



Australian Government

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

*Transition to Independent
Living Allowance (TILA) –*

Program Guidelines

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1 Preface

The Australian Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) funds the *Transition to Independent Living Allowance* (TILA). TILA commenced in March 2003 and helps young people making the transition from Care arrangements to independent living.

TILA encourages a preventative and early intervention approach, which can help these young people avoid further welfare dependency and homelessness.

These Guidelines provide the framework for the implementation and administration of TILA. They should be read in conjunction with the contract between DEEWR and the Service Provider. . In the event of any inconsistency between the contract and these guidelines the contract will prevail.

The program guidelines include:

- The purpose of *TILA*
- DEEWR's expectations of the Service Provider including performance expectations
- Monitoring and program management arrangements including accountabilities and program governance arrangements for DEEWR and the Service Provider
- Other relevant information pertinent to the successful delivery of *TILA*

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

2 Program Overview

2.1 What is TILA?

TILA was developed in response to the Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce *Footprints to the Future Report* (available at www.youthpathways.gov.au) which emphasised the need to improve the provision of support services to young people as they make the transition to independent living. The majority of the Taskforce's recommendations were actioned by the former Department of Education, Science and Technology (DEST) and the former Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR). An element of one of the Taskforce's recommendations was a one-

off payment to young people leaving care to help defray up-front costs associated with accessing employment, education or accommodation.

Providing TILA as part of a young person's transitional plan can help reduce their reliance upon crisis intervention and other community services at a later time. DEEWR administers TILA as part of a suite of Youth support programs.

In conjunction with other Australian and State and Territory Government support mechanisms, TILA helps young people who are leaving Care to achieve independence and stability, and reach their full potential through enhanced engagement in employment, education, training and community life.

2.2 Target Group

The Allowance of up to \$1 500 is available to all young people regardless of cultural background, aged from 15 to 25 years who meet the eligibility criteria set out in section 2.3.

2.3 Young people - eligibility

To be eligible for the Allowance, the young person must:

- Be a permanent Australian resident; *and*
- Be aged from 15 to 25; *and*
- Be approaching (within 6 weeks of applying) or experiencing an exit from Care or if having already exited Care has done so no more than 24 months prior; *and*
- Be subject to one or more Risk Factors for an Unsuccessful Exit from Care; *and*
- Not have received TILA assistance before; *and*
- Have been in, or currently be in, Care.

An explanation of the above criteria is in the Glossary of these guidelines.

2.4 Young people who have already exited care

TILA can also be provided to young people who have exited Care not more than 24 months ago, provided they are still able to satisfy the eligibility criteria (see section 2.3 (above) and, in the opinion of the TILA Service Provider, the young person is still 'at risk' of, or experiencing an unsuccessful exit from Care.

2.5 Vulnerable minority groups

The TILA Service Provider will also ensure that young people in identified groups have full and appropriate access to TILA, including:

- Young people with a disability;
- Young people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds; and
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people.

This should be done through the promotion and marketing of TILA by the Service Provider.

2.6 Administration of TILA

An amount of \$3.806m is available to assist a maximum of 2,500 young people within the allocation each financial year.

2.7 The Allowance

The value of the Allowance is up to \$1 500 per eligible young person, to purchase a range of goods, and other costs associated with their transition to independent living.

TILA must be used *on top of* any other assistance available to the eligible young person from any other source such as State Care and Protection Departments, Rental/Bond Schemes etc.

2.8 What can be paid under the Allowance?

TILA must provide 'necessary relief' for a young person leaving Care.

Necessary relief is a discretionary term that applies to means of assistance that directly benefit a young person's transition to independence.

Examples of necessary relief include, but are not limited to:

- Support to enter accommodation (such as connecting utilities and moving expenses);
- Purchase of essential household items (including appliances, whitegoods or furnishings and consumables etc);
- The cost of supported life skills programs to equip a young person with the skills for independent living (for example, financial or other counselling);
- Support to access employment, education or training opportunities (such as purchase of books/computer, transport to undertake studies or employment); and

- Purchase of bus tickets, phone cards or other essential items that will support the young person in accessing the above.

2.9 How is TILA paid to the young person?

TILA is *not* a direct cash payment to a young person, except that in special circumstances a small portion of TILA assistance (up to \$50) may be provided directly to a young person for necessary purposes, which cannot be met via other means. Such circumstances must be approved by the Service Provider prior to the funds being spent.

Referring Organisations (ROs – see definition at 3.1) complete a Referral Assessment Form with the young person. This form is then submitted to the TILA Service Provider for assessment and approval. Once approved by the TILA Service Provider, TILA is paid by the Service Provider to the RO as a reimbursement for approved items purchased or to a supplier of goods and services (such as an electrical appliance store, or bookstore) on behalf of the young person. Under the contract between DEEWR and the Service Provider DEEWR will provide the money to the Service Provider for provision to the RO.

2.10 What cannot be paid under the Allowance?

TILA is not designed to be used on an ad-hoc basis for crisis assistance. It must be used as part of a developed Transition Plan which includes follow up of the young person after they have received TILA assistance.

TILA funds must also not be used to replace assistance that is available through other existing schemes, including but not limited to:

- Rental bond assistance schemes;
- Centrelink payments e.g. maternity payment;
- Scholarship funds; and
- Other transitional support schemes.

Where a transition support program or similar support measure exists, TILA must not be used to replace any of these support measures. However, if a young person has received the maximum benefit or support available under an existing measure and the need is still unmet, there is scope for TILA to be used to complement this.

Example: TILA funds cannot generally be used for bond assistance if a young person can receive bond assistance from a state or territory government. However, if a young person can only receive partial bond assistance from a state or territory government, TILA can be used to fund the difference.

3 Application Process

Applications for TILA can *only* be made through a Referring Organisation that is providing ongoing support to the young person. Individuals cannot apply for TILA themselves.

3.1 Referring Organisations (ROs)

Any non-government organisation (NGO) providing After-Care Services to a young person who is about to (within 6 weeks of applying), exit or has already exited Care may submit a Referral Assessment Form to the TILA Service Provider.

3.2 Assessment

The TILA Service Provider must be satisfied that the young person meets all the eligibility criteria. If so, it can approve the application.

The amount to be paid to each successful applicant will be determined by the total amount claimed on the Referral Assessment Form and supported by the attached quotes. This amount cannot exceed \$1 500.

If the application is not approved, the Service Provider must contact the Referring Organisation to discuss the referral and request further information (if necessary), or explain in writing to the Referring Organisation why the Allowance will not be approved.

3.3 Referral Assessment Form

The process of *accessing* TILA begins with the completion of a Referral Assessment Form by the RO. Copies of this form are available from the TILA Service Provider (www.tila.org.au), or DEEWR's website at <http://www.deewr.gov.au/tila>

The Referral Assessment Form collects information about the young person for the TILA Service Provider to assess, in order to approve TILA support. De-identified information collected by the Service Provider will also be analysed by DEEWR to assess the effectiveness of TILA.

The ROs are required to complete all relevant parts of the Referral Assessment Form.

It is the ROs responsibility to ensure the Referral Assessment Form is completed thoroughly, correctly, and is signed by the young person.

NOTE: A completed Referral Assessment Form must include a summary of the transition plan for the young person and the full transition plan must be attached to the form by the RO.

If a RO has any questions about the requirements for the Referral Assessment Form, they should contact the TILA Helpdesk, the number for which appears below.

Once the Referral Assessment Form has been completed, the RO must forward this to the TILA Service Provider.

The Service Provider may contact the RO to discuss the referral as necessary.

If the Referral Assessment Form has not been fully completed by the RO, or the transition plan is not attached, the Service Provider must contact the RO and request the RO to fully complete the form or attach the plan.

If a young person does not wish to disclose their personal details it may affect their assessment of TILA as the information collected on the Referral Assessment Form is essential to determine the eligibility of the young person. The Service Provider should contact the RO for the required information and advise that the application will be rejected if it remains incomplete.

3.4 TILA and Centrelink

TILA is *not* regarded as income for the purposes of income support entitlement assessments by Centrelink and it is not subject to repayment by a young person. A young person eligible for TILA may also be eligible for income support.

Definition of Independent Status for Centrelink payments

For the purpose of TILA eligibility, having *independent status* for Centrelink payments requires that the young person should:

(i) be in receipt of, eligible for, or previously in receipt of one of the following payment types

- Youth Allowance; or
- Disability Support Pension; or
- Abstudy; or
- Special Benefit; **AND**

(ii) have been granted Independent status for one of the following reasons:

- Homeless (unreasonable to live at home); or
- Supported state care; or
- Unsupported state care; or

- Refugee without parents in Australia; or
- Orphan; or
- Parents unable to exercise their responsibilities.

Young people currently receiving another Centrelink benefit other than those listed above (New Start, Parenting Payment etc) may still be eligible for TILA depending on the payments they were receiving previously. This information will need to be verified by Centrelink.

An explanatory note and examples of TILA eligibility is at Appendices 6.1 *Examples of TILA Eligibility* of these guidelines.

3.5 Verifying the young person's circumstances

When a young person is claiming TILA, it is necessary that their circumstances as set out in the Referral Assessment Form are verified by the Service Provider.

Verification of the young person's *Subject of Care and Protection Order* can be obtained from the relevant state or territory Child Protection Agency.

Verification from Centrelink of Independent status for Centrelink payments will need to be provided for young people exiting Informal Care or Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Kinship Care.

The TILA Service Provider must be satisfied all eligibility criteria are met before approving the application.

3.6 Transition (exit) Plans

A RO seeking TILA for a young person needs to ensure that a transitional plan has been developed with the young person and that the TILA Referral Assessment Form is consistent with the needs identified in that plan.

Transition plans must include the following details:

- Short, Medium and Long Term goals; *and*
- Follow up plan and schedule by the RO after receiving TILA

3.7 Receipts for goods/services

Once the application has been approved the RO will be asked by the Service Provider to purchase the item, and to provide copies of the receipts to the Service Provider for all goods and services purchased with TILA funds.

Both the Service Provider and the ROs are required to obtain value for money for the young person by ensuring that the goods and/or services purchased are well priced and complementary with the transition plan.

4 Privacy and confidentiality

Privacy and Confidentiality

The Service Provider will be required under its contract with DEEWR to comply with the Information Privacy Principles of the Privacy Act 1988 when performing its obligations under the contract, and to not

Applicants for TILA must be advised either verbally or in writing by the RO that personal details collected will be treated as confidential. DEEWR is bound by the *Privacy Act 1988*.

4.1 Freedom of Information

The *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (the FOI Act) gives the public the right to access information in the possession of the Department with certain limited exceptions. Information collected or held by the Department may be made available on request, unless exempted under the relevant provision of the FOI Act or under specific legislation that provides for the confidentiality of that information.

4.2 Reporting and monitoring

The Service Providers will be required under the contract with DEEWR to provide reports regarding the services and meeting monitoring requirements in accordance with the contract.

5 Contact Information

Further information about TILA including all general enquiries and eligibility inquiries should be directed to the TILA National Service Provider:

Email tila@syfs.org.au

OR

By telephoning 1300 761 961

OR

Visiting the TILA website www.tila.org.au

DEEWR contacts for TILA may be sought from the:

Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA) Program Officer
Office for Youth
Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR)
LOC C72NB2
GPO Box 9880
Canberra ACT 2601

OR

By telephoning the DEEWR switch on 13 33 97

6 Appendices

6.1 Examples of TILA Eligibility

The case studies provided in the Appendices to this document are used as an example only and do not reflect any real life situations and do not refer to actual individuals or their circumstances.

Explanatory Note

For the purpose of determining a young person's eligibility to receive TILA under the criterion of *Informal Care* it may be necessary to gain the young person's consent to contact Centrelink to establish if they have been assessed as independent for one of the payment types and reasons given above. It is important to note that the rate of the young person's payment from Centrelink is not indicative of them having been granted *independent status* or of the reason that they may have been granted independent status.

Young people transitioning from Informal Care (Informal Out-of-Home Care or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Kinship Care) to independent living who are not in receipt of, or considered to be eligible to receive, one of the above payments for the specified reasons, are not eligible for TILA assistance.

Example 1. *Amina is a permanent Australian resident who is turning 16 in two weeks time. When Amina turns 16 she will exit state care because of her age. Amina currently resides in SAAP accommodation and has high and complex needs. Amina's Child Protection caseworker has assisted in drawing up a case-plan that includes Amina seeking Government Housing and going to TAFE to complete a Trade Certificate. Amina has applied for TILA to assist her to move from the refuge into independent living after her 16th birthday and to assist her to access training opportunities as her case-worker believes that she is at risk of not successfully completing her transition to independent living.*

Amina is eligible for TILA assistance as she meets the eligibility criteria set out in 2.3

Example 2. *Brian is a 15-year-old permanent Australian resident who was until recently in custody at a youth detention centre. Since his release he has been living with his maternal aunt, as he is unable to return home due to a history of family violence. Brian's aunt has given Brian one month to move out because of tension with her sister about Brian's living arrangements. Brian is keen to move to a regional area where he has been offered seasonal work as a fruit picker and start a new life away from his family. Brian applies for TILA assistance to help him access accommodation in the area where he has found work and to assist him to purchase the necessary materials for his employment. Brian has been granted Youth Allowance because it is unreasonable for him to live at home. Brian's Juvenile Justice caseworker assists Brian in his application for TILA, as she believes that due to Brian's circumstances he is at risk of making an unsuccessful transition to independent living.*

Brian is eligible for TILA assistance as he meets the eligibility criteria set out in 2.3

Example 3. *Carlos is a 19-year-old former ward of the state. Carlos was placed into care when he was 9 years old and had numerous foster care placements until his orders expired when he turned 18. Carlos has remained*

with his last foster carer since that time but is now planning to move from foster care to live with his mother who was recently released from prison. Carlos applies for TILA with the assistance of his youth worker to assist him to buy furniture and white goods for the house he is going to share with his mother.

Carlos is not eligible for TILA assistance, as he does not meet the criteria set out in 2.3, as his circumstances do not meet the criterion regarding moving to independent living as he would be residing with his mother.

Example 4. *Deanne is a 16-year-old permanent resident who has been residing in an Indigenous kinship care arrangement with her uncle's family since she was 14. Deanne wants to leave her Uncle's home in a regional town and move to the city. Deanne has been in contact with the local Reconnect service and applied for TILA to assist her to move to the city and access accommodation and education opportunities. Deanne has been assessed as being dependant for the purpose of Abstudy and is receiving the dependant away from home rate of payment.*

Deanne is not eligible for TILA assistance as she does not meet the criteria set out in 2.3 as her circumstances do not meet the criteria for informal out of home care due to her being on the **dependent** away from home rate therefore not having independent status for Centrelink payments

7 Glossary

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person

A person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community in which they live.

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Kinship Care (aka Indigenous Kinship Care)

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander kinship care refers to the provision of accommodation, meals, clothing etc to Indigenous young people when they are unable to live with their immediate family. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kinship care is an informal care arrangement, that is, it is not state-ordered by a child protection authority. Kinship care arrangements are made privately without orders being taken by a state or territory welfare department to authorise the care arrangements. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kinship care includes the provision of accommodation, meals, clothing etc to a young person by an adult and may include that provided by a relative or other significant members of a young person's community/kinship network.

After-Care Services

Services provided by non-government organisations which have been contracted by a government agency responsible for the care and protection of young people.

Australian Resident

A permanent Australian resident is a person who resides in Australia and is either an Australian citizen or the holder of a permanent visa.

Care

Means Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Kinship Care, Formal Care, Informal Care and/or Informal Out-of-Home Care.

Formal Care

To be considered to have been in or to currently be in 'formal care' a young person must:

- Be the subject of a care and protection order that places them in the care and custody of someone who is not their parent; *or*
- Have been the subject of a care and protection order that placed them in the care and custody of someone who was not their parent and their order has ceased/expired because of their age.

Independent Status

Means being deemed eligible by Centrelink for a payment at the full independent rate

Informal Care

To be considered to have been in, or to currently be in, Informal Care a young person must:

- Have 'Independent Status' for Centrelink payments; *and*
- Currently be in, or formerly have been in, Informal Out-of-Home care (e.g. SAAP, refuge, homeless, supported accommodation, staying with friends/relatives not their parents); *and/or*
- Currently be in, or formerly have been in Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Kinship Care.

Informal Out-of-Home Care

Informal out-of-home care is the care provided to a young person when they are unable to live with their immediate family. This arrangement for the young person to live away from the family home is an informal care arrangement, that is, the care is not state-ordered by a child protection authority. Young people in Out-of-Home Care are usually residing in SAAP accommodation, Refuges or other forms of supported accommodation. Young people who are directed to reside away from the parental home by a juvenile justice authority, including those leaving detention, are considered to be in informal out-of-home care. Other types of informal out-of-home care include that provided to a young person by an adult who may be a relative or family friend.

Not-for-profit organisation

Means one which is not operating for the profit or gain of its individual members, whether these gains would have been direct or indirect. This applies both while the organisation is operating and when it winds up. Any profit made by the organisation goes back into the operation of the organisation to carry out its purposes and is not distributed to owners, members or other private people. Upon winding up of the organisation any residual assets are transferred to an organisation with similar objects and which has provisions in its constitution preventing distribution of profit or gain to individuals.

Program

Refers to TILA.

Referral Assessment Form

Means the form referred to in section 3.3. of these guidelines.

Service Provider

The organisation (local government, community based, not-for-profit or for profit) contracted by DEEWR to administer TILA.

Special Circumstances in which TILA may be paid directly to a person

Means an amount of up to \$50 to purchase goods and/or services where it is impractical for a cheque to be used such as grocery items or food purchases. Special Circumstance cases are extremely rare, TILA is not to be used on an ad-hoc basis and must be approved by the Service Provider prior to the funds being spent.

Stakeholders

Individuals, organisations or networks that have or potentially have a relationship or interest in the work undertaken by the service provider.

Risk Factor for an Unsuccessful Exit from Care means:

- Experience of multiple placements;
- Lack of stable/established social and support networks; *r*
- High and/or complex needs; *or*
- Requirement for a support service to assist their transition to independence.

Young Person means a person aged from 15 to 25.