

'Working for nothing': Childcare crisis pushes Sydney parents to the brink^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Read online^[2]

EXCERPTS

Most parents are experiencing substantial difficulties with the financial burden and lack of availability of childcare, with costs that have more than doubled for some families in just over a decade.

A national survey, which has tracked more than 17,000 people in 9500 households since 2002, has released its latest snapshot of the nation, including our attitude to family life.

The long-running report shows people are becoming more progressive in their attitudes on topics such as gay marriage.

Every demographic, except men over 65, agrees that homosexual couples should have the same rights as straight couples.

The report - Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) - also shows that, later in life, men want to have children more than women do, though they also say they ended up with more children than they intended to.

And women who want kids at 35 have a 50-50 chance of it happening.

Kate Murphy believes the cost of childcare is high but worth the price.

The Oyster Bay high school teacher was unsurprised to learn the at the cost of childcare has doubled in real terms, describing it as a "burden" but one which pays off long term.

Ms Murphy and her husband have two children, Sarah, three and Michael, one, who attend a local childcare centre three days a week.

The centre charges \$122 a day but the Federal Government childcare rebate runs out six weeks before the end of the financial year, leaving the family thousands of dollars out of pocket.

"For six weeks of the year you feel as if you're working for nothing," Ms Murphy said.

"But you have to weigh up the cost of not working at all and for our family the benefit of staying in the workforce outweighs the cost of childcare.

"I am not going to work for financial gain. I am going to work so I can continue to have a career."

Ms Murphy described the quality of care provided at her children's childcare centre as "excellent" and worth the price but felt the rebate should be applied more evenly so it did not unfairly penalise families where both parents are in the workforce.

How many people use paid childcare?

Kids with single parents are in formal childcare for more than 31 hours a week, almost nine hours more than two years before.

Couples have their kids in care for 23 hours a week on average, according to the HILDA survey.

-reprinted from The Sydney Morning Herald

Region: Australia and New Zealand^[3]

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<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/fees> [6] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/subsidy>