

Child Care in Australia

By Frankie Rodney

As the structure of society slowly changes, so does the way in which families in Australia utilise the child care services available. A report released by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations gives a summary of child care in Australia as of August 2013.

Usage

Between the September quarter of 2004 and the September quarter of 2012, the number of families using long day care services increased by 41.3 per cent. The number of children in such services increased from 441,240 to 615,630.

The number of families utilising family day care services/in home care was virtually unchanged in the same period. In fact, the number of families using such services dropped in 2008-09 and only increased again recently due to strong growth in the family day care sector.

The number of children using occasional care services decreased 38.2 per cent between 2004 and 2012. The drop is attributed to the program being capped by the government and services closing.

Out of School Hours Care (OSHC), on the other hand, has shown a steady increase – in the same time period, the number of children using OSHC increased by 25.3 per cent.

Across all services, the number of Australian children in child care in the September quarter of 2012 totalled over one million – an increase of some 33 per cent since the same quarter in 2004.

Availability

The total number of child care services in Australia has risen from 10,023 in 2004 to 15,147 in 2012.

The strongest growth has been in OSHC services, the number of which has risen 41 per cent – from 4,964 to 8,413. Long day care services have also shown an impressive growth of 26.4 per cent. Family day care and in home care services have remained low, increasing slightly from 397 to 460. Occasional care services have suffered, dropping from 105 to 82.

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Data from the 2010 National Workforce Census showed that 93.1 per cent of child care services do not vary their opening hours across the week. In home care is the most likely service to offer flexible hours of operation.

Almost all child care providers, across all types of services, provide care five days a week, and the standard hours of care are 7.00am to 6.30pm. These hours are given in the Child Care Services Handbook. Over a third of long day care, OSHC and occasional care services provide child care outside these standard hours. ■

