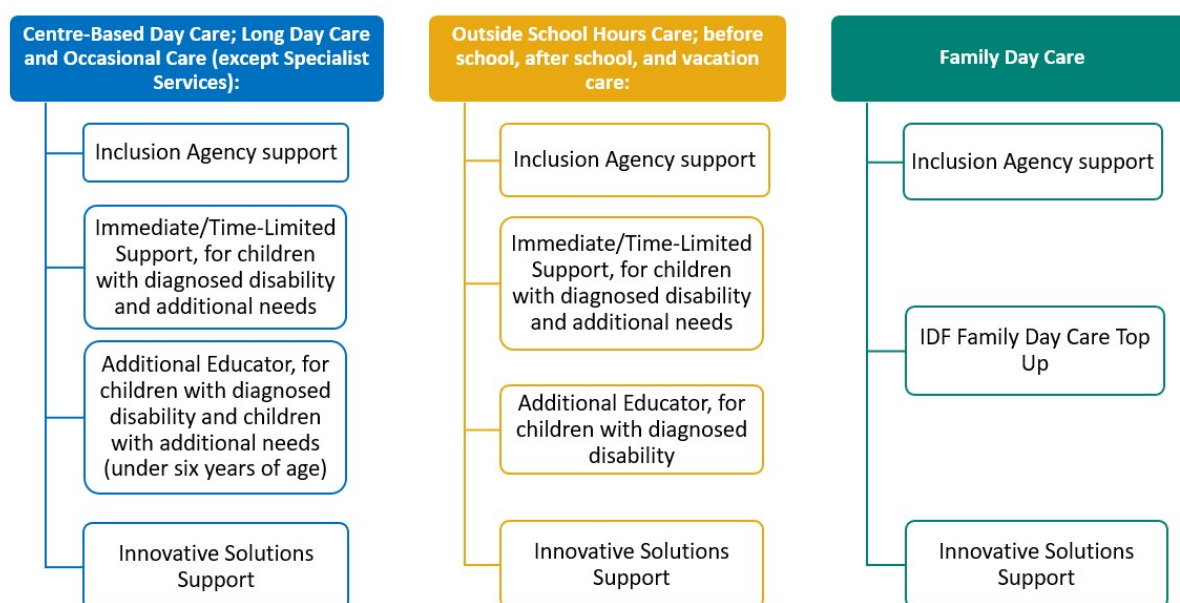
Each IA also manages a Specialist Equipment Library for services in their state or territory to loan items that facilitate and support the inclusion of children with additional needs. Items may include mobility aides, communication tools (such as Auslan) and specialised inclusion toys or resources.

Inclusion Development Fund

ECEC services requiring further support can apply for the Inclusion Development Fund (IDF). Applications for IDF are developed by ECEC services with the IA and assessed by the Inclusion Development Fund Manager (IDFM) to provide national consistency and equitable management of the IDF. The four streams of IDF are:

- **Subsidy for an Additional Educator:** per-hour funding to centre-based services to subsidise the employment of an additional educator. This increases the educator-to-child ratio to support the inclusion of a child (or children) with disability or additional needs.
- **Subsidy for Immediate/Time-Limited Support:** enables centre-based services to immediately engage an additional educator for a time-limited period to support the inclusion of a child with high support needs while an alternative and more stable solution is being determined.
- **Family Day Care Top-Up**: supports eligible Family Day Care services to include children with additional (ongoing high support) needs, including disability, by providing a fee top-up payment where including the child results in the educator being unable to enrol the maximum number of children usually allowed.
- **Innovative Solutions Support**: funds innovative, flexible and responsive solutions to inclusion where a barrier or barriers have been identified that cannot be addressed by the support provided by its IA.

ISP support by ECEC service type

Further information

For further information, including the ISP Guidelines and information for families, visit [our website](#) or contact your local Inclusion Agency.