



Fair Child Care Fact Sheet

If you have young children – or are thinking of having them – your ability to look after your family financially and emotionally is dependent on being able to find good, affordable and accessible child care. A service where you feel comfortable enough to leave your child and know they are getting the best care they can. Are you happy that you can find a service that meets this requirement?

What is the problem?

- An April 2010 Treasury Report into Child Care¹ found “robust evidence that, for married women, local problems with availability, quality and affordability [of childcare] are associated with women working fewer hours and, in particular, being more likely to work part-time instead of full-time.”

Key causes, why does it happen?

- According to HILDA data, about one third of children under the age of three use centre-based care.
- If children using family day care are included, about half of children under three are in formal child care.

Over the past couple of decades, child care has changed from being a community-based service, with some commercial services, to being primarily a big commercial services industry.

- According to FaHCSIA in 1991 there were 4,100 child care services in Australia, the majority of which were community not-for-profit services, in 2010 there are 13,638 services, with a larger number of private providers

The demise of ABC child care services has cast doubt on the value of big chains, however the policies for funding that were geared to this type of development have not changed, despite its many problems.

While government research shows that the majority of child care centres report daily vacancies, this data is not broken down by age of children or location of centres. Parents still report difficulties in finding child care in some locations, and child care for very young children.

¹ Australian Treasury April 2010: *Child Care Availability, Quality and Affordability: are local problems related to maternal labour supply?*

Child care has become more affordable for most people, and there have been very good moves to improve quality and consistency of care. However, inadequate access to services in regional areas and for very young children needs to be addressed. Changes must also be linked to a funding system that recognises the extra costs of the changes and ensures fees do not become unaffordable. Otherwise, less advantaged parents whose children are most likely to benefit from quality early childhood services will not be able to afford the costs of the services.

WEL will be using our Feminist Policy Framework to lobby government for policies that increase fairness.

- *Ensure the costs and benefits are fairly distributed between women and men, as well as between different groups of women*
- *Value and reward fairly people's different skills, experiences and contributions*
- *Recognise the value of caring and supporting roles, whether paid or unpaid*
- *Recognise and rectify past and current inequalities and between men and women; and*
- *Enhance opportunities for both women and men to take on equal rights and responsibilities in all aspects of society: politics, community, employment and social life*

What you can do

Ask your local member:

- Whether they think services for children under school age need to be seen as part of the wider community and education sectors, rather than as commercial services
- If they support funding services to ensure adequate supply in areas of need, at times of need, and for children of all ages
- If they are prepared to implement the recommendation in the Henry Report to combine the two childcare subsidies and the two family benefits

Make your voice heard for fairness