

Australia Childcare Alliance

WHAT PARENTS WANT? CHILDCARE AFFORDABILITY SURVEY MAY 2012

*Report developed by
Executive Counsel Australia*



The Childcare Alliance Australia represents 70% of all long day child care centres across Australia and its staff who care for more than 400,000 children

Summary Aims

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- To determine the attitudes of parents whose children attend long day care centres by measuring:
 - Awareness of the Federal Government's National Quality Agenda reforms (NQA) – Early Childhood Education and Care
 - The relative cost of long day child care
 - Affordability of proposed increased costs of the NQA reforms
 - Impact of NQA reforms on a parent's ability to afford long day child care
 - Adequacy of the Child Care Benefit compensation
 - Whether increasing the Child Care Benefit cap will relieve financial stress
 - Impact on vote of increasing the Child Care Benefit
 - How affordability of child care impacts on voter intent

Research Methodology

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- n= 796 online survey across Australia of parents whose child/children attend a long day care centre (private or community).
- Survey conducted between 13 April and 2 May 2012.
- Variations of +/-1% in reported percentages are due to rounding.
- Unless otherwise stated, all charts based on total sample of parents with children in long day child care.

Executive Summary

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This survey has found that:

- ✦ 46% of parents are not aware or are unsure of the Federal Government's National Quality Agenda reforms.
- ✦ 68% of respondents stated that they cannot afford the 15% increase in childcare fees, as predicated by the Productivity Commission's *Early Childhood Development Workforce* report released in December 2011.
- ✦ 91% of parents state that they will vote for the party which makes childcare more affordable and accessible for their families.

Executive Summary

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The survey found that:

Rising child care costs will force many families to consider:

- reducing the hours their child/children spent at long day child care (88%);
- seeking alternative care arrangements within their own families (72%);or
- reducing other household expenditure (70%).
- Most alarmingly of all, and showing the stress hard working families are under is the fact that a third (34.2%) of parents said they would place their children into unregulated childcare arrangements.

Executive Summary

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This survey went on to find that:

The situation is worsened for those families who already find long day care very expensive and are currently experiencing financial stress.

Among this cohort of parents:

- 76% say they would withdraw their child/children altogether from their current long day child care centre.
- More than two thirds (70%) of these parents say they would consider delaying having more children if the costs of child care increased further. This is twice the number of parents surveyed on the same question in 2010. (

Executive Summary

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The survey found most:

- 46% of parents find the major parent subsidy, the Child Care Benefit, inadequate in helping families access afford quality childcare programs.
- 78% of families seek bi-partisan support for increasing the Child Care Benefit by 30% particularly for the 0-3 years olds.

Parents are prepared to change their vote on the issue of childcare affordability.

Comparison to previous surveys

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2012

- 70% reduce other household expenditure
- 88% reduce the hours their child/children spent at long day child care
- 72% seek alternative care arrangements within their own families
- More than two thirds (70%) of these parents say they would consider delaying having more children

2010



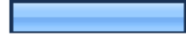
- 33% reduce other household expenditure
- 38% reduce the hours their child/children spent at their current long day child care centre
- 38% seek alternative care arrangements within their own families
- one third (35%) of these parents say they would consider delaying having more children

Have you heard of the Federal Government's National Quality Agenda - Early Childhood Education and Care?

| | | Response Percent | Response Count |
|----------|--|--------------------------|----------------|
| Yes |  | 54.5% | 433 |
| No |  | 25.4% | 202 |
| Not Sure |  | 20.1% | 160 |
| | | answered question | 795 |
| | | skipped question | 1 |




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The Federal Government have introduced reforms it says are intended to improve quality in long day child care by increasing the ratio of carer to child (this applies to all states other than WA) and increasing the formal qualifications required by some staff. Whilst this is welcomed in principle, the Long Day Childcare sector is concerned that our families will be forced to bear the increased cost. The Productivity Commission has predicted fees will rise by 15%. If this is the case; could you afford to pay those increased fees?

| | | Response Percent | Response Count |
|----------|--|-------------------|----------------|
| Yes |  | 9.3% | 74 |
| No |  | 68.2% | 542 |
| Not Sure |  | 22.5% | 179 |
| | | answered question | 795 |
| | | skipped question | 1 |

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Would it influence your vote to support the party that commits to making child care more affordable and accessible for you and your child/children?

| | | Response Percent | Response Count |
|-------------------|--|------------------|----------------|
| Yes |  | 91.0% | 720 |
| No |  | 3.5% | 28 |
| Not Sure |  | 5.4% | 43 |
| answered question | | | 791 |
| skipped question | | | 5 |

What would you do if you found you could not afford to carry the increased costs caused by these reforms? (You can answer yes to more than one option). Would you consider?

| | Yes | No | Response Count |
|---|-------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| Reducing the hours your child/children attends the early learning centre | 88.5% (586) | 11.5% (76) | 662 |
| Withdrawing (one or more) child altogether from the centre | 76.5% (460) | 23.5% (141) | 601 |
| Seek out alternative arrangements of care from within your family | 72.8% (442) | 27.2% (165) | 607 |
| Reduce other essential household expenditure to afford to continue with childcare | 70.3% (409) | 29.7% (173) | 582 |
| Delay having more children | 70.1% (363) | 29.9% (155) | 518 |
| Place your child in unregulated care | 34.2% (172) | 65.8% (331) | 503 |
| | | answered question | 794 |
| | | skipped question | 2 |

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Do you support moves to means test the Child Care Rebate?




| | | Response Percent | Response Count |
|--------------------------|--|------------------|----------------|
| Yes | | 6.4% | 51 |
| No | | 86.0% | 683 |
| Not Sure | | 7.6% | 60 |
| answered question | | | 794 |
| skipped question | | | 2 |

If either party moved to means test the Child Care Rebate, would this influence your vote at the next election?




| | | Response Percent | Response Count |
|--------------------------|--|------------------|----------------|
| Yes | | 83.4% | 657 |
| No | | 5.7% | 45 |
| Not Sure | | 10.9% | 86 |
| answered question | | | 788 |
| skipped question | | | 8 |

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If you receive the Child Care Benefit; do you consider this subsidy is adequate to help you afford access to a quality early learning program for your child/children?

| | | Response Percent | Response Count |
|--------------------------|---|------------------|----------------|
| Yes |  | 39.1% | 286 |
| No |  | 46.2% | 338 |
| Not Sure |  | 14.6% | 107 |
| answered question | | | 731 |
| skipped question | | | 65 |

Do you want to see all parties commit to increasing the Child Care Benefit and, in particular; increasing it by 30% for 0-3 years?

| | | Response Percent | Response Count |
|--------------------------|--|------------------|----------------|
| Yes |  | 78.0% | 605 |
| No |  | 8.6% | 67 |
| Not Sure |  | 13.4% | 104 |
| answered question | | | 776 |
| skipped question | | | 20 |

For further information:

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