

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Introduction

What is your name?

Name:

[REDACTED]

What is your email address?

Email:

[REDACTED]

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Yes, but do not publish my name

Guided submissions

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.

Unsure / No View

Please provide further comment if relevant:

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.

Unsure / No View

Please provide further comment if relevant:

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:

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.

Agree

Please provide further comment if relevant:

I have attempted to use Starting blocks and Acecqa to make a judgement on which childcare centre to use but there are several issues that prevents me to use the website as the sole reason for selecting a childcare centre. The starting blocks website does not actually provide current vacancies and costs that are correct. The Acecqa ratings sometimes are 5 years old so I am unsure if the quality of the cars is still up to standard. Moreover, some of my childhood educator friends say that a centres rating sometimes does not actually reflect true care quality. I have mostly used the search engine to find slme childcare centres located near me but have used word of mouth and tours to make a decision on which centre to enrol in.

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

Unsure / No View

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:

I find it bizarre that the Labour costs are the driving factor for childcare fees yet the workers themselves are not paid well.

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.

Unsure / No View

Please provide further comment if relevant:

I think fees definitely play a role, but often it's the availability of places that has made me decide on which centre to use.

The centres also don't offer a place until maybe 2 months before enrolment starts, so it is hard to plan for return to work.

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.

Unsure / No View

Please provide further comment if relevant:

11. On average, margins are higher:

Agree

Please provide further comment if relevant:

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

Unsure / No View

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:

I think the childcare subsidy activity test negatively impacts families with less activity hours and/or low income. I myself have faced this situation where I am in transition to finding work and moving states. As I would be unemployed, my family will have reduced CCS hours, and we would be out of pocket thousands of dollars just to secure a place in childcare. If we don't pay this amount then it makes it challenging for me to find fulltime work, as it would dependent on when a place becomes available. Places are scarce for Nursery rooms. The CCS activity test is creating a chicken and egg situation for me.

I also don't want my child to miss out on early education and social development that childcare offers. Yet the cost is exorbitant.

I am not entitled to any income payment support. The CCS activity test is creating undue financial stress.

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:

Its difficult to use the online calculator to truly understand how much out of pocket we will be.

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.

Agree

Please provide further comment if relevant:

I found the website only useful for finding local centres but had to directly contact the centre for fees and vacancies and ratings.

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:

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

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 servicetype. 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:

I strongly recommend that the activity test be completely abolished. Its creating a barrier to entry for low income families or families with complex situations, parents in between jobs. I also think it will lessen the administrative burden on the government.

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.

Support

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: