

Why childcare is now a privilege: five-star centres popping up all over Sydney ^[1]

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EXCERPTS:

Oh to be a Sydney toddler. Yoga. Zumba. Language classes. Meal plans designed by nutritionists and cooked by professional chefs.

If it were not for their pint-sized patrons, childcare centres could be confused with day spas.

And they have a price tag to match.

In some parts of city, the average cost of childcare is \$130 a day, and at the city's most expensive childcare centre, Sally's Place in Mosman, parents pay up to \$168.

Parents willing to pay the extra - and even the most expensive centres have waiting lists in the hundreds - can treat their children to a timetable they can only dream of.

A centre soon opening in Camperdown offers Mandarin classes; Pippies at Balmoral offers yoga to its three- year-olds; and one centre is even considering concierges to help with drop-off and pick-up.

Premium operator Only About Children, which has 31 campuses in Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne, employs a nutritionist to plan the menu and a chef at each centre to cook the children's meals. It regularly assesses the children to ensure they are meeting their hearing, sight and speech milestones.

Its other focus is on music and second languages, in the belief this sets children up for life. "You lose the ability to gain the intonation of a second language very early, at about six, so this gives the child the brain development to learn a language later on," Fraser Cleghorn, chief operating officer, said.

"Each campus chooses a language - French, Spanish or Italian - and what we try to do is immerse that campus in the language."

Parents pay a premium, with some centres costing around \$164 a day.

Even parents happy to settle for childcare without the flourishes can struggle to find care that costs less than \$100 a day.

"The most expensive suburbs are where land value is high," said Roxanne Elliott, the founder of the website careforkids.com.au.

"Acquisition costs are high, or rent is high, that is what drives the cost up."

-reprinted from the Sunday Telegraph

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