

Trouble with childcare ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Full report in pdf ^[2]

Description:

Recent government approaches to childcare funding have been simple rather than innovative. Improvements in affordability have been short lived, with benefits quickly absorbed through higher costs charged to families. The result is an ongoing game of catch up between government and service providers with families stuck in the middle. Since 2001, the proportion of Australian households reporting difficulties with the cost of childcare for a child under five has increased to more than three out of ten, making affordability an ongoing issue for households - and an election issue for politicians.

Despite childcare being an election issue in 2004 and 2007 and subsequent incentive in government assistance, many households still report a range of difficulties accessing childcare services. Difficulties often include the cost of childcare, the availability of childcare places and the quality of childcare services. These three categories of difficulty are measured in the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey. The availability of data from 2001 means we can analyse any changes in the level of reported difficulties since then. Data on the cost of childcare and household disposable income are also collected in the HILDA Survey, allowing a measurement of the effect household demographics have on the likelihood of experiencing difficulties.

This paper considers the three aspects of access difficulties to childcare; affordability, availability and quality. The paper restricts analysis to households using formal childcare services for a child not yet at school. Initially the paper provides a background on each form of difficulty, followed by an overview of who is using childcare and who of these people are reporting difficulties. An analysis of these difficulties between 2001 and 2010 and how household demographics inform the difficulties experienced in accessing childcare provides new insights into this issue. Finally some policy solutions are provided to address evident difficulties with childcare access.

Region: Australia and New Zealand ^[3]

Tags: affordability ^[4]

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