

Two-year queue for childcare [AU] ^[1]

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Source: Australian

Format: Article

Publication Date: 11 Sep 2004

AVAILABILITY
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EXCERPTS

Parents are waiting up to two years to obtain long daycare places for children aged under 2.

An investigation by The Weekend Australian has also revealed families are now being asked to pay up to \$40 a child to register on some waiting lists.

But the shortage of long daycare places in some parts of Australia - with inner Sydney, Melbourne and Perth the worst-affected - has been countered by warnings of an oversupply of places in other areas, including parts of Queensland.

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs Larry Anthony conceded yesterday the supply of long daycare places was not meeting demand in many areas.

"Childcare has really exploded in the last couple of years and we know the number of childcare places and the number of children using childcare, particularly long day care, has increased dramatically," Mr Anthony said.

"Certainly there are some places where there are some hot spots (of unmet demand) and there are other areas where there is excess supply."

The ACTU and childcare lobby groups have attempted to ignite the lack of childcare places as an election issue, and both the Coalition and Labor are likely to make strong pitches for the childcare vote in coming weeks.

Labor has promised to introduce new controls in an attempt to encourage new long daycare places in areas with shortages, although Labor's spokeswoman for children and youth services, Jacinta Collins, has refused to detail how the plan will work.

This week Senator Collins said the removal of planning for long day care places had not created enough new places in some areas, especially inner-city Sydney, Melbourne and Perth.

"The large (private) child care providers have gone more into acquisition mode than growth mode, buying up existing services rather than going into those areas where there is significant unmet demand and setting up new services," she said.

The overall number of childcare centres and places - including family daycare and out-of-school care places - have boomed since the Coalition came into office in 1996, with almost half of all children under 4 now spending some time in formal childcare.

The growth has partly been fuelled by the Coalition's removal of funding limits, through the Child Care Benefit, for long daycare places in 2000.

In the past four years the number of families using formal childcare has grown by 20 per cent to more than 538,000 families.

Since 1996 the number of childcare services have increased by 22 per cent to more than 9700; total childcare places have surged by more than 80 per cent to 563,000 places; and long daycare places have increased by 26 per cent to nearly 212,000 places.

But the growth is uneven, with many centres now reporting waiting lists of up to two years for long daycare places.

- reprinted from the Australian

Region: Australia and New Zealand ^[2]

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funding ^[4]

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[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/04/09/two-year-queue-childcare-au> [2] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/region/australia-and-new-zealand> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/affordability> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/funding> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/privatization> [6] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/availability>