

Pressure mounts to improve child care services for toddlers [AU]

[1]

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AVAILABILITY

See text below.

EXCERPTS

The Federal Government is under pressure from the Carr Government to boost its child care benefit to help meet the cost of care for children aged under two in New South Wales.

The Department of Family and Community Services is reviewing the child care benefit for the first time since the subsidy was introduced in 2000.

After sustained lobbying from NSW, Mr Anthony agreed at a meeting with his state counterparts a fortnight ago that the review would also consider "the extent to which adjustments to the benefit may be warranted to improve availability of services for children 0-2 years".

The NSW Minister for Youth, Carmel Tebbutt, has been pushing for a review of the child care benefit with a special emphasis on services for children aged two years and under. She wants the Government to increase the amount it subsidises child care for this age group and to provide more long day-care places.

The Federal Government, through the child care benefit, subsidises long day-care places in centres that have been licensed by the State Government. Although the NSW Department of Community Services has licensed 11,066 places, only 5690 places are being offered.

Ms. Tebbutt believes centres are reluctant to offer service for children under two because the benefit does not take into account the higher cost of caring for them.

There must be one worker for every five children under two, compared to the 1:8 ratio for children aged two to three and the 1:10 ratio for children between three and six years old.

- reprinted from the Sydney Morning Herald

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