

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

## Introduction

What is your name?

Name:

What is your email address?

Email:

Are you responding to this survey as:

Parent or guardian

What is your organisation?

Organisation:

Do you consent to the ACCC publishing your submission?

Yes, but do not publish my name

## Open written submissions

### Confidentiality and personal information

Choose File:

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If you wish to provide responses to all or any of the draft findings and recommendations outlined in the September interim report, please move to the next section 'Guided submissions' to provide responses against the relevant findings and or recommendations.

## Draft Findings - Costs

1. Labour is the main driver of cost for supplying childcare, accounting for 69% at centre based day care and 77% at outside school hours care. Labour costs have increased significantly for large centre based day care providers over the last 5 years.

Agree

Please provide further comment if relevant:

This FY the cost increased by 10%. If labour is the main source of the increase, I note that our family income did not increase by 10%.

2. Land and related costs are the other significant driver of cost for centre based daycare providers.

Unsure / No View

Please provide further comment if relevant:

3. Not-for-profit providers appear to face lower land costs than for profit providers, but these savings are invested into labour.

Agree

Please provide further comment if relevant:

Based on our experience this is true. However, the cost has significantly increased across the board which leaves the difference between NFP and FP providers to be minimal

4. Location influences costs of supplying childcare services, although the influence differs depending on the cost category. Overall, costs to supply services to different areas of remoteness and socio-economic advantage do not differ greatly, except for the areas of most remoteness and most socio-economic advantage.

Unsure / No View

Please provide further comment if relevant:

I would like to note that the options in our area (Sutherland Shire) are fairly limited. This means that we are required to drive at least 15 minutes for more options (if places are available in the first place). Waiting times for places are long too.

#### Draft Findings - Competition

5. Parents' and guardians' demand for centre based day care is driven by a complex combination of factors. Parents look to prevailing market prices, however informal measures of quality are key considerations.

Do Not Agree

Please provide further comment if relevant:

There is limited competition in our area. This means that you "grab" any place that comes available and price is a second consideration.

6. Providers' supply decisions are influenced by expectations of viability, which is heavily influenced by relative socio-economic advantage and geographic location.

Agree

Please provide further comment if relevant:

7. Staffing constraints are a barrier to more suppliers entering or expanding their operations in childcare markets.

Agree

Please provide further comment if relevant:

8. The nature of competition reflects the unique demand and supply factors in childcare markets; price plays a less influential role once households have chosen how much childcare to use and providers compete on quality to attract and retain children and families.

Agree

Please provide further comment if relevant:

#### Draft Findings - Profitability, viability and quality

9. On average, large centre based day care and outside school hours care providers appear to be profitable and financially viable.

Unsure / No View

Please provide further comment if relevant:

10. Occupancy is a key driver of revenue and therefore profits and viability.

Agree

Please provide further comment if relevant:

This is one of the only industry where you're required to pay for a "spot" regardless of using the service or the service being open for business. As a result, there is no real incentive for parents to keep their children at home if they feel unwell. You're paying regardless and better opting for the "I will await the phone call" model. Also, parents are required to pay on days that the centre is closed for instance due to a public holiday. It is a rather frustrating and archaic model

11. On average, margins are higher:

Agree

Please provide further comment if relevant:

Although I don't have oversight, the fees are higher in FP centres.

12. The ability to attract and retain staff is a key determinant of quality, which affects the profitability and viability of a service.

Agree

Please provide further comment if relevant:

### Draft Findings - Price regulation mechanisms

13. The design of the Child Care Subsidy and existing price regulation mechanism has had a limited effect in placing downward pressure on prices and limiting the burden on taxpayers.

Agree

Please provide further comment if relevant:

The model is encouraging lower income earners to cease working. This is a double whammy because if you drop below a certain threshold, you're no longer entitled to a particular number of hours. The increase of the CCS family income is helpful, BUT families earning over \$350k (which seems a decent salary but in Sydney it's not), get penalised because they are losing the increase subsidy for 2 or more kids in care. This is a significant penalty.

14. Childcare providers are optimising session lengths to match current activity test entitlements to minimise out-of-pocket expenses for parents and guardians and maintain their revenues and profits.

Agree

Please provide further comment if relevant:

15. The Child Care Subsidy is complex for parents and guardians to understand and it is difficult to estimate out-of-pocket expenses.

Agree

Please provide further comment if relevant:

100% agree. Our family received regular salary and bonus payments. Bonus payments are difficult to predict and discretionary. This may trigger repayment obligations which are very unfortunate.

Also, as noted, the higher percentage for 2 or more kids in care is helpful. However, if you reach a threshold family will lose the higher percentage. This is very difficult to deal with.

16. More information is important for parents and guardians, yet the comparator website StartingBlocks.gov.au is not widely used by parents and guardians and can contain outdated information.

Do Not Agree

Please provide further comment if relevant:

I've used it.

### Draft Findings - International childcare costs and price regulation mechanisms

17. Overseas data indicates childcare in Australia is relatively less affordable for households than in most other OECD countries.

Unsure / No View

Please provide further comment if relevant:

I find Australia and in particular Sydney rather unaffordable. Housing prices, groceries, petrol, insurance, childcare, schooling are all very high. We are raising future tax payers and finding it difficult to keep up

18. Many OECD countries are moving toward greater regulation of childcare fees such as low fees or free hours for parents and guardians, supported with supply-side subsidies to cover providers' costs of provision.

Unsure / No View

Please provide further comment if relevant:

### Draft Recommendations - Existing regulatory arrangements

Draft recommendation 1 - The ACCC recommends that the Australian Government reconsider and restate the key objectives and priorities of its childcare policies and supporting measures, including the relevant price regulation mechanism.

Support

Please provide further comment if relevant:

Draft recommendation 2 - The ACCC recommends further consideration and consultation on changes to the Child Care Subsidy and existing hourly rate cap mechanism, to simplify their operation and address unintended consequences, including on incentives and outcomes.

Support

Please provide further comment if relevant:

Draft recommendation 2 (a) - Consideration be given to determining an appropriate base for the rate cap and indexing the cap to more closely reflect the input costs relevant to delivery of childcare services. This could include consideration of labour costs as well as the additional costs associated with providing childcare services in remote areas and to children with disability and/or complex needs

Support

Please provide further comment if relevant:

Draft recommendation 2 (b) - Consideration be given to changing the hourly rate cap to align with the relevant pricing practice for the service type. This could include consideration of a daily fee cap for centre based day care. Consideration will need to be given to setting and monitoring minimum requirements to avoid creating incentives for childcare providers to reduce flexibility or quality.

Support

Please provide further comment if relevant:

Draft recommendation 2 (c) - Consideration be given to removing, relaxing or substantially reconfiguring the current activity test, as it may be acting as a barrier to more vulnerable children (for example, households with low incomes or disadvantaged areas) accessing care and creating a barrier to workforce entry or return for some groups. An alternative would be to consider a specific entitlement, such as a certain number of days of care.

Support

Please provide further comment if relevant:

Draft recommendation 2 (d) - Consideration be given to including a stronger price and outcomes monitoring role by government, supported by a credible threat of intervention, to place downward pressure on fees.

Support

Please provide further comment if relevant:

Draft recommendation 3 - The ACCC supports reconsideration of the information gathered for and reported on StartingBlocks.gov.au so that it is better focused on meeting parents and guardians' information needs, and balanced against the costs of collecting and publishing information. This could include:

Support

Please provide further comment if relevant:

Draft recommendation 4 - The ACCC recommends that the governments further consider how the existing regulatory frameworks support and influence the attraction and retention of educators and workforce in the early childhood education and care sector.

Support

Please provide further comment if relevant:

## Draft Recommendations - Broader policy considerations for more significant change

Draft recommendation 5 - The Australian Government should consider maintaining and expanding supply-side support options for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations that provide childcare and additional support services for First Nations children, parents and guardians.

Unsure / No View

Please provide further comment if relevant:

Draft recommendation 6 - A market stewardship role should be considered for both Australian and state and territory governments, in identifying under-served areas and vulnerable cohorts, along with intervention whether through public or private provision. A competitive tender process is one tool that could be used by governments to facilitate delivery in these areas.

Unsure / No View

Please provide further comment if relevant:

Draft recommendation 7 - The ACCC supports further consideration of supply-side subsidies and direct price controls. Some changes to the policy settings are likely to reduce the impact of the hourly rate cap as an indirect price control, and may warrant a shift to direct price controls supported by operating grants for regulated childcare providers.

Support

Please provide further comment if relevant: