

# Family daycare gets hammered<sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS

The number of children in family daycare has slumped since Labor took power, but institutionalised long daycare centres have been booming.

New figures provided by the federal government reveal that childcare places in accredited family homes have fallen under Labor in what the opposition claims is an ideological push towards formalised care.

In March 2006, the number of children in family daycare, which was heavily promoted by the Howard government in its later years, hit a high of 109,950.

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Family daycare is a home-based childcare alternative that is often preferred by parents because it is cheaper, offers more flexible hours and generally has a more personal approach.

In last year's federal budget, the Labor government announced it would cut the one-off payment currently given to those people, usually mothers, who want to start family daycare in their homes. A new national ratio of one carer to seven children, with no more than four under school age, will come into force in January 2014.

Family Day Care Australia spokeswoman Lynne Moran said the decline in home-based childcare numbers demonstrated the boom in institutionalised childcare, despite the collapse of the nation's largest childcare provider, ABC Learning, in 2008.

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Childcare Minister Kate Ellis defended the decline in family daycare places, saying parents had the right to choose where their children went for care.

"Parents take into account a range of factors when making the important decision about placing their children in care," Ms Ellis said. "This includes considerations like an individual child's developmental needs, the availability of various types of care in their area, and the cost and quality of the care provided.

"Over the past few years there has been a modest decline in the number of children in family daycare, which has been accompanied by strong growth in the number of children attending long daycare centres."

She attributed the decline to the government's decision to remove the cap on long daycare places, which enabled the childcare sector "to grow and meet increasing demand".

"We are supporting parents so they can choose the childcare arrangements that work best for their family," the minister said.

The opposition blames the decline in family daycare places on the introduction of higher quality standards on all childcare places.

The Coalition's childcare spokeswoman, Sussan Ley, said the new national quality framework took a "sledgehammer" to family daycare by enforcing a ratio of one carer to four preschool-age children.

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- reprinted from The Australian

**Region:** Australia and New Zealand<sup>[2]</sup>

**Tags:** legislation and regulation<sup>[3]</sup>

regulated family child care<sup>[4]</sup>

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