

Low income families excluded from early childhood services ^[1]

Press Release

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EXCERPTS

Low income families value early childhood education highly, but the Productivity Commission draft report risks excluding them from services, UNSW research shows.

Families at the Centre, a national study conducted by UNSW's Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) to be launched today, aims to understand why low-income and disadvantaged families use Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services less than other families.

The study involved qualitative interviews with more than 130 parents across four states, as well as an analysis of statistical data and national and international policy.

The research shows that the Productivity Commission's draft report, which proposed limiting access to childcare fee assistance to families where parents are working or studying less than 24 hours per fortnight, will exclude low-income families from accessing ECEC.

"Many of the families who participated in Families at the Centre could not afford early childhood education and care if the fees were no longer subsidised," said lead researcher, Professor Deb Brennan, one of Australia's leading family and work experts.

"If the government accepts the draft recommendations of the Productivity Commission, thousands of children whose parents are not employed will be excluded from early childhood services and these are precisely the children who would benefit from services the most."

Key findings from the Families at the Centre study:

- Low-income families value early childhood education highly
- Free or low-cost and culturally appropriate ECEC services are essential to low-income families
- Families found applying for the Child Care Benefit and Rebate confusing and frustrating
- Some parents avoided ECEC because they had past experiences with ECEC where providers did not respond to their needs
- Parents want service providers to place more emphasis on learning processes that would better support their children when they started school
- Services need to be flexible for families who are also trying to find secure housing and employment.

Families at the Centre researcher, UNSW's Dr Jen Skattebol, said many of the study participants were deeply concerned about their children's education.

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Region: Australia and New Zealand ^[3]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/14/11/low-income-families-excluded-early-childhood-services>

Links

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<https://www.arts.unsw.edu.au/news-events/news/low-income-families-excluded-from-early-childhood-services/> ^[3]

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