



A Strategic Assessment of the Children's Services Industry

*A paper prepared for the Children's
Services Subcommittee of the
Community and Disability Services
Ministers' Advisory Council*



**Government
of South Australia**

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The report was commissioned from independent researchers and does not necessarily reflect the views of Commonwealth or State/Territory Governments.

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Executive Summary

In the last decade, early childhood education and care (ECEC) has experienced 'a surge of policy attention' from governments around the world. A considerable body of research confirms that early childhood is the foundation for later development and that experiences in the early years have lifelong consequences for health, education and wellbeing. In addition, there is growing evidence of the economic returns from investment in high quality early education. Such research, combined with information about the stresses and challenges facing modern families, has propelled ECEC to a prominent place in the policy agenda of many countries. Governments and international organisations increasingly recognise the long-lasting impact of children's early years and seek to develop programmes and policies that will have beneficial impacts upon children's future development, including their health, educational and social development. ECEC policy is also connected with a range of other policy arenas and goals, from increasing women's labour force participation to poverty alleviation.

The Australian government has placed early childhood education and care (ECEC) at the centre of an exciting and challenging agenda. ECEC is, for the first time, being seen both as valuable in itself and as a tool to be utilised in the nation's long-term social and economic strategies – including productivity, labour force participation, skills formation, social inclusion and the 'education revolution'. It is an important element of 'closing the gap' between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children.

States and Territories have also strengthened their focus on ECEC, increasing investment and innovation and exploring new services and supports that more closely match the needs of contemporary Australian families.

The emerging agenda around early education and care is exciting and challenging. It includes universal access to preschool education in the year before school and the development of parent and child centres which will act as service hubs, bringing together health, education and child care and providing targeted services for particular groups.

The implementation of this new agenda will require new ways of thinking about the needs of children, families and communities, new structures, and new relationships between the Commonwealth and State/Territory governments and other stakeholders. It will require moving beyond notions such as the separation of 'education' and 'care' to thinking in more holistic ways about the needs of children, families and communities. Already there are many excellent examples of such services in operation across Australia. The challenge is to develop a systematic, nationwide approach while recognising and respecting local needs and aspirations.

The achievement of Australia's ambitious goals in relation to ECEC is made more complex by the nature of the market in children's services. Almost three-quarters of Australian long day care is provided by the private, for-profit sector – a similar proportion to the UK, but higher than the USA. Reliance upon the private sector to deliver children's services is common across the English-speaking liberal welfare states. Australia is unique, however, in its level of market concentration: a single commercial provider owns approximately one-third of the long day care places in the country - a situation unparalleled in the rest of the world. (By comparison, the top 40 providers together own about 10 per cent of the market in the UK, while in the USA national chains collectively own 13 per cent of all centres.)

Private providers play an important role in many areas of Australian social policy including health, aged care and the delivery of welfare services. The private sector has contributed to a

rapid expansion of long day care places since the early 1990s. The mixed market is a central feature of the Australian children's services industry and will remain so for the foreseeable future. The nature of the market reinforces the importance of policies geared to the enhancement and monitoring of service quality. This, in turn, requires accurate and continuous information about standards and quality in *all* publicly funded settings. This is particularly so given the broad public policy goals being linked to Australia's early childhood services agenda. The existence of a mixed market introduces some new issues into strategic thinking. For example, international literature and a small number of Australian research studies show a trend for the highest quality care to be associated with non-profit and independent private providers, and the poorest quality care with corporate chains. Australia's commitment to evidence-informed policy requires further research to test the relevance of these findings in Australia and to develop strategies to ensure that high quality is being delivered in all settings.

The international focus on ECEC and the policy initiatives and research it has generated, provide a valuable knowledge base for Australian policy makers. New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Sweden and parts of Canada have all embarked on policy agendas that focus on the needs of children in their early years, that move beyond separate spheres of education and care and that seek more integrated, holistic service provision. New Zealand began this process earlier than most, uniting education and care services in a single department in 1986. The UK has similarly brought together policy responsibility for education and care. In addition, the UK has built hubs for the delivery of integrated services; these 'Children's Centres' to be located in every neighbourhood, provide education, care, health and family support. The experience of all these countries shows that integration involves more than reorganising policy responsibility or the delivery of a range of services for children from a single site. Child-focused integration extends beyond the policy arenas of early education and care. So in the UK, integration has been designed to address poverty alleviation and maternal employment goals. In Sweden, integration has occurred between preschool (1-6 years) and primary school curricula, in which each influenced the other.

Comprehensive approaches to early childhood service provision require close attention to the staff who work in ECEC services, their qualifications, pay and conditions and career prospects. New qualifications and career paths have been developed in the UK, New Zealand and Sweden specifically for early teachers. New mechanisms have been developed to recognise the experience of staff already engaged in providing education and care. In New Zealand, pay parity has been achieved between early years teachers and primary school teachers. New funding mechanisms were implemented in Quebec so that parents pay \$7 for a full day of ECEC, in this way overriding the education and care split between operational subsidies for education and fee subsidies to enable parents to purchase care. The different needs of parents and children have been addressed, so that in Quebec, parents can, if they wish, place their children in a single high quality service for up to 10 hours per day which both meets the needs of employed parents and of children for quality education and care.

Australia is on the threshold of an exciting era in the development of early childhood education and care. Collaboration, goodwill and sustained innovation in policy and funding approaches are essential to move forward on the agenda now in play. The principles and strategies outlined below will help move Australia closer towards this goal.

1 Principles and Strategies

1.1 A national vision for Australian early childhood education and care

Australian children's services must be based upon an agreed vision of ECEC which has the wellbeing and development of children at its core. Given its primacy in policy-making and funding, the Commonwealth government should take the lead in developing such a vision. To gain acceptance and credibility across the sector, this must be done in consultation with other levels of government and the broader community, including parents, providers, staff, unions, researchers and others with specialist knowledge. An appropriate starting point for Australian discussion about an overarching framework would be the principles that the OECD has encouraged national governments to incorporate into their planning, namely:

- A systemic and integrated approach to policy development and implementation
- A strong and equal partnership with the education system
- A universal approach to access, with particular attention to children in need of special support
- Substantial public investment in services and infrastructure
- A participatory approach to quality improvement and assurance
- Appropriate training and working conditions for staff in all forms of provision
- Systemic attention to monitoring data collection
- A stable framework and long term agenda for research and evaluation.

A child-focused system requires a continuum of services and supports for families. Considerable attention is currently being paid to the early months of life (exemplified in debates about maternity/paternity/parental leave) and to extending preschool education to children in the year or two before school. Without this, there is potential for a policy vacuum to develop between a short period of paid maternity/parental leave and entry to preschool in the year or two before school. While these are both critical 'moments' in the lives of young children, a comprehensive vision should address the whole period from birth to the start of school. It should embrace measures to support and enhance the health of mothers during (and even before) pregnancy and extend into the early years of school.

1.2 Public investment in quality services

Expenditure on high quality children's services represents an investment in the future. The OECD notes that "Only the regular funding that state investment brings is able to guarantee access and quality on a fairly equitable basis for all groups." The current level of expenditure on early childhood education and care in Australia is below that of most other OECD countries. Implementation of a system of integrated, universal, high quality services, supplemented by targeted initiatives, will require additional resources. For example, current regulations for most types of ECEC do not reflect international evidence about what is required to achieve positive outcomes for children. Moving towards regulations and standards that better reflect evidence and best practice will inevitably involve costs. Well-focused expenditure will result in tangible benefits that will enable ECEC services to connect with the broad public policy goals of government.

1.3 Collaborative policy and programme development

A coherent national vision for early childhood requires co-ordinated and cohesive service provision. The current policy focus on early childhood coincides with the emergence of innovative ways of thinking about Commonwealth/State financial relations and a focus on outcomes rather than tied grants. These developments are particularly appropriate for the

expanded vision of ECEC currently being explored. They open up the possibility of agreed goals being implemented within individual jurisdictions in ways that best fit the distinctive traditions of individual States and Territories, allowing for innovation and experimentation at State and local levels.

The successful models of integration, rural and remote service provision, partnership with stakeholders and parental and community engagement that already exist around the country could flourish and be extended within a framework that supports jurisdictions to find their own path towards agreed goals and outcomes.

1.4 Planning processes to ensure fair and equitable access to services

Equitable access to early childhood education and care requires local planning within the context of national goals. Such planning will require mechanisms at State/Territory and, where appropriate, local government or regional levels. Effective planning depends upon accurate, up-to-date and comprehensive data and the insights of knowledgeable and well-resourced policy makers. The involvement of other ECEC stakeholders including parents, providers, staff and ECEC experts will strengthen the planning process and allow for the input of local knowledge about community needs.

Australia's reliance upon market mechanisms to develop new child care places has resulted in a rapid expansion of some service types, but it has not led to equitable access to services across geographical areas or population groups. Indigenous children, children with special needs, children in rural and remote areas and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds do not access formal services at the same level as other children.

1.5 Efficient deployment of resources

Every dollar of public and private expenditure on ECEC should be spent in the most effective way. Encouraging and resourcing small and independent ECEC providers to bring together some service functions would encourage greater efficiency at the local level. Depending upon the context, economies of scale could be achieved in the procurement of equipment, IT hardware and software and in some areas of human resource management (e.g. relief staffing). Aggregating services could create new employment opportunities and longer career ladders – both potentially useful strategies for recruitment and retention of staff. Savings generated through such measures could be used to build service quality and enhance professional development.

Similar ideas (derived from other industries) could, potentially, be considered in relation to staff training. In some jurisdictions, levies are imposed to create a pool of funds to support upgrading the skills of workers. Measures of this type, perhaps funded from licensing fees, could be considered in relation to children's services. Another example comes from the UK, where a government-funded initiative, the Graduate Leader Fund, supports training and continuous professional development within private, voluntary and independent early years services.

1.6 Support for parental engagement

ECEC services and programmes need to respect and acknowledge the role that parents play in their children's development. Opportunities for parent engagement in service provision must reflect the realities of the 21st century. Not all families seek, or value, direct input into the management of services. Nevertheless, parents should have opportunities for engagement in, and partnership with, ECEC services. Such opportunities should not be about compulsory participation in management, but, rather, genuine opportunities to engage as partners in the

education and care of their children, in ways consistent with other obligations such as paid work and other personal responsibilities.

Particular attention needs to be given to the parents of disadvantaged children and those with special needs since research clearly shows the positive benefits of a real partnership between services and their families.

1.7 A special focus on Indigenous children

The Australian government has indicated its commitment to tackling Indigenous disadvantage and to closing the gap between the life chances of Indigenous and other Australians. ECEC services have a crucial role to play in meeting these goals. Policies surrounding Indigenous ECEC must recognise that such services play a broad role in supporting Indigenous families and promoting health and development. The workforce development and training needs of the Indigenous child care sector require specific attention, including the employment of Indigenous staff.

1.8 Measures to support parents as 'consumers'

International research suggests that parents are more generous in their assessments of ECEC service quality than are professionals. To put this in another way, few parents have the tools to identify high quality care. Once services achieve a modest level of quality, parents tend to rate them highly. This feature of ECEC, together with the lack of services in many areas, limits the effectiveness of traditional market mechanisms. If parents cannot choose between services *either* because they lack available alternatives *or* because they lack the tools to make informed choices, most will choose on the basis of either price or convenience. Ratings systems which provide information about the quality of services, combined with general information/education about quality in ECEC, could help to make parents more effective 'consumers' of ECEC. (Children, of course, are the real 'consumers' of ECEC, which is the fundamental reason why governments have an interest in promoting quality.)

Closely related to quality is the issue of cost. In other areas of social provision where governments rely on private providers (e.g. aged care and general practice medicine), measures have been introduced to keep fees to a reasonable level and/or to limit the profits that can be made from taxpayer subsidised services. One of the most widely supported suggestions in ECEC is the idea of a 'schedule of fees' (ACOSS 2006). This would not *set* the fees, but would act as a guide, informing parents about the costs of care at given levels of quality. If parents were to be provided with such information (updated on a regular basis) *in addition to* quality ratings for services, they would be in a far stronger position to make informed choices. In particular, they would be able to make their own decisions about trade-offs between costs and quality.

1.9 Workforce development

The proposed expansion of Australian ECEC will depend upon deepening and extending the expertise of people in a range of positions related to children and families, from frontline staff to programme managers, policy makers and researchers. The OECD's *Starting Strong* notes that "Quality ECEC depends on strong staff training and fair working conditions across the sector. Initial and in-service training might be broadened to take into account the growing educational and social responsibilities of the profession. There is a critical need to develop strategies to recruit and retain a qualified and diverse, mixed-gender workforce and to ensure that a career in ECEC is satisfying, respected and financially viable."

An ECEC strategy for Australia will need to include recruitment and retention strategies to address the high turnover of staff through improved wages and working conditions, additional pre-service and in-service training and enhanced professional status. The Commonwealth and States/Territories will also need policy makers knowledgeable in ECEC and with the skills to work with local communities on needs assessment and local implementation plans.

Countries such as New Zealand, Sweden and Denmark require *all* staff in ECEC settings to have relevant qualifications. The emerging agenda in early childhood education and care requires fundamental re-thinking of the workforce. (In the case of New Zealand, this is a target to be met by 2013.) Similarly, Australia will need ambitious new strategies to enhance qualification, deliver appropriate recognition and remuneration, extend career paths and protect industrial rights.

1.10 Research, monitoring and data collection

Strengthening the information base for ECEC will contribute to effective planning, development and monitoring of services. At present, there is no national mapping of ECEC services and limited data on which to make decisions. The Productivity Commission has pointed to the paucity of information about cost-effectiveness of different types of services, the lack of robust quantitative information, and the relatively few indicators of quality that are currently available. Information on the availability and characteristics of ECEC programmes, patterns of supply, demand and patterns of utilisation is essential for planning and policy making. Systematic attention should be given to monitoring the impact of public and private expenditure against agreed outcomes.

2 Children's services in Australia: the current scene

The Australian government has placed early childhood education and care (ECEC) at the centre of an exciting and challenging agenda. ECEC is, for the first time, being seen both as valuable in itself and as a way means of contributing to long-term social and economic strategies – productivity, labour force participation, skills formation, social inclusion and the 'education revolution'. The role of ECEC in this bold agenda will require new thinking, new structures, and new relationships between the Commonwealth and States.

The Australian government has announced a range of policy commitments including:

- **Universal early childhood education:** by 2013, all children in the year before formal school will have access to 15 hours of play-based early childhood education for a minimum of 40 weeks per year delivered by degree qualified early childhood teachers in public, private and community-based preschools and child care.
- **Integrated parent and child centres:** The Prime Minister has proposed 'universal, high quality, affordable parent and child centres for all 0-5 year-old Australian children' that will 'bring together maternal and child health, long day care and preschool into one stop shops ...' (Rudd 2008).
- **Indigenous Strategy:** The apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples delivered by the Prime Minister on 13 February 2008, singled out early education. 'Let us resolve over the next five years to have every Indigenous four-year-old in a remote Aboriginal community enrolled and attending a proper early childhood education centre or opportunity and engaged in proper pre-literacy and pre-numeracy programmes.
- **Early years learning framework:** with an emphasis on play-based learning, early literacy and numeracy skills and social development
- **Improved quality** through national early childhood education and care quality standards, investment in the training and education of the early childhood workforce and a new rating system to improve parents' access to information about education and care options.
- **New services:** through establishment of 260 new long day care centres on school, TAFE, university and community sites
- **Improved affordability:** through an increase in the Child care Tax Rebate to 50 per cent of out-of-pocket expenses, and raising the cap on the rebate to \$7,500 per child per year.

The government's agenda builds on work initiated by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in the context of its human capital and productivity agenda. In February 2006, COAG noted that 'High quality and integrated early childhood education and care services, encompassing the period from prenatal up to and including the transition to the first years of school, are critical to increasing the proportion of children entering school with the basic skills for life and learning.' It gave priority to improving early childhood development outcomes, as a part of a collaborative national approach. Later in 2006, a COAG communiqué included both early childhood ('with the aim of supporting families in improving childhood development outcomes in the first five years of a child's life, up to and including school entry') and child care ('with the aim of encouraging and supporting workforce participation of parents with dependent children') among its priority areas for human capital.

The COAG agenda has moved towards a child-centered, integrated approach to children's services. The Commonwealth and States, through COAG, are committed to a national approach to quality assurance and regulations for early childhood education and care that will commence in 2009. The purpose of this is 'to improve standards in early childhood services, remove overlaps and duplication between State and Commonwealth regulations and reduce

red tape for service providers'. Most recently, in July 2008, COAG made an in principle commitment to a National Partnership to address the needs of Indigenous children in their early years, to be funded jointly over six years for \$547.2 million.

State, Territory and local governments have undertaken exciting new initiatives that provide examples of planning for the early years and integrated service provision. A selection of case studies is provided in Appendix I. The case studies describe integrated hubs for children and families which have been implemented in the Australian Capital Territory, Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria. The nature of integration is varied, in some cases it includes early years education and care; in others it also includes health and/or family support services. In one instance, there was a focus on integrating a child care centre with the primary school where it was located. A number of these projects have focused on particular groups. Most notably, projects specifically targeting Indigenous children and their communities are operating in the Northern Territory and Queensland. Specific training programmes for Indigenous staff have begun in Western Australia and Queensland. Rural communities have also been the focus of new integrated services in Queensland and South Australia. The case studies detail new approaches to planning underway in New South Wales and Victoria, which has also encouraged local government early years planning.

2.1 Economic, social and political significance of the early years

In the last decade, early childhood education and care (ECEC) has experienced 'a surge of policy attention' from governments around the world (OECD, 2001: 7). The findings of early childhood researchers have been widely disseminated, with the theories and policy prescriptions of economists, developmental scientists, psychologists and early childhood educators widely (though not always accurately) discussed in parliaments and popular media. Increasingly, governments and national and international organisations have recognised the importance of children's early years in a wide range of policy arenas: from a child's individual development to population strategies and from labour force participation to poverty alleviation.

The OECD *Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care* considered ECEC provisions in twenty countries and produced two major comparative reports, *Starting Strong I* and *Starting Strong II*. The policy recommendations of *Starting Strong I* included:

- A systemic and integrated approach to policy development and implementation
- A strong and equal partnership with the education system
- A universal approach to access, with particular attention to children in need of special support
- Substantial public investment in services and the infrastructure
- A participatory approach to quality improvement and assurance
- Appropriate training and working conditions for staff in all forms of provision
- Systemic attention to monitoring and data collection
- A stable framework and long term agenda for research and evaluation (OECD 2001).

Building on these recommendations, *Starting Strong II* addressed system-wide supports, especially 'the social context of early childhood development'. It focused on children's wellbeing and agency, family and community involvement and the promotion of 'ECEC systems that support broad learning, participation and democracy. This might be regarded as a counterweight to a perceived trend to frame and evaluate early childhood systems; primarily through their potential to enable children to reach narrowly defined often academic outcomes

(OECD 2006, 6). *Starting Strong II* tries to capture children's wellbeing in the present, as well as their development as future citizens.

Drawing upon these principles, the OECD identified several issues that hamper Australia's ability to provide high quality services:

- The lack of a **clear vision regarding policy direction**. The OECD suggested that a strategy framework be elaborated, drawing upon the 'views and interests' of children, families, communities, professionals and researchers.
- The need for **system coherence and co-ordination**, particularly given 'the complexities of government in a federation of states, and the multi-layering of administration and regulation'.
- The low **status, poor pay and working conditions of staff**, especially in settings labelled 'child care'. These, according to the OECD, have the potential to 'counterbalance' government investment in the sector (2006, 272).

2.2 Historical legacies

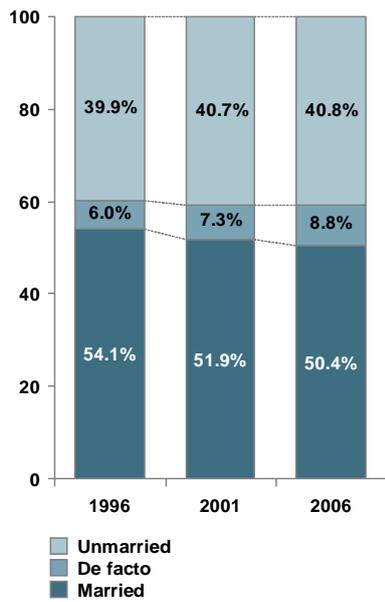
The absence of a national approach to early education and care in Australia reflects deeply entrenched historical legacies. 'Child care' for the children of working parents was, for many decades, widely regarded as a service targeted at parents, providing a solution to the problem of safe custodial care for their children during work hours. By contrast, services deemed 'educational' (such as preschool and kindergartens) were seen as child-focused. The hard and fast division between care and education is beginning to break down. It is widely acknowledged that high quality child care provides far more than a custodial service and that preschool offers respite to parents, as well as benefits to children. But the division between 'education' and 'care' remains entrenched in discrete service types, funding formulae, regulations, the wages and industrial conditions of staff, the range of government departments that have responsibility for the development of policy, the administration of funds and the regulation of services and even the physical fabric of some services.

2.3 Changing patterns of family life and employment

Australian families are changing rapidly. Many aspects of family life are markedly different at the beginning of the 21st century to the way they were only a decade or two ago. Today fewer people marry and more people remain unmarried or live in de facto relationships (Figure 2.1). Couple families with children are less common, with increasingly more single parent and childless households (Figure 2.2). Today, just 40 per cent of families consist of two parents living only with their biological children (2020 Summit, 2008). More couples divorce and more families consist of step-parents and children.

Figure 2.1: Marital status

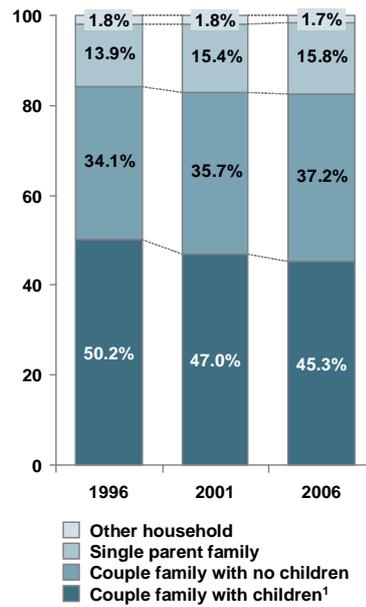
% people by marital status – Australia: 1996-2006



Source: 2020 Summit, 2008

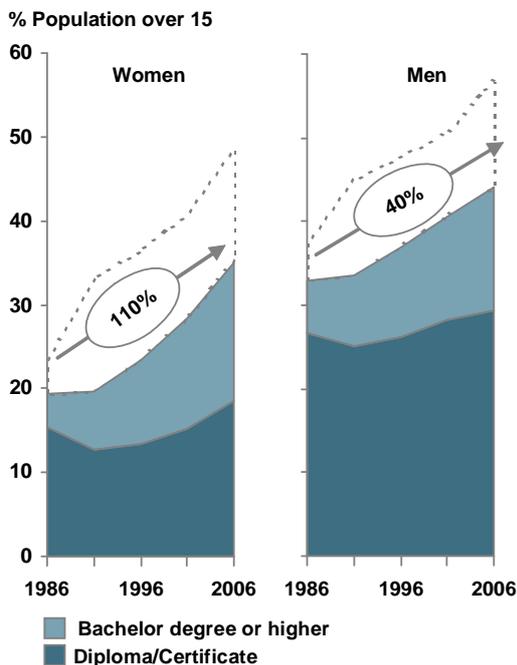
Figure 2.2: Australian households

% households by family type – Australia: 1996-2006



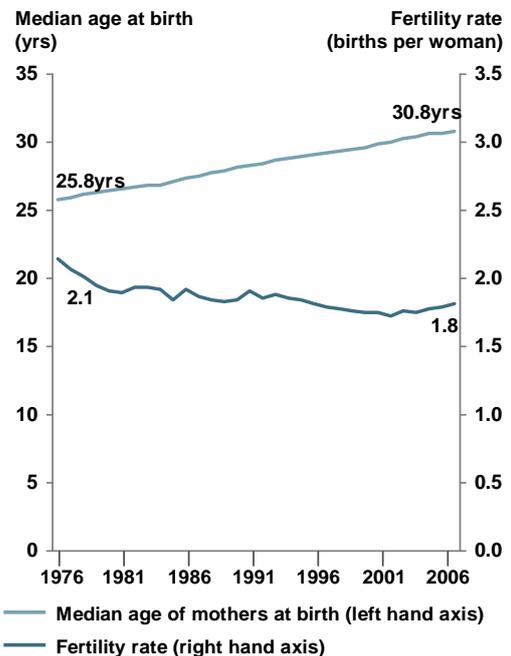
Source: 2020 Summit, 2008

Figure 2.3: Highest level of qualification: Australia, 1996-2006



Source: 2020 Summit, 2008

Figure 2.4: Crude birth rate and median age of mothers at birth: 1976-2006



Source: 2020 Summit, 2008

Family formation is changing too. The rate at which women are attaining tertiary qualifications is rising faster than it is for men; and women are having fewer children later in life (Figures 2.3 and 2.4).

Women's labour force participation rates have risen steadily in recent decades (Figure 2.5, below). Almost 60 per cent of women between 15 and 64 now participate in the labour market (ABS, 2008a) and women make up 45 per cent of the Australian labour force (ABS 2006a). The increase in women's employment has primarily been in part-time employment; women's full-time employment rate has increased only slightly. While men's part-time employment rates have also risen, most men continue to be employed full-time.

The growth in employment of mothers of young children has been particularly marked: more than 60 per cent of mothers of dependent children now have paid jobs, compared with 46 per cent in 1985 (Campbell and Charlesworth 2004, 77). Participation in paid work rises rapidly as children grow older. Approximately 46 per cent of mothers are employed when their youngest child is less than five years; 66 per cent when the youngest child is aged five to nine years; and 70 per cent when the youngest is ten to fourteen years (FaCS and AIFS 2005, 11).

Correspondingly, the number of women with children who are employed has increased. The rate at which mothers are engaged in employment increases with the age of their youngest child (see Table 2.1). Thus, 35 per cent of mothers in couple families are employed when their youngest child is less than one year old; this increases to 59 per cent among mothers of 4-5 year olds. The increase is largely due to increases in full and long part-time hours work, as employment in shorter part-time hours (less than 25 hours) remains at around one quarter for all child age brackets. Not surprisingly, lone mother's employment rates are lower than those of couple mothers.

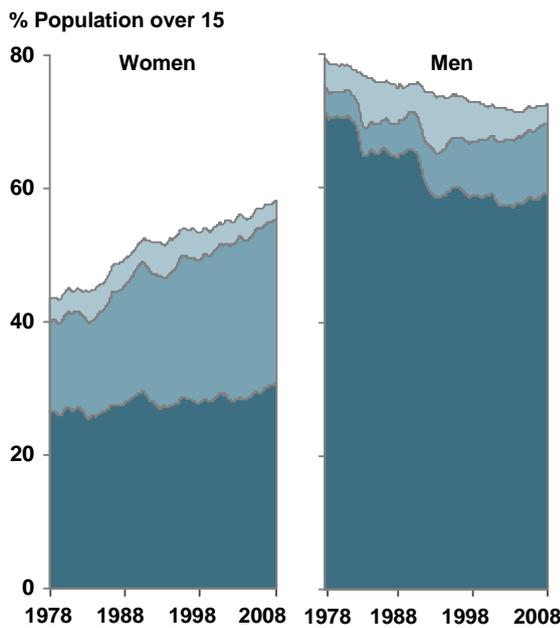
Table 2.1: Australian Mothers' Employment Rates, 2001

Age of youngest child	Couple mothers Hours per week			Not in employment	Lone Mothers Hours per week			Not in employment
	35+	25 to 34	less than 25		35+	25 to 34	less than 25	
0	8	4	24	65	4	2	9	86
1	14	7	28	52	6	3	14	77
2	16	8	28	48	9	4	16	70
3	19	9	28	45	11	5	19	65
4 to 5	21	10	28	41	13	6	20	60
6 to 13	29	14	27	30	21	9	23	48
14 to 18	38	14	22	25	37	11	18	34
Total	24	11	26	39	20	8	19	53

Source: Campbell and Charlesworth, 2004: A2.8

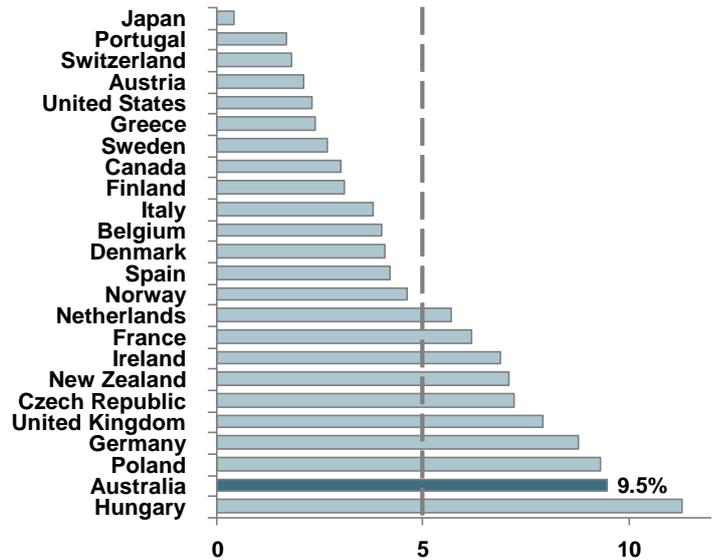
In thinking about services for the early years, it is important to note that, despite the focus on maternal labour force participation, many children grow up in households in which no parent has employment. Australia has a much higher proportion of such children than do other OECD countries (Figure 2.6).

Figure 2.5: Australian Labour Force Profile: 1978-2008



Source: 2020 Summit, 2008

Figure 2.6: Percentage of working age households with children without an employed parent, OECD countries, 2000



Source: 2020 Summit, 2008

Together this demographic data provides a complex picture of Australian families need for education and care for children in their early years. More mothers are employed, more families have a single parent, and more households are made up of more complex families. Women are more likely to be having children later in life when they have already established a career. As a result, more households require care for children in their early years. At the same time, policy which focuses on the needs of families with employed parents, risks neglecting the education and care needs of the large proportion of children whose parents do not have employment.

2.4 Current features

ECEC provision and administration

Commonwealth, State/Territory and (to varying degrees) local governments all play a role in ECEC, alongside non-profit organisations, charitable groups and private businesses. The split between services such as preschools and kindergartens (deemed to be ‘educational’ and child-oriented) and long day care and family day care (regarded as providing ‘child care’ for the children of working parents) has historical roots going back to the nineteenth century. The Commonwealth became involved in ECEC in 1972 with the introduction of the *Child care Act*. Subsidies were tied to the employment of trained teachers and nurses and could be paid only to non-profit long day care centres. The *Child care Act* embodied the deep split between ‘care’ and ‘education’. Historically, preschool has been the province of the States although, for a period between the mid-1970s and the mid-1980s, Commonwealth funds were directed to preschools as well (Brennan 1998).

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, parallel systems of ‘care’ and ‘education’ developed around Australia (McDonald, 2002: 197). Most State governments provide extensive access to preschool as well as overseeing child care licensing. The Commonwealth government has

focused more on the delivery of 'care' to the children of working parents. In the 1990s, the *Child care Act* was amended to extend eligibility for subsidies to the users of private, for-profit child care services. From 2000, most Commonwealth assistance has been delivered through income-tested subsidies such as Child care Benefit and the Child care Tax Rebate.

In most states, ECEC policy responsibility is shared between a number of departments, including health, community services and education (Press, 2006: 26). However, in South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria, ECEC service policy is located solely within departments of education (DEECD, 2008; Press, 2006: 58). State and Territory governments are responsible for funding and/or administering preschools, licensing of centre-based long day care and other child care services, and implementing and monitoring national child care standards.

Australia has six broad service delivery models (SCRGSP, 2008: 3.14):

1. Centre-based long day care (LDC) – primarily aimed at 0-5 year-olds, provided in a centre, and usually by a mix of qualified and other staff. Some centres may also provide before and after school care and school and vacation care. Centres typically operate for at least eight hours per day on normal working days, for a minimum of 48 weeks per year.
2. Family day care (FDC) – comprises services provided in the approved carer's home. The care is aimed at 0-5 years old but primary school children may also receive care before and after school and during school vacations. Central coordination units in all states and territories organise and support a network of carers, often with the help of local governments.
3. Occasional care – comprises services usually provided at a centre on an hourly or sessional basis for short periods or at irregular intervals. Aimed primarily at 0-5 year-olds with the centre employing a mix of qualified and other staff.
4. Preschool – comprises services usually provided by a qualified teacher on a sessional basis in dedicated preschools. Preschool programmes or curricula may also be provided in long day care centres and other settings. In Victoria, WA and Tasmania, the preschool programme is known as kindergarten.
5. Outside school hours care (OSHC) – comprises services provided for school aged children (primarily 5-12 years old) outside school hours during term and school vacations. OSHC is increasingly also being provided before school times.
6. Other services include those designed to support children with additional needs or in particular situations (including children from an Indigenous or non-English speaking background, children with a disability or of parents with a disability, and children living in regional and remote areas).

Key Providers

Long day care centres and preschools tend to have different forms of ownership and management across Australia. Most notably, while nearly three-quarters of centre-based long day care is privately managed, among preschools half are government managed. This varies widely across the states, however. For example, community managed long day care is more common than privately managed long day care in South Australia, Tasmania, ACT and NT. Preschools are overwhelmingly government managed in most states and territories, but in NSW and Victoria they tend to be community managed.

Table 2.2: Proportion of State and Territory licensed and/or registered children's services by management type, 2003-04 (per cent)

	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>Aust</i>
Centre-based long day care									
Community managed	19.8	21.4	15.2	33.5	46.9	51.0	65.4	65.7	23.7
Privately managed	80.2	68.3	83.1	63.3	49.8	28.8	34.6	34.3	73.1
Government managed	0.0	10.3	1.8	3.2	3.3	20.2	0.0	0.0	3.2
Preschool	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Community managed	80.7	74.1	23.1	0.0	4.9	0.0	8.9	0.0	38.0
Privately managed	8.7	8.1	22.9	0.0	0.0	26.5	0.0	0.0	10.8
Government managed	10.7	17.8	54.0	100.0	95.1	73.5	91.1	100.0	51.2

Source: SCRGSP 2002, 2008

Funding

The 2002-03 Australian National Accounts report that expenditure on both child care and preschool education by public and private sources was 0.45 per cent of GDP (OECD, 2006: 270). Sixty-six per cent of the spending was public and 34 per cent private. The OECD (2007c: 206) publication, *Education at a Glance*, reported that in 2004, Australian public and private spending on pre-primary education was 0.1 per cent of GDP (this is spending on children aged from 3 years until school age). This was the lowest pre-primary educational expenditure in the OECD (a rank Australia shared with Korea); it compared with an OECD average of 0.5 per cent.

The Australian Productivity Commission reports that total government expenditure on services for children aged 0-12 years, which included both child care and preschool, was \$3.03 billion in 2005-06 (SCRGSP, 2008: 3.7). This was an increase from \$2.4 billion in 2003-04 (SCRGSP, 2005: 14.6). The Federal Government's contribution was largely directed towards fee assistance for parents (Press, 2006; SCRGSP, 2005). The State and Territory government component was mostly directed towards preschool education.

It is estimated that families contribute 54 per cent, or \$2 billion, annually, to the cost of long day care, family day care and outside school hours care. \$1.8 billion is for children aged 0-4 attending long day care or family day care (ACOSS, 2006: 9).

Affordability

Two funding mechanisms from the Federal Government have been implemented to improve the affordability of child care through fee subsidies to parents. The first, the Child care Benefit (CCB), is calculated based on family income, number of children receiving care for how many hours and the form of child care used (DEERW, 2008a: 11). The highest rates of assistances are paid to those with the lowest incomes. From 1 July 2007, the maximum rate of CCB is \$3.47 per hour of care for one child, up to \$173.50 per week.

Child care Tax Rebate (CCTR) is based on different principles and has a different distributional impact. By rebating a fixed proportion (now 50 per cent) of out of pocket child care costs, it ensures that the highest benefits go to those with the highest costs; disproportionately those with the highest incomes (Brennan, 2007b: 222). Families with very low incomes who pay little or no income tax benefit least from the Child care Tax Rebate as

an offset to their tax obligations. In 2008-09, the maximum amount of CCTR payable will be \$7500 per annum per child (in 2007-08, it was \$4354) (DEEWR, 2008b: 11).

Both CCB and CCTR are paid for use of approved care, most commonly, long day care, family day care and before and after school care (DEEWR, 2008b: 11). Registered care, for example care provided by nannies or grandparents, can attract the minimum rate of CCB but no CCTR. The minimum rate of CCB in 2007-08 is \$0.58 per hour for one child, or \$29.05 per week.

Affordability is an issue of real concern for parents. In 2002, for parents of children of before school age, the cost of child care was a difficulty for more than a quarter of those who used or thought about using child care in the previous twelve months¹ (Cassells et al., 2005: 7). Two parent households and higher income households were most likely to report problems with the cost of child care. Cassells et al., (2005: 16, 18) speculate that this may be due to Child care Benefit income tests, thresholds and rates, as well as higher child care use among higher income families.

Many parents do not use child care services because it is too expensive. In 2005, 13,900 parents with children aged 0-4 said that, in the previous four weeks, they needed additional child care but did not use it primarily because the cost was too high (ABS, 2006: 32). A further 41,000 parents of 0-4 year olds said that the main reason they *did not* require additional child care was the cost (ABS, 2006: 33).

The affordability of child care is impeding parents' participation in the labour force. An ABS survey in 2006-2007 found that 29,900 people said that although they wanted a job, or more hours than they currently worked, the cost of child care was such that they were not looking for work (ABS, 2007: 4). Nearly all of those who did not seek work for child care cost reasons (29,100) were mothers (ABS, 2007: 24).

The affordability of preschool varies widely across Australia (Walker, 2004). In most states preschools seek voluntary contributions from parents but do not charge fees. In Queensland, school based preschools do not charge fees, but other preschools do. In NSW and Victoria the cost of fees fluctuates widely and can be high. In general, the cost of attending preschool cannot be reduced by claiming the Child care Benefit or Child care Rebate.

Access to ECEC services

In June 2005, 957,500 children aged less than 12 used formal care services, including preschool, long day care, family day care and occasional care (see table 5.3 in section 5.2 below). Of these, 742,400 children were aged less than six years. Use of formal ECEC increases sharply from less than one in ten among infants, to more than nine in ten among four year olds. In 2005, 16,700 infants aged less than one used formal care (7 per cent), 114,700 two year olds (46 per cent) and 232,800 four year olds (91 per cent).

Although long day care centres, in general, are open for much longer hours than preschools, most children attend long day care for relatively short periods: 36.5 per cent attend for between 10 and 19 hours per week while 23 per cent attend for 5 to 9 hours (23 per cent) (ABS, 2006: 17). Most children who go to preschool (40 per cent) do so for between 10 and 14 hours per week (ABS, 2006: 40).

¹ After difficulties finding child care for a sick child.

In general, children from disadvantaged backgrounds do not attend child care at the same rate as their more privileged peers (SCRGSP, 2008: 3.14). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are under represented in government funded child care places. They comprise 4.4 per cent of the population of children aged 0-5, but just 1.8 per cent of children using child care. Child care attendance is also lower among children who live in remote areas. Children with disabilities are also underrepresented, making up 5.2 per cent of the population of children aged 0-5, but only 2.5 per cent of the children in approved child care. Children from non-English speaking backgrounds and children from low income families make up a greater proportion of child care attendees than they do in the population of children aged 0-5.

Evidence is mixed regarding use of child care by children from low income families. The ABS Child care Survey indicates that among children living with couple parents, the proportion of low income children using long day care is lower than that of higher income families (Table 2.3). Among lone parent families, the unreliability of data for high income families means that it is difficult to determine patterns of long day care use by income.

The pattern of lower rates of use by children from lower income families holds when all 0-12 year-old children's use of formal care is examined using the Child care Survey (ABS, 2006: 26-27).

Table 2.3: Proportion of children using long day care by weekly income of parents, 2005

	Couple families	Lone parent families
Less than \$400	8.3	8.2
\$400-\$599	5.1*	} 10.3
\$600-\$799	8.5	
\$800-\$999	9.7	} 15.5*
\$1000-\$1199	11.5	
\$1200-\$1399	9.2	} 5.6*
\$1400-\$1999	11.4	
\$2000 or more	11.1	
Total	9.6	9.4

Source: ABS, 2006: 26-27.

*estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution.

** estimate has a relative standard error greater than 50% and is considered too unreliable for general use.

In contrast, the Australian Government Census of Child care Services shows that children from low income families are well represented in their child care use. As reported by the Productivity Commission, the participation in child care of children aged 0-12 years from families with an income of \$33,361 (the cut-off point for receiving the maximum amount of Child care Benefit as at May 2006) is equal to their representation in the community (SCRGSP, 2008: 3A.20).

It is not clear why these two surveys tell a different story with regard to children from low income households. Perhaps it is due to different survey methods, the fact that one surveys parents, the other child care providers might affect the findings. Or perhaps income differences are hidden by Census data being presented for *all* child care services, rather than broken down into different forms of care. However, given the numbers of parents citing cost as an impediment to using child care and the particular importance of early years education and care services for the development of children from disadvantaged backgrounds, this disparity warrants further and more detailed investigation.

Many parents report an inability to find child care places for their children. In 2005, 49,000 parents of 0-4 year olds said they had not used the care they needed in the previous four weeks because there were no places available (ABS, 2006:32). There is clear evidence that lack of access to child care (like high child care costs) limits mothers' labour force participation. In 2006-07, 19,500 women said that they were unable to look for work or seek more hours of work because there was no child care available (ABS, 2007: 24).

There are currently no comprehensive and comparable data collections on preschool attendance in Australia (AIHW, 2005b: 65). However, ABS data demonstrates that children whose parents are not in employment are less likely to attend preschool than those whose parent/s are employed (Cass, 2007: 105). The Productivity Commission shows preschool attendance rates are low among children from non-English speaking backgrounds and children with disability (SCRGSP 2008: 3.14). Importantly, while rates vary across jurisdictions, children from Indigenous backgrounds and regional and remote areas were well represented in preschool.

Licensing and regulation

Each Australian state and territory has its own licensing requirements and regulatory regime (OECD, 2006: 269). The diversity of government departments responsible for child care and preschool education have resulted in a broad array of regulations. Some jurisdictions regulate for a range of care settings, others only for long day care and not for preschool or family day care (Press, 2006: 38-9). As an example of the diversity of regulations, the staff to child ratios required for licensed services ranges widely. Regulations include ratios for three year olds which vary from 1:8 to 1:15, and for infants aged less than one year, ratios of 1:4 or 1:5 (Table 2.4).

The National Child care Accreditation Council (NCAC), established in 1993, administers the Child care Quality Assurance system. NCAC is an incorporated association whose chairperson and members are appointed by the federal minister responsible for children's services. In the past decade, the responsibilities of the NCAC have expanded to include family day care and outside school hours care in addition to its original focus on long day care (NCAC, 2006: 3-4). The Child care Quality Assurance systems are not licensing systems, but rather seek to capture a "standard of quality beyond the minimum requirements described by licensing regulations" (NCAC, 2006: 4).

Preschools do not participate in the national Child care Quality Assurance systems. Some comply with elements of the State and Territory requirements for child care services, such as licensing and health checks, others follow public preschool service registration processes which include set curricula and staff professional development.

Table 2.4: Long Day Care Staff: Child Ratios by State and Territory

State/territory	Staff : child ratios	
NSW	0-2 yrs	1:5
	2-3 yrs	1:8
	3-6 yrs	1:10
Vic	0-3 yrs	1:5
	>3 yrs	1:15
Qld	0-2 yrs	1:4
	0-3 yrs	1:5
	2-3 yrs	1:6
	2.5-3 yrs	1:8
	3-6 yrs	1:12
	4-6 yrs	1:13
SA	0-2 yrs	1:5
	>2 yrs	1:8
WA	0-24 mths	1:4
	24-36 mths	1:5
	>36 mths	1:10
Tas	0-3 yrs	1:5
	3-5 yrs	1:10
	>6 yrs	1:15
NT	0-3 yrs	1:5
	3-5 yrs	1:11
ACT	0-3 yrs	1:5
	>3 yrs	1:11

Source: DEEWR, 2008b: 19

Staff training

Requirements for training among ECEC staff vary widely across jurisdictions. Most states do not require teacher qualifications among long day care centre staff, whereas preschools are generally staffed by teachers (Press, 2006: 40). Licensing rules in Victoria require one staff member qualified with 2 years of training for every 15 children, whereas in Western Australia, one staff member for each age group is required to have 2-4 years training, and the ACT requires every second contact staff member to have 2 years of training. Teachers with early childhood qualifications are only required in both preschools and long day care in New South Wales.

Among workers providing Federal Government approved child care in 2006, 59 per cent of staff had formal qualifications in 2004 (SCRGSP, 2008: 3A.13). The proportion of staff that had either formal qualifications or three years of relevant experience ranged from 78 per cent in New South Wales, to 62 per cent in the ACT. In preschool services, the proportion of staff with relevant qualifications ranged from 69 per cent in the Northern Territory to 46 per cent in Victoria (SCRGSP, 2005: 14.22).

Employment conditions

In May 2004, nearly all Australian child care workers were women (97 per cent), the majority (71 per cent) worked part-time hours and nearly half of them held casual jobs that did not offer paid leave for sickness or holidays (Rooney and Whitehouse, 2006: 139). In 2004, the average hourly earnings of child care workers was \$14.90, compared to an average in male employment of over \$20 (for example carpentry and joinery qualified tradespersons earned \$23 per hour and unqualified food factory hands earned \$21.30) (Rooney and Whitehouse, 2006: 140). Such poor working conditions, particularly wage rates, have led to well-trained people leaving the ECEC system (McDonald, 2002: 201). It has been estimated that staff leaving their positions is the cause of 50 per cent of vacancies which arise among child care staff and 80 per cent of child care coordinators (Press, 2006: 43).

3 International trends

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This is a version of a paper by Fran Press, Senior Lecturer, Charles Sturt University. The paper, 'Trends and debates in ECEC policy: a literature review canvassing policy developments in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Sweden and the United Kingdom' was commissioned by the SPRC. It is used here with permission of the author.

3.1 Learning from other countries

International comparison can serve a range of purposes. It can provide examples of good practice to be emulated and paths to be avoided. It can provide 'natural experiments', enabling policy makers and researchers to study the results of policies in a range of contexts. It can challenge the everyday practices and confront us with different philosophical and ethical conceptions of everyday practices.

In recent years, governments around the world have adopted new approaches to ECEC planning, policy development and administration. These are influenced by each nation's policy history, philosophical and ethical stance on the position of children in society, division of responsibility between jurisdictions and across levels of government, and the administrative and policy location of education and care. Countries emphasise different elements of these drivers in their early childhood policy development. In the UK, for example, increasing women's labour force participation and reducing child poverty have been key drivers of child care policy (Smith 2007). Across the globe, New Zealand's ten-year plan for early childhood, *Pathways to the Future/Ngā Huarahi Arataki*, located the government's commitment to the early years within a broad framework of raising the educational achievement of all NZ children. Enhanced early childhood education is seen as the first step in this process (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2002).

In this section we consider academic and policy-relevant literature addressing national-level ECEC initiatives in several countries, focusing on the policy themes given prominence by the OECD's two *Starting Strong* reports (outlined above). The review focuses on the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Canada – English-speaking liberal societies that have recently reviewed their national policy directions and priorities in relation to early childhood. We have also included some observations about Sweden, primarily because of Sweden's role as an international exemplar of high quality, integrated care and education.

3.2 The OECD principles: a review of policy and research

In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration. (Article 3.1, UNCROC 1990).

It is appropriate to commence this discussion with reference to the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC)*. Since its adoption by the United Nations (UN) in 1989, the Convention has been ratified by over 200 member states, the only exceptions being the United States of America (USA) and Somalia. UNCROC is the most widely ratified of all UN human rights instruments (Jones 1999). Australia and Sweden ratified the UNCROC in 1990, Canada in 1991, New Zealand in 1993 and the Convention came into force across the United Kingdom (UK) in 1992. By ratifying the Convention, countries have agreed to respect children's rights and to assess policies and laws affecting children against the articles contained in the Convention.

In 2005, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child released *General Comment No. 7: Implementing child rights in early childhood* (United Nations, 2005). Concerned with the development of a 'positive agenda for rights in early childhood' this paper is especially pertinent to a discussion of ECEC policy. The rights of infants and very young children have, in many cases, been interpreted as being primarily concerned with issues such as health and survival. The broader principles of the Convention, in relation to areas such as participation in decision-making and education, have more usually been applied to older children. The *General Comment* advocates the recognition of young children as rights holders and persons in their own right, 'active members of their families, communities and societies' rather than 'people in the making', waiting to be moulded by adults. It stresses the applicability to young children of rights-related principles such as participation, respect for their 'concerns, interests and points of view', as well as attention to their particular requirements for 'physical nurturance, emotional care and sensitive guidance.....social play, exploration and learning' (UN 2005).

Thus the UNCROC is significant to ECEC in multiple ways. It advocates the provision of early childhood services; it asserts that such services should always operate in children's best interests; and it promotes respect for children's agency through the work and purposes of the early childhood setting. The extent to which each country has actively drawn upon the Convention to inform policy and practice in early childhood education and care varies. Sweden boasts a 'highly developed view of the child based on democratic values which gives respect for the child as a person in its own right and a belief in the child's inherent skills and potential' (Korpi, 2000). New Zealand has drawn extensively on the Convention to inform policy developments in early childhood education, particularly its strategic plan for early childhood education (Smith, 2007).

The degree to which children's rights principles are embedded in government policies appears to be related to how much formal recognition is institutionalised through the creation of ministries for children. For instance, one suggestion of the *OECD Country Note* for the UK was the creation of an Ombudsman for Children to work across relevant ministries to ensure that children's issues were addressed systematically (OECD, 2000). Sweden established the Office of the Children's Ombudsman in 1993. A decade later, New Zealand created a Commissioner for Children and Northern Ireland established a Commissioner for Children and Young People. In 2004, Scotland established a Children's Commissioner; and in 2005, England's first Children's Commissioner was appointed. Neither Australia nor Canada has yet established national children's ministries; although in Australia equivalent Commissions exist in a number of States and Territories. The Australian government introduced legislation for a Children's Commission at the national level in 1974 but the Commission was never established (Brennan, 1994).

The OECD Policy Considerations for ECEC

A systemic and integrated approach to policy development and implementation

The shape of children's early care and education has been influenced by a range of policy arenas and imperatives. The organisation of ECEC reflects changes to family and workforce structures, research on children's development and wellbeing, and the impact of broader shifts in economic policy on the provision of services once considered the province of government or the public sector, or indeed, the family itself. The provision of child care and preschool services has been linked to strategies to: enable women's participation in the paid labor market and, by association, enable women's citizenship (Dobrowolski and Jenson, 2004); redress disadvantage, particularly educational disadvantage and poverty; reinvigorate communities; and, more recently, has been linked to an enactment of children's rights.

Canada

Responsibility for ECEC in Canada lies primarily with the provinces and territories. Traditionally, the federal government has primarily been concerned with funding, with some national agreements through which it set or framed an early childhood agenda, for example, the QUAD Principles: Quality, Universal inclusiveness, Accessibility and Developmental programmes (Cool, 2007: 6). In recent years, federal government focus has moved away from national agreements towards fee subsidies for parents. In most provinces and territories education and care are treated as separate policy concerns, Quebec and Prince Edward Island are the exception.

Across Canada, all five year olds have a legal entitlement (usually non-compulsory) to part-time kindergarten programmes operated as part of the public education system. The federal government is generally responsible for social services for First Nations and Indigenous Peoples living on reserves. With regard to ECEC, it has implemented two targeted programmes, First Nations Inuit Child care Initiative and Aboriginal Head Start. The former aims to increase the supply of child care places on reserves and the latter to increase children's readiness for school in urban and other off reserve communities (Friendly and Beech, 2005: xxiv).

Access to child care services in Canada is low. It has been estimated that 15.5 per cent of 0-12 year olds and 24 per cent of 0-6 year olds have access to regulated spaces (Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights, 2007: 142).

Quebec

ECEC in Quebec, as in other parts of Canada, consists of two streams. Kindergarten services, or *Maternelle*, are provided for 23.5 hours per week for five year olds (Friendly and Beach, 2005: 56). Attendance is not compulsory. Four year olds living in Montreal generally attend *Maternelle* or, if living in rural areas, *Passe-Partout*.

Currently, key elements of ECEC in Quebec include:

Full day services for 0-5 year olds. So that children do not have to move between different settings during the day, centres are required to offer at least 10 hours of continuous care.

Parents pay \$7 per child per day – this programme is highly popular among parents and has bipartisan support. It is implemented through operational grants, fee subsidies to parents were phased out over four years from 1997 (Beach and Friendly, 2005: 1). Legislation was introduced in 2005 (Educational Child care Act) to mandate that centres could not charge more than \$7 per day.

Ministère de la Famille et de l'Enfance is the single ministry responsible for early childhood care and education policy for 0-4 year olds. Kindergarten services for 5 year old children remain the responsibility of the ministry of education.

Most centre based services are not for profit.

30 per cent of children aged 0-12 have access to child care, the largest proportion across Canada (CRRU, 2004: 6). This is an increase of 23 per cent from 1992 to 2004, by far the largest increase in places throughout Canada.

Around 95 per cent of 5 year olds attend kindergarten.

The result is that, for many countries, the ECEC sector is comprised of a number of different service types that are subject to an often diffuse set of policies from a range of government departments. This has been identified as problematic for Australia, Canada and the UK (Department for Education and Skills (DfES), 2004; OECD, 2003; Press and Hayes, 2000). Canadian ECEC was described by its OECD *Country Note* as 'a patchwork of uneconomic, fragmented services' (2003 p.6). The OECD *Country Note* for Australia referred to the 'ad hoc nature' of Australian early childhood policy and noted that the interests of children ran the risk of being subsumed by 'the needs of parents, the workplace, and the economy' (2001 p.37). England's *Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners* (2004) has sought to address existing splits between child care and education.

Fragmentation is characteristically found along a number of dimensions including:

- The diversity of services provided, which is often accompanied by divisions of responsibility between different government portfolios.
- The various levels of government (local/municipal; state/provincial; and national) that have a direct policy impact on ECEC (particularly in Australia and Canada).
- Discontinuities between ECEC and compulsory schooling.
- Discontinuities between ECEC and other areas of family policy, such as parental leave, and welfare to work regimes.
- The mix of providers – government, not-for-profit non-government organisations, and for-profit businesses and corporations.
- Differing standards (regulations, curricula, accreditation) according to jurisdiction and /or type of early childhood service.
- Differing staffing requirements according to jurisdiction and/or type of early childhood service.

In its *Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy* the OECD adopted the term 'early childhood education and care' in order to reinforce the need for a coherent approach to children's early development and learning (2001). The juxtaposition of 'education' and 'care' highlights the intimate interrelationship of the care and education of young children (UNESCO, March 2002). According to the OECD (2001), in countries where early childhood policy is based upon a foundational understanding that children are competent learners from birth, divisions between 'care' and 'education' become meaningless. This rise of the terminology of 'care and education' has, to some extent, changed the discourse that surrounds the provision of early childhood services and associated policy. For instance, New Zealand has renamed its child care centres 'education and care centres' (May, 2007); the New South Wales (NSW) Curriculum Framework for Children's Services states that the interwoven nature of care and education make it 'inappropriate to label some services, or even parts of the day in a programme, as educational and others as care' (undated, p. 16); Sweden uses the term *förskola* (preschool) to encompass its full-time centre based services for children aged between 1 and 6 years; and the UK has adopted the term 'educare' to describe 'joined up' education and child care to children in the year before school (DfES, 2004). Notwithstanding the adoption of more inclusive terminology, for many jurisdictions the provision of child care and early education remains divided and thus discrepancies in funding and staffing remain.

New Zealand

New Zealand has undertaken long term planning for children's services. The ten-year plan for early childhood, *Pathways to the Future/Ngä Huarahi Arataki*, was developed to provide strategies for increasing children's participation in early childhood services, improve quality and promote collaboration, and to ensure the childhood sector is responsive to the needs of Māori and Pasifika peoples (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2002).

The plan built on the existing curriculum for early childhood, *Te Whāriki*, which, when introduced in 1996 was notable for being the first national and the first bicultural curriculum for early childhood.

Recently, the government has undertaken to:

- increase the number of registered teachers - so that by 2013 most staff will be teachers and all other staff will be in teacher training; improved teacher to child ratios
- improve accessibility of education and care, for example by requiring new school sites to include provision for early childhood centres
- increase levels of funding; improved pay and conditions
- prioritise funding and support for community rather than for-profit centres (Mitchell 2005).
- New Zealand began the process of integrating education and care services for the early years much earlier than other countries. Elements of this integration include:
 - The co-location of ministerial responsibility for child care and education services for children in their early years. In 1986, responsibility for child care services was transferred from the Department of Social Welfare to the Department of Education, where it has remained (Mitchell 2005:178).
 - In 1988, integrated training was introduced for kindergarten and child care workers, providing both with three years of teaching training.

The New Zealand government is investigating making the curriculum mandatory in both early years education and care settings (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2007a).

While NZ education and care has been co-located for two decades, integration issues remain (Mitchell 2005:193). For example:

There are significant differences due to historical legacies between different elements of the early years sector, for example, between Education and Care Services and Kindergartens, the two most common providers.

Education and Care Services	Kindergartens
Placements for part, all day or flexible hours	Placements for part-days, a few days per week
Children aged from birth to school age.	Children aged between 2½ and 5 years.
Half staff must be registered teachers.	All staff hold teacher qualifications
Over 50% of services are run for profit.	Run by parent and community committees
Most staff on individual contracts, employment conditions vary widely	Nationally agreed employment conditions. In 2007 achieved pay parity with school teachers.

Aspects of funding arrangements also remain unintegrated. Bulk funding for centres comes from the Department of Education, whereas the child care subsidy is delivered by the Department of Social Development. The two departments and two funding systems have different priorities. The Department of Education funding has educational priorities which differ from the labour market priorities of the Department of Social Development. As a result education and care funding is not cohesive and involves two different administrative costs (Mitchell, 2005: 193).

In each of the review countries, education and care services for young children take a variety of forms. Long day care (both centre-based and family day care), preschool/kindergartens, and services specific to Indigenous communities are reasonably typical of the mix. Formal ECEC might be supplemented by programmes that also have a focus upon supporting children's development and parenting, but require the presence of parents at the service. Such programmes include the New Zealand Playcentres (May 2007), the Family Resource/Support Centres found in parts of Canada (OECD 2003), and supported playgroups in Australia. This mix of service types reflects their varying antecedents with responsibilities typically split between portfolios of education (preschool) and health and/or welfare (child care). *Starting Strong II* points out that in liberal market economies (which include the reviewed countries of Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom) 'younger children are considered to need 'child care' rather than early education' (p.46) with governments more prepared to assume responsibility for preschool education (in the one or two years before the commencement of school). For many years, preschools have represented governments' investment in early childhood *education systems* in particular. Although not all of the jurisdictions within each of the reviewed countries provide universal access to preschool, many have sought to achieve this goal. However, the 'traditional' structure of preschool education, where children are offered a limited number of hours per week in the year or two immediately before the commencement of formal school, is not responsive to the working hours of parents. As a result, many children and families who would have once used kindergartens, now use long day care centres and family day care homes instead.

In recognition of the multiplicity of influences upon ECEC policy, *Starting Strong I* recommended governments 'formulate and work with coordinated policy frameworks at centralised and decentralised levels'. In a similar vein, the UN *General Comment* urges 'coordinated, multi-sectoral strategies in order to ensure that children's best interests are always the starting point for service planning and provision' (OECD 2001,11). In Australia and Canada, the complexities of federalism mean that coordinated policy frameworks are required to encompass a number of domains. Firstly, there is a need to work toward integrated early childhood education and care; secondly, there is a need to recognise and incorporate the nexus between maternity/parental leave and the provision of early childhood education and care; and thirdly there is a need to strive for congruence and alignment across key policy areas including education, health, work and family, and social welfare (Press, 2006). To achieve coordination the OECD suggests the establishment of a 'lead ministry that works in cooperation with other departments and sectors' (OECD 2006, 47).

Each of the reviewed countries has introduced changes, often incremental, to address at least some of the divisions and disjunctures previously outlined. Both New Zealand and Sweden are considered exemplars in this respect with New Zealand integrating ECEC under the Department of Education in 1986 (Meade and Podmore, 2002) and Sweden transferring responsibility for child care from the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs to the Ministry of Education and Science in 1996 (UNESCO, May 2002). These departmental integrations have

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom has made far-reaching changes to its child care and early years system since the election of the Labour government in 1997. These have been achieved through the implementation of a number of high-profile strategies and significant new expenditure. Under Labour, child care came to be seen as a key aspect of the broader social and economic agenda, including maternal labour force participation and child poverty. Some key policy measures are outlined below, focusing on the UK approach to education and care.

Meeting the Child care Challenge (1998) – a national strategy to improve quality, affordability and accessibility (HM Department for Education and Employment, 1998). The green paper argued that a lack of government involvement in child care planning had led to variable levels of quality, high costs for parents and insufficient places.

Sure Start (1998) brought a range of children's services together, including education, child care, health and family support. Later *Children's Centres* brought several early years programmes into Sure Start. The UK government has committed to placing a Children's Centre in every neighbourhood, starting with the most disadvantaged.

Choice for Parents, the Best Start for Children: A Ten Year Strategy for Child care (2004) – free early education for all 3 and 4 year olds, starting with 15 hours per week for 38 weeks and aiming for 20 hours per week by 2010 (HM Treasury, 2004: 1). Elements of the Strategy were implemented in the *Child care Act 2006*, the first Act of Parliament to specifically focus on child care (Hill, 2008; *Sure Start: Child care Act 2006*).

Staff development– A new professional qualification, the *Early Years Professional*, has been developed. These workers lead an organisation's developmental work with children in a range of ECEC settings. All Children's Centres are to be led by an Early Years Professional by 2010; by 2015 each daycare centre is to be led by a graduate, with two graduates per setting in disadvantaged areas (Children's Workforce Development Council, nd; ippr 2008,4). The *Graduate Leader Fund* is paid to full daycare services which can be used to contribute to the wages of a newly employed Early Years Professional, support an existing staff member to undertake Early Years training, and to contribute to the further professional development of graduates.

(see <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/workforcereform/earlyyearsworkforce/>).

Examples of integration in UK ECEC

Service delivery – Children's Centres in the most disadvantaged areas include support for families and children with special needs, health facilities and advice for parents on employment and training (National Audit Office, 2006: 14). The *Children Act 2004* brought children's education and care services together with health and welfare, under a director of children's services in each local authority (Hill, 2008).

Policy responsibility – As part of the *Every Child Matters* agenda, the UK Government brought education and care services for children together, locating responsibility for both under the auspices of the Department for Education and Skills (HM Department for Education and Skills, 2004: 1). However, while co-located, education and care remained divided, occupying different divisions in the department (Cohen et al., 2004:182). In June 2007, the Department for Education and Skills was renamed the Department for Children, Schools and Families, further cementing the co-location of responsibility for care and education services for children (HM Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007: About Us). Early years services have nonetheless become closely connected with broader policy agendas including child welfare, child health, child poverty and labour market policy.

Workforce – Merging the education and child care workforces has not been a strong feature in the English integration agenda (Cohen et al., 2004: 184). However, an interesting development in early years training is a new course, the *National Professional Qualification in Integrated Centre Leadership*. This is a new specialist qualification for leaders in multi-agency and multi-disciplinary early years settings. Enrolment priority is given to the leaders of new Children's Centres. In this qualification, integration is not only between education and care services, but a range of services in the local community. For more information see <http://www.ncsl.org.uk/programmesprogrammest/npqicl/index.cfm>

been consolidated by policy interventions designed to create a coherent and seamless approach to children's early care and education. For example, New Zealand's strategic plan for early childhood education, *Pathways to the future: Nga Huarahi Arataki* had, as a guiding principle, to 'identify and take into account relationships between government policy in early childhood education and other government policy goals, particularly those in education, labour market, health, welfare ...' (Ministry of Education, 2000). One of the 'on the ground' objectives related to this principle was to 'improve the development and educational achievement of children between birth and age eight through forming strong links between ECE services, parent support and development, schools, health and social services' (Pathways to the Future 2003, np).

In 1998, England and Scotland integrated responsibility for all early childhood services within education departments (Kamerman, 2005; Moss 2006). Since that time, the UK has invested a considerable amount of money into early childhood education and integrated Children's Centres have been developed. England's *5-Year Strategy for Children and Learners* has set out to consolidate a range of services into Children's Centres so that early education and child care, family support, health services, employment advice and specialist support are available on a single site, as well as working toward the establishment of a Children's Centre in every community (Glass 2006). A further aim is to integrate child care and what is referred to as 'nursery education' (DfES 2004). All services for children below school age, as well as schools and care services for school aged children are now the responsibility of one local department, Children's Services, and one central department, the Department for Children, Schools and Families – an approach first heralded in a Government Green Paper, *Every Child Matters*, in 2003 (HM Treasury, 2003).

Canada and Australia have released National Agendas for children but these have not directly tackled the systemic divisions in the same way. In 1998 Canada announced a *National Children's Agenda* which in 2000 resulted in an extension of parental leave provisions and an Early Childhood Development Initiatives Agreement (ECDI) with states and provinces. The ECDI agreements provided funding for improvements in the key areas of: a) healthy pregnancy, birth and infancy, b) parenting and family support; c) early childhood development, learning and care, and d) community supports (Colley, 2006).

In late 2007, Australia released a *National Agenda for Early Childhood* (Family and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA), 2007)². Australia's Agenda is described as 'a framework for action to promote the positive development of all children living in Australia for birth to age eight'. In a similar fashion to Canada's ECDI agreements, it identified four action areas: healthy families; early learning and care; supporting families; and child friendly communities. Unlike the Canadian Agenda, the Australian Agenda was not considered to be a plan of action, rather it was described as a reference document for people working with young children and no funding was attached to the achievement of its outcomes. Nor did it seek to reconfigure the various responsibilities of different levels of government and related sectors, although it did advocate joint planning processes. An Indigenous Child care Plan was released in 2007 (FACSIA 2007a). In line with the National Child care Strategy the Plan recommends 'an integrated approach to the delivery of child care, health and broader family support services' (FACSIA 2007a).

² The status of the National Agenda is unclear following the change of government.

Sweden

Sweden is regarded internationally as one of the countries that best exemplifies a high standard of provision.

The Swedish central government determines early years policy, guidelines and funding, providing strong direction for ECEC, which is administered by municipalities (OECD, 2006: 409). For example, in 1995, legislation was enacted by the Swedish government which required all municipalities to ensure there were sufficient places in education and care for all children aged 1-12 whose parents are employed or studying as well as for all the children in the municipality who have special needs (Szebehely, 2005). At the time, most municipalities were already providing places for these children, but the few which were not quickly adapted to provide additional places (Korpi, 2007:57). Later, the children of unemployed parents or parents on parental leave became entitled to 3 hours per day of ECEC.

In Sweden, education and care services were merged in 1996 by transferring responsibility for child care from the Ministry for Health and Social Affairs to the Ministry of Education and research (Gunnarsson et al., 1999: 10). Integrated provision for children was already strong by the time departmental responsibility was integrated and there was awareness in Sweden of the different principles and assumptions in education and welfare policy. Each influenced the other in integration. For example:

- 'welfare' principles of targeting services to children who met particular criteria, such as having employed parents or special needs, have changed. The early years sector has moved towards a more education-like principle of universal entitlement for all children (Cohen et al., 2004: 187). The introduction of a maximum fee, regardless of hours spent at preschool, and of 15 hours free for all children, regardless of their parents' employment status, is evidence of this influence (Cohen et al., 2004: 187; Korpi, 2007:70).
- The introduction of a mandatory preschool curriculum in 1998 is further evidence of the integration of education and care (Cohen et al., 2004: 188; Gunnarsson, 1999: 11).
- Conversely, the preschool year exerted a strong influence on primary school, introducing pedagogical approaches into primary school which had their origins in preschool, such as play, exploration and creativity (Korpi, 2007:62). The primary school curriculum was modified to ensure a smooth transition for children from preschool to their first year of compulsory schooling at age 7.

Following departmental integration, the Swedish early childhood workforce was integrated primarily through the development of a new early childhood teaching qualification (Cohen et al., 2004:184). Nearly all staff have qualifications for working with children, around half of them tertiary teacher training (Skolverket, 2007:35). Pay differentials continue to exist, but these are not as great as in some other countries (Cohen et al., 2004:184; European Foundation, 2006:14-15).

In contrast to the other countries reviewed here, in Sweden, services for children in their early years are mostly full-time rather than part-time (Szebehely, 2005). Long hours of attendance at education and care services date back to the 1970s.

Notably, too, due to long paid parental leave of 480 days (shared by parental couples), very few Swedish infants attend early years services – just 30 children aged less than one were enrolled in 2005.

While the Swedish government regulates service quality, it does so via goals rather than standards. For example:

- Teacher to child ratios are not set by the Swedish government. Instead it conducts extensive monitoring and publishes annual reports commenting and making recommendations on the state of preschool education (OECD, 2006: 409).
- The Swedish preschool curriculum, while mandatory, does not contain a set syllabus, but instead goals and principles to guide teachers in their work (Alvestad and Samuelsson. 1999).

For the UK, New Zealand and Australia, progress toward a systemic approach to ECEC is somewhat confounded by the move to a mixed economy of child care provision. While most preschools have been government run, or managed by publicly funded not-for-profit agencies, the long day care sector is a mixed economy and long day care centres in both Australia and New Zealand are run largely by the for-profit sector, and increasingly by the corporate sector (Brennan, 2007b; Mitchell 2002). In the UK the expansion of Children's Centres has relied heavily on private, voluntary and independent providers (Penn, 2007). The for-profit sector and not-for-profit sectors do not always share the same goals for early childhood policy and, at times, advocate for different outcomes from government policy (Duncan 2007; Penn 2007; Press and Woodrow, 2005).

A strong and equal partnership with the education system

The disjuncture between children's care, seemingly exemplified by services such as long day care or child care, and children's early education, seemingly exemplified by preschool (Wangmann, 1995), is manifest in the way in which much government funding is directed within the early childhood sector, and the split between what might be broadly described as the prior to school sector and the school sector. The care and education split is typified by arrangements for preschool education that only commence in the year or two before school and which do not generally match the working hours of parents (Sweden, and now New Zealand, are exceptions in this regard). Child care, on the other hand, is provided for longer hours, but less likely to require the employment of early childhood teachers. As a result, in countries such as Australia, Canada, and the UK, children may find themselves moving between services on any given day, within each week, and from age group to age group as families juggle child care needs and attendance at preschool programmes. An additional consequence of the care and education split is that services for children under the age of three are relatively poorly resourced (Bennett, 2003). Thus the *UN General Comment* (2005) notes that existing divisions between education and care are not always in children's best interests.

In calling for ECEC to have a strong and equal partnership with the education system, *Starting Strong I* envisaged the creation of a unified system that would more comprehensively address the needs of younger children, and 'enable smoother transitions for children, and the recognition of early childhood pedagogy as an important part of the education process' (OECD 2006, p.58). Just as in public schooling, investment in ECEC needs to be regarded as a public good.

A central tenet of the OECD recommendation, however, is that of *equal partnership*. As outlined in the previous section, there are a number of national developments and specific moves within nations designed to streamline the relationships between the formal care and education arrangements for children before school and compulsory schooling. Although the previous section canvassed the advances made as countries have moved to unify ministerial responsibility for 'prior to school' and school services, the creation of a 'strong and equal' partnership, is not solely the product of a unified ministry. A review of the literature and policy debates of each country highlight the fact that in order for early childhood education to be granted the same status as education systems a number of elements need to be addressed, including: increased funding for services in the years before formal school – particularly in the earliest years of children's lives; upgraded requirements for staffing of services; and respect for early childhood pedagogies. As systems seek partnership and cohesion there is a need to challenge the 'cultures, traditions and value systems' (Colley 2006, p.11) vested in existing (or pre-existing) portfolios.

In fact, moves to integrate early childhood services within departments of education have at times been resisted because of fears of the 'schoolification' of early childhood services. Petrie

describes schoolification as a process of colonisation whereby the expectations and cultures of the school system take over 'children's lives, other children's services, and their workforces' (2005, 179). To counter this, John Bennett who previously headed the OECD Thematic Reviews, advocates for early childhood education to exert a positive influence on schools. Arguing that the current split results in an overemphasis on cognitive development to the 'detriment of care and social attachment', he suggests that schools have much to learn from the approaches and impact of early childhood education in relation to the importance of teacher-child relationships and their caring function (Bennett, 2003; see also Korpi 2005).

Sweden has made remarkable progress in this area, and its experience is frequently used to showcase, not only how this partnership might be achieved in structural terms, but how early childhood approaches to children's pedagogy might exercise an upward influence on schooling (UNESCO 2002). One such manifestation of this impact is that 'Swedish schools are increasingly seen as places where school-age children are cared for in a holistic manner while their parents are working. More and more, schools are becoming a substitute home for school-age children, as preschools have been for younger children, where teachers and child care workers collaborate to ensure students' holistic development' (UNESCO 2002, 8). The success of the Swedish model is, in large part, the result of deliberate government intention to assure the integrity of early childhood systems within an expanded education department.

Substantial public investment in services and the infrastructure

Public investment is recognised as foundational to building an ECEC system that is capable of providing effective support to families and promoting children's wellbeing and development. Inadequate investment results in tensions between quality, affordability and accessibility, which Wangmann (1995) refers to as the 'trilemma'. Reminiscent of this, Colley identifies the following four interrelated issues emerging from a review of Canadian ECEC: financing; access; equity; and quality (2006, 69). Unfortunately, within this mix of policy pressures, the quality of children's experiences in ECEC is often subsumed. In response, *Starting Strong II* calls for countries to **base public funding estimates on achieving quality pedagogical goals**.

A minimum public investment in early childhood services of 1 per cent of GDP is the benchmark established by the European Commission Network on Child care (European Commission Network on Child care, 1996). Sweden is the only country, of the group reviewed, which reaches this level of investment. In recent years, the UK and New Zealand have increased their expenditure significantly; expenditure in Canada and Australia is notably lower. The UK Treasury forecasts that expenditure on ECEC services will increase from the current level of around 1% GDP (the European average) to 2.7% by 2015. This would put UK expenditure on a par with the highest spending countries in Europe (Pascal 2008).

However, the percentage target has been criticised from various quarters and *Starting Strong II* suggests an alternative approach is to consider the average investment *per child* needed to create a good quality programme. These estimates vary according to the age of the child and the length of the programme (full-day or half day). But estimates generally range from \$US8,000 - \$US12,000 per child per year for a full-day programme with higher costs associated with younger age groups (OECD, 2006).

A universal approach to access, with particular attention to children in need of special support

To date, much policy attention has been paid to increasing children's access to preschool education. Many governments are looking to establish universal access to preschool

education where this is not already available, or to increasing its availability in terms of the hours and length of time that children are entitled to attend. The UK's Effective Provision of Preschool Education (EPPE) study (Sylva et al., 2003) affirms the effectiveness of high quality preschool education in improving outcomes for children considered at risk of school failure, but it makes the point that two years of access to preschool education is much more effective than a single year preceding school.

In Sweden, preschool is available to all children between the ages of one and six (OECD 2001) and 68 per cent of all children below the age of six are enrolled in preschool (Rauch, 2007). New Zealand has recently introduced an entitlement to 20 hours per week of free early childhood education at teacher-led services for all three and four year olds (May, 2007). In the UK, three and four-year-olds are entitled to 12.5 hours a week for 33 weeks of the year and this is being extended (DfES 2003). In Australia, a number of jurisdictions offer universal access to preschool education in the year before school, but there are serious gaps in provision in a number of regions (Press 2006). The newly elected Australian government has promised 15 hours a week of preschool education for all four year old children (Rudd et al., 2007). In Canada, fewer than 20 per cent of children find a place in a regulated service in the years before school (OECD 2003 p.10).

However, attention to one or two years of preschool before the commencement of compulsory schooling can divert attention from the needs of children below preschool age. For working parents in particular, the use of unregulated, non-family care increases when the availability of formal care is limited (see for instance the experience of Canada, OECD 2003 p.66). Thus the UN interprets 'every child's right to education as beginning at birth and closely tied to the right to development'. In this way 'education' is not conceived of as 'schooling', rather it is envisaged as a community service for both children and parents (Woodhead and Moss, 2007).

The goal of universal access is not just a question of availability. It also raises questions of how to develop a system that does not result in groups of children being excluded or segregated. Hence, the first *Starting Strong* report stressed the need to give particular policy attention to children in need of special support, and the second reinforced this call with its recommendation to increase resources within universal programmes for children with diverse learning rights. This principle is upheld by the *UN General Comment No. 7* which advocates for all children to be guaranteed access to services with particular attention paid to those most vulnerable (2005). Disability, cultural and linguistic factors, poverty, and family dysfunction are among the factors that might cause families to be marginalised within, or disenfranchised from, ECEC. Yet appropriately resourced, high quality, responsive early childhood services are the very services that can directly provide, or be a platform for, the provision of the additional supports and interventions that facilitate children's successful social and educational inclusion. In relation to immigrant children, Pascal and Betram regard ECEC programmes as 'key sites for enacting national goals for social inclusion and the creation of new citizens' (2006, 1).

Despite such well documented potential, *Starting Strong I* noted that in many countries the funding provided to support families and children with additional needs was often insufficient and irregular (2001). The capacity of early childhood systems to inclusively and effectively respond to families with additional needs is affected by the base from which they start. Sweden seeks to provide all children with access to mainstream services, with extra funding allocated to enable the provision of extra individualised attention to children who require specialist support (OECD 2006). The Sure Start programme in the UK used the notion of 'progressive universalism' to build up a system of supports to children and families that in the first instance target children in disadvantaged areas. Whilst Sure Start programmes were

established in specified areas, identified because of their levels of disadvantage, these programmes were open to all families in the area in which they were located. Additional support was made available for families with additional needs (OECD 2006).

By and large, policy approaches which facilitate the inclusion of children within mainstream programmes are considered the most successful. One exception to this has been the development of culturally specific programmes for Indigenous populations. Examples of these can be found in Australia, Canada and New Zealand. Although New Zealand has separate language and cultural immersion programmes, it also works toward a bicultural mainstream ECEC sector (OECD, 2004).

A participatory approach to quality improvement and assurance

While this literature review does not canvass the considerable body of evidence concerning the impact of quality on children's development, it notes that many ECEC policy debates, and actual and mooted interventions, are based on an understanding that the quality of early education and care does make a difference to how children and families fare (see Waldfogel 2006). The quality of ECEC is a critical issue because it can serve to either mitigate or exacerbate the impact of disadvantage. While good quality early childhood programmes have positive benefits for children and families in terms of both concurrent outcomes and outcomes over time (NICHD 2002; Sylva et al. 2003) poor quality environments can lead to adverse outcomes and pose a risk to children's development (Love et al., 2002; NICHD 2002). Children at risk of not doing well at school are positively influenced by participation in good quality services but they are also particularly susceptible to the impact of poor quality (Peisner-Feinberg et al., 2000).

Thus policies and regulatory instruments to underpin the quality of service provision are recommended by both OECD reports (2001, 2006). The recommendations reflect diverse approaches to ensuring quality with the first emphasising the engagement of families and communities in determining and ensuring good quality services, and the second reinforcing the need for strong and enforceable governance, by calling for the creation of **governance structures necessary for system accountability and quality assurance** (OECD 2006). The different foci of each recommendation reflects the understanding that quality is multidimensional and involves the creation and enhancement of family and community networks; the provision of information, support and where appropriate, specialist intervention; in addition to caring and nurturing environments and learning programmes (OECD 2001).

Across countries, the policies in place to support quality vary in the extent to which they rely upon externally imposed accountability mechanisms, and the content of such mechanisms. A mixed economy of service provision tends to generate a higher degree of reliance upon external monitoring and regulation (*UN General Comment, 2005*). Such an approach is consistent with a number of studies that indicate the quality of ECEC provided by the private sector is in general lower than that of non-profit services (Phillipsen et al., 1997; Mitchell, 2002; Cleveland et al., 2007). Regulation appears to play a mediating factor in improving standards (Phillipsen et al., 1997).

At the same time, both the OECD and the *UN General Comment No. 7* caution against an over-reliance upon externally imposed, standardised criteria for quality and highlight the need for ECEC services to work with local communities, in order to create responsive and dynamic services. While clear about the need for high quality programmes, the *UN General Comment* advocates the development of community-based ECEC programmes that embrace a rights based approach and that seek to work with and empower parents. In countries such as Sweden, a strong philosophical commitment to children's rights, coupled with the

employment of highly qualified staff, leads to less reliance on externally imposed government standards to ensure quality. Hence, commentators such as Moss (2007b) point to the presence of a skilled, knowledgeable and reflective early childhood workforce as central to the creation and sustaining of ethical and respectful early childhood services.

It is important to note that within early childhood academic, policy and practitioner communities, the notion of 'quality' has been contested (see for instance, Dahlberg et al., 1999). This contestation does not downplay the focus upon children's wellbeing, but rather highlights the fact that understandings of, and approaches to, good quality early childhood services are embedded within particular cultural and political contexts. Critics of the discourse of quality in early childhood policy further claim that the concept of 'quality' is problematic because 'you have closure when the norm is attained'. They prefer to use concepts such as 'meaning-making' and 'ethical practice' in early childhood which emphasise a skilled, knowledgeable and reflective workforce able to engage with children, families and communities (Moss 2007b).

To develop with the stakeholders broad guidelines and curricular standards across ECEC services

The introduction and implementation of early childhood curriculum within prior to school services raises a number of policy issues and its focus is often contested. Key debates concerning early childhood curriculum, apart from those that focus upon content, include whether or not they should be compulsory, and to what early childhood services they should apply. Soler and Miller (2003) describe early childhood curricula as 'sites of struggle' as 'parents, teachers, researchers and politicians often have strong and conflicting views' about 'content and contexts for learning and development in early childhood' (p. 59).

Soler and Miller's description of the staged curriculum developed for England as 'concerned about *what education is for* rather than *what the experience of education might entail*' (2003, p.62, emphasis added) neatly encapsulates the tensions emerging from differing understandings of the nature and purpose of curriculum. These competing understandings might be crudely grouped as either 'instrumentalist' or 'socio-cultural' in nature. Instrumentalist constructions tend to be highly prescriptive, while socio-cultural views are regarded as more appreciative of children's agency and the experiences of children in the here and now.

The OECD in its *Country Note* for the UK expressed its concern about the downward pressure placed by the school sector on early childhood services, particularly in relation to goals for early learning. The UK curriculum for 3-5 year-olds is linked to over 60 learning goals and has been described as 'highly prescriptive' (Moss 2007a, p.9). The OECD commented that early childhood settings felt under pressure to 'resemble downward extensions of primary school' even though this approach is not considered supportive of young children's learning (2000 p. 39). The OECD (2006) favors the development of curriculum frameworks that enable responsiveness to local conditions, that are respectful of the professional judgment of teachers, and that have the capacity to incorporate new ideas, perspectives and understandings. In this respect it is important to note the emergence of a new phenomenon, the curriculum developed and promulgated from the central office of a business or corporation. For instance, ABC Learning, one of the world's largest child care providers boasts its own curriculum (ABC Developmental Learning Centres, 2007).

Alternative constructions of curriculum are less concerned with academic outcomes and more attentive to ensuring a respectful environment for children that works with their natural dispositions for learning. For instance, the *NSW Curriculum Framework* centres upon a

recognition of the primacy of children's relationships to their learning and wellbeing; New Zealand's early childhood curriculum, *Te Whariki*, 'conceptualises the child's development as a series of increasingly intricate patterns of linked experience and meaning, centred on cultural and individual purpose.' (Carr & May, 1996, cited in Soler & Miller, 2003, p.63); and the Swedish Curriculum declares that 'all preschool activity should be carried out in accordance with fundamental democratic values' (Samuelsson, 2002).

The types of ECEC services to which early childhood curriculum applies, vary considerably across, and within, nations. Typically, curriculum is more likely to apply to preschool, than to long day care (centre based or home-based). However, a shared curriculum may act as a unifying influence when it applies across a diverse sector. A number of New Zealand early childhood commentators believe that *Te Whariki*, which applies to all early childhood services in New Zealand, has resulted in a 'shared philosophical and pedagogical stance' (White, 2005). Further, Meade and Podmore (2003-2003) argue that the impact of the New Zealand early childhood curriculum in unifying care and education has also been a force in successfully preventing a 'schoolification' of the sector. *Te Whariki* became mandatory for chartered early childhood programmes in 1998 and is one of a handful of curricula that give official recognition to infants and toddlers (Meade and Podmore, 2002-2003).³

Appropriate training and working conditions for staff in all forms of provision

The quality of the care and education available to children in formal ECEC is intrinsically linked to staff. Qualifications, consistency of staff and staffing arrangements, and the relationships that staff are able to build with children, families and communities are central features of a good quality system. Yet the OECD observes that 'the professional standing of the early childhood workforce tends to remain low' (2006, p.158). Thus *Starting Strong II* reinforces the recommendation of the first report by recommending that policy aims to improve the working conditions and professional education of ECEC staff.

Specialist training in early childhood learning and development, and early childhood teacher training, have a significant and positive impact on quality, giving staff the skills and knowledge base they need to work with children and families positively and effectively and upon which they can draw to engage in ongoing reflection (Whitebrook et al., 1989; Clarke-Stewart et al., 2002). Specialised teacher training produces better outcomes for children and less qualified staff are significantly better at supporting children's learning when they work with an early childhood teacher (EPPE, 2001). The *UN General Comment* (2005) reinforces the requirement for appropriately staffed services for young children emphasising that all staff working with young children should be appropriately trained, grounded in a sound understanding, both theoretical and practical, of children's rights and development. Further, it urges the availability of specialist professional resources and support. Variations in the staffing arrangements expected for each type of early childhood setting, and indeed, differences between the early childhood sector and schools, are found in most of the countries canvassed for this review, and emanate from previous or existing divisions between education and care. These variations often enable lesser qualified (or unqualified) staff to work in child care and tend to work against the development of an integrated ECEC sector and the creation of a 'strong and equal partnership' with education.

Important policy considerations regarding staff include:

³ Others include the NSW Curriculum Framework, South Australia, Sweden

- Whether teachers or early childhood specialists are employed in early childhood programmes
- Whether early childhood teacher specialisations are valued and required
- Whether teachers in early childhood programmes have pay parity with their counterparts in the school sector.

When a teacher qualification (or its equivalent) is not required within an early childhood setting, but is within a school, then it is difficult to claim or create an equal partnership. In Australia, the UK and Canada, teacher qualifications are required for preschool programmes, but not necessarily for long day care programmes. New Zealand is implementing a major strategy to improve staff qualifications by setting targets for the employment of registered teachers in early childhood services, resulting in a minimum of 70 per cent regulated staff having an approved teaching qualification by 2012, with the remainder of staff studying for an approved teaching qualification (Mitchell and Brooking, 2007). The achievement of this goal has been supported by a range of training incentives including scholarships (Mitchell 2004). In addition, wage parity has been achieved between teachers in kindergartens and teachers in schools (Mitchell et al. 2007). The UK is looking to reform its early years workforce by improving qualifications across the early childhood sector (OECD 2006).

Another important consideration is whether the early childhood pedagogical component of teacher qualifications is valued. In Sweden, preschools are staffed by teachers with an early childhood specialisation (OECD, 2006). Canadian kindergarten teachers are not required to have special training in early childhood (OECD 2003 p.29), and Australian preschools do not necessarily require the employment of an early childhood teacher (Press 2006). Cheeseman (2007) argues that, in at least some Australian jurisdictions, early childhood policies centred on welfare and the delivery of early childhood programmes by welfare agencies, have served to further marginalise the role of early childhood teaching qualifications.

Attracting and retaining staff in early childhood programmes have been cited as difficulties in Australia (Community Services Ministers' Advisory Council, 2006), New Zealand (Mitchell et al. 2007), Canada (Expert Panel, 2007) and the UK (Pugh, 2003). Many reports cite low wages, and poor conditions, as major contributors to this problem (Expert Panel, 2007; OECD 2006). In NZ, one fifth of teachers considered their workload to be excessive, with issues such as excessive workload, and poorer working conditions more likely to arise in private centres. Nevertheless there are also grounds for optimism, with 73 per cent of early childhood educators and teachers in New Zealand rating their morale as generally high, a higher rating than teachers in primary and secondary education settings (Mitchell et al. 2007).

Systemic attention to monitoring and data collection; and a stable framework and long term agenda for research and evaluation

The need to better inform the development and evaluation of programmes relevant to infants and young children has resulted in greater attention to the collection and collation of data on early childhood programmes. The UN points to the need for comprehensive and contemporary data 'on all aspects of early childhood for the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of progress achieved, and for the assessment of the impact of policies' (2005 np).

Countries have sought to establish or enhance data sets in a number of ways including:

- the funding of longitudinal research tracing the development of large cohorts of children over time.
- the gathering and evaluation of data at the population level.
- improving existing data collection regimes, specific to early childhood programmes areas, by addressing issues such as data compatibility.

A number of countries have instituted longitudinal studies designed to assess children's health and development and the determinants of these. New Zealand's *Competent Children, Competent Learners* project, funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Education, commenced in 1993 with the original aim of examining the concurrent, short-term, and long-term impact of early childhood education experiences. The project has recently completed its seventh phase and has tracked the development of the children at ages 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14 and 16. The study 'analyses the impact of different experiences and resources on a range of competencies, and what can help narrow the gaps between children's education, (Ministry of Education (nd), 2007). Canada's *National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth* (NLSCY) began in 1994 and is tracking the development and wellbeing of Canadian children from birth to early adulthood with the aim of gathering information on the factors influencing social, emotional and behavioural development and their impact on the child's development over time (Statistics Canada, 2006). The UK's *Millennium Cohort Survey* commenced in 2001 and is following a sample of nearly 19,000 babies born between September and August 2001 (Centre for Longitudinal Studies (CLS), 2007). Australia's *Longitudinal Study of Australia's Children* (LSAC), which commenced in 2003, is gathering data on 10,000 children over at least a seven year period. The study commenced with one cohort of 5000 infants, and a second cohort of 5000 children aged 4 or 5 years (Australian Institute of Family Studies, nd; Sanson et al., 2002). Data will be collected from the children and their families from 2003-4 until 2010 and possibly beyond. It is envisaged that the outcomes from each of these studies will inform the development of policy related to children and their families.

Population level measures of young children's development are also gaining currency as a means of providing information to assess, at the community level, how well children are faring. An example of this is the Early Development Index (EDI) developed by Janus and Offord in Canada. Based upon a teacher-completed checklist that covers five developmental domains (language and cognitive skills; emotional maturity; physical health and well-being; social competence; communication skills and general knowledge) results are interpreted at suburb or postcode level. Such mapping of children's development assists in identifying socio-economic and community influences on children's development and in monitoring changes over time (Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne (RCH), 2007). Since being piloted in 1998, the EDI has been completed in a large number of communities throughout Canada. British Columbia, Ontario and Manitoba now mandate the inclusion of all kindergarten children in regular EDI measurement (Janus et al., 2007). Since 2004, an adapted version of the EDI, the *Australian Early Development Index* (AEDI), has been completed in 60 communities around Australia (RCH, 2007).

Some governments have funded research to gather data specific to ECEC, often with the aim of determining its impact on children's outcomes, and to discern which factors contribute to programmes which appear to provide the most effective support to children's development. Such studies include New Zealand's aforementioned *Competent Children, Competent Learners Project* and the UK's *EPPE Project* which commenced in 1997 and is still continuing.

As well as the examples discussed, the regular gathering of data on trends in usage, funding, and characteristics such as staffing, ownership and so forth, of early childhood services, enables the cumulative impact of policies to be assessed. In order to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of its strategic plan for Early Childhood Education, *Pathways to the Future: Nga Huarahi Arataki*, NZ established a baseline picture of the situation of NZ services 'at the beginning of a period of considerable change' (Mitchell et al. 2007 p.xi) through its *First NZCER national survey of early childhood education services 2003-2004*. However, diversity in programme type and delivery, splits and differences in responsibility between

portfolios as well as jurisdictions, has meant that in a number of countries, there are serious gaps and problems in much of the data that has been collected concerning early childhood programmes. Frequently, data are not compatible and thus not comparable, at both jurisdictional and national levels. Data on children under age three in early childhood programmes is particularly difficult to access (OECD 2006, p.176). This has been a particular problem for Australia. In December 2007, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) released a discussion paper entitled: *Measuring Learning in Australia: Concepts and directions in Early Childhood Learning* (Pink, 2007). While the paper proposes to gather information on all education and care programmes for children from birth to eight years, it defines formal learning programmes as only applying to children over 3 thus potentially exacerbating the problem identified by the OECD.

Trends, debates and tensions in early childhood policy

'The institutions we provide for children both 'shape' children and shape our understandings of them' (Petrie 2005, p.175). In turn, the nature of the institutions we provide for children is influenced by a range of social and economic considerations and related policies, not all of which are driven by a primary focus upon the interests and needs of the children themselves. It is clear that early childhood provision is in flux in many countries. This section provides a brief overview of some of the myriad influences competing, or coalescing, to shape the early childhood landscape.

In the countries reviewed, the two most common institutions for the care and education of young children outside the home, preschool and child care, have grown from differing historical roots. Preschool, with its foundations in the European kindergarten movement of the nineteenth century; and child care, strongly related to both nineteenth century philanthropy and the women's movement of the second half of the twentieth century, may still reflect distinct forms and purposes. It is only in relatively recent years that a number of countries have made progress toward breaking down dichotomies between children's education (preschool) and care (child care). Nevertheless, the nexus between the provision of ECEC and the capacity of mothers to enter the workforce remains an important policy consideration.

At the same time, the emergence of a significant research base examining the impact of ECEC upon children themselves has become an important contributor to early childhood policy debates. As more is understood about the impact of children's time in ECEC on their development and wellbeing, more attention is being paid to the question of the quality of all early childhood care and learning environments, and the nature of children's experiences within them. The accumulation of longitudinal studies on children's outcomes across a number of developmental domains, coupled with cost-benefit analyses that quantify the 'pay-off' for money spent on high quality child care, has renewed policy interest in ECEC. The framing of ECEC expenditure as an investment is now common in the policy discourse.

3.3 Conclusion

A number of common trends and debates have emerged in early childhood policy at the conceptual and programme level although resultant developments have not been uniform. In part, variations in approach to improving early childhood systems can be explained by each country's differing foundation, particularly with regard to availability and access to early childhood services. More fundamentally, differences also arise from each country's image of the child, and its understanding of the role and purpose of education, and in particular, the care and education of young children. As Moss (2007 p.7) points out, inherent in ECEC policy debates and directions is the question of 'what we think early childhood services are for?'

In countries such as Australia and the UK, the investment discourse has a tendency to construct children primarily as 'adults in the making' and the provision of ECEC services is linked to school readiness, rather than the creation of spaces for children themselves. The extent to which children are regarded and respected as a distinct social group is associated with a concern for the experiences of children themselves, and a consciousness of children's rights. Kagan and Hallmark (2001) observe that 'Sweden operationalises its national values by providing a splendid array of high-quality services undergirded by a clear and widely held vision of childhood' (p.6). Arguably, NZ's close attention to children's rights in its strategic plan for an improved and expanded ECEC sector, signals a similar regard for children.

Finally, the impact of neo-liberal economics has opened up early childhood services to the private for-profit and global corporate sector in a way which is profoundly changing the early childhood policy and provision (Duncan, 2007; Penn, 2007; Woodrow and Press, 2007). As Duncan (2007) notes, neoliberal discourses position education as 'a private good that should be paid for by the individual' and assert that 'choice and competition.... ensure efficiency and the maximum use of resources' (p.321). Yet, the arguments for comprehensive ECEC systems rest in an understanding of early childhood education as a public good. For instance, the final recommendation of *Starting Strong II* asks governments to aspire to ECEC systems that support broad learning, participation and democracy (OECD 2006). In Australia, for-profit (and increasingly corporate) provision dominates the provision of long day care. The extent to which governments can achieve social and educational objectives via market based child care is canvassed in more detail in the next section.

4 Mixed markets in children's services

4.1 Market mechanisms in social policy

The issue of 'mixed markets' is critical to a strategic assessment of the children's services industry in Australia. In this country, as in the UK, Canada and USA, centre-based child care is provided by both for-profit and non-profit providers. As discussed in Section 1, most care and education in Australia is provided by State government or non-profit providers. It is only in the long day care sector that for-profit providers predominate, accounting for some 73 per cent of services across the country (SCRGSP, 2008). There are significant differences between the States: Queensland has the highest proportion of for-profit care (83 per cent) and Tasmania the lowest (29 per cent). The national figure is broadly similar to the proportion of for-profit child care in the USA and UK. The exceptional feature of the Australian market is its high level of concentration in the hands of a single owner. While there are no official figures, a single company is reported to own up to twenty-five per cent of all Australian long day care places. This represents a level of concentration of child care centre ownership unparalleled in other countries. In the UK, the largest 40 providers together own about 10 per cent of all places (Pricewaterhouse Coopers 2007; Cohen and Harker 2006). In the USA national chains *collectively* own 13 per cent of all centres (Sosinsky et al. 2007).

Market strategies in early childhood are closely associated with the English-speaking liberal market economies. Although several European countries have long histories of *private* (i.e. non-state) involvement in community services, these services are generally owned by co-operatives, religious groups and similar not-for-profit bodies. The only Continental European country to have made a major foray into market provision of ECEC is the Netherlands. The systems regarded as being of the highest quality internationally (Sweden and Denmark) are almost entirely based on public provision; there is some private, non-profit provision, but for-profits play a negligible role. European governments that provide educationally-oriented services for preschool aged children rely overwhelmingly upon public (government) and private non-profit services.

The market model in early childhood has attracted considerable international attention in recent years. For example, in 2006, the journal *Children in Europe* devoted a special issue to the theme, 'Managing the Mix: Public and Private Sectors in Early Childhood Services'. A year later, researchers at the University of East London formed the Centre for the Mixed Economy in Child care:

- To generate greater knowledge about early childhood education and care provision in countries which employ mixed economies of welfare and education services.
- To explore the contribution to young children's well being within mixed economies of child care.
- To develop an international and multi-disciplinary approach to exploring mixed economies of child care.

4.2 Markets in human services

The appeal of markets in human services is part of a broader suite of changes in state-society relations, particularly in English-speaking countries. Similar developments have occurred in other human services including aged care provision, hospitals, disability services and prisons.

In considering the impact of the mixed market on Australian children's services, it is worth examining the reasons for the switch from exclusive support of non-profit providers (the bipartisan position in Australia until the early 1990s) to support for a mixed market. Private

providers played a role in child care provision in Australia from the post-war period onwards. Little is known about these services, but it seems that most were owner-operated businesses, sometimes run by women who had trained as early childhood teachers, sometimes set up by individuals who simply recognised a business opportunity and/or a chance to meet community needs. As noted above, the *Child care Act 1972*, introduced by a Coalition government, explicitly precluded private firms from receiving government subsidies. This aspect of the legislation was completely uncontroversial and no explicit justification was offered (Brennan 1998). The implicit assumption appears to have been that early childhood services (like schools) were 'public goods'.

As pressure to expand the child care programme grew during the 1980s, the Commonwealth looked for ways to expand service provision with minimal cost to itself. Not surprisingly, the private sector was an obvious part of the solution. At the time, there were several hundred small, private for-profit providers whose users were not eligible for fee subsidies. Extending Commonwealth subsidies to the users of these services enabled governments to expand the number of families in receipt of Commonwealth assistance at a rapid rate, and with no capital outlay. Further, the risks associated with capital investment were transferred to the private sector. The emergence of commercial providers as a component of the Children' Services programme took some time to emerge fully and was closely linked with the shift from supply-side to demand-side subsidies.

- 1991: fee subsidies extended to users of for-profit long day care
- 1997: operational subsidies withdrawn from most non-profit long day care centres
- 2000: introduction of expanded child care assistance (renamed Child care Benefit)
- 2004: introduction of Child care Tax Rebate
- 2006: capital subsidies available to long day care centres (non-profit and for-profit) in limited circumstances
- 2008: extension of Child care Tax Rebate

Although the desire to limit Commonwealth expenditure (especially capital expenditure) was an important element of the shift towards the market in child care provision, it was by no means the only factor. Additional, complementary, reasons for the change in policy included:

- (i) **Equity:** extending fee subsidies to families in like circumstances using any type of approved service, was seen as an equity, or fairness, measure.
- (ii) **Efficiency:** for-profit providers were expected to deliver services at a lower cost than the non-profits, driving prices down across the board.
- (iii) **Resisting the push to higher wages and qualifications:** critics of the non-profit sector in the 1980s saw the push for higher quality standards and regulations as evidence of 'creeping credentialism' which would be eliminated by the discipline of the market. The introduction of Commonwealth accreditation, combined with State regulations, was seen as ensuring that acceptable quality standards would be maintained.

Since the early 1990s, the private sector has been the main engine of growth in Australian long day care. In 1997, the Coalition government ended operational and capital works subsidies to community-based centres, resulting in some closures and bringing growth of this form of care almost to a standstill. (One of the ironies of the 'choice' philosophy behind markets is that, by their nature, markets cannot deliver the access to non-profit, community-based care that is highly valued by many parents.) Private providers now account for almost three-quarters of all long day care. In some states, a single corporation owns and controls up

to half of these places while independent, owner-operated services own most of the remainder. Long day care has grown rapidly, in response to market imperatives, rather than as the result of careful planning for the needs of parents and children. Access is uneven across the States and Territories.

In other jurisdictions, particularly the UK, the market-oriented approach has been seen as a way of extending parental choice. This argument did not play a large part in the Australian debate, but should be acknowledged as an important element of the pro-market philosophy.

The appeal of markets can be summed up as follows: '[markets] compel producers to serve the public interest by providing goods and services that are efficiently produced, of reasonable quality, and at prices that are close to costs' (Cleveland 2008). Thus an attractive suite of results was anticipated as a result of the shift to market provision:

- Rapid expansion of places
- Increased parental choice
- Lower costs
- Higher quality
- Greater diversity of provision
- Encouragement of small business
- Greater efficiency⁴

Most markets in ECEC are not 'pure markets' comprised of consumers and suppliers. Typically, governments intervene to set and enforce quality standards and, sometimes, to regulate entry into the market and to subsidise supply and/or demand. Governments sometimes subsidise services directly (supply side subsidies) or indirectly through fee subsidies to consumers (demand side) resulting in 'quasi-markets' or 'managed markets' (Whitty, Power and Halpin 1998; Davidson 2007).

The application of market principles to children's services is controversial. Canadian economist Gordon Cleveland points to two sets of arguments that illustrate why markets in children's services may fail to meet broad public policy objectives. These are (i) public interest and (ii) information asymmetries.

With regard to the former, Cleveland notes that 'for most ... goods and services sold in the market, the public interest is well served if consumers get the quality and amount of the good they can afford (no matter what that quality and amount are) as long as there is competition amongst suppliers. However, for early childhood education and care ... both the quality of the service and the amount traded are of public interest ...' In other words, the public interest is not served if families cannot afford (or do not choose to buy) services of high quality. This is closely related to the second issue, information asymmetry.

A well functioning market requires certain conditions:

- Information about suppliers is available to consumers at low cost
- Consumers can assess quality of what they might purchase as well as available alternatives
- The costs of changing supplier are low
- Suppliers are in a reasonably competitive market.

⁴ Economies of scale are sometimes described as a benefit of markets, but not included here, since economies of scale can also be achieved by large, non-profit providers.

According to Land and Himmelweit, writing about the UK, 'None of these conditions apply fully in the market for child care' (2008). Consumers (assuming here that parents, rather than children, are the 'consumers' of child care) do not have ready access to information about alternative suppliers; it is difficult for most parents to make accurate judgments about quality; and the costs of changing supplier (i.e. moving one's child from service to service) are generally very high since, at the very least, they involve disrupting the child's relationships with staff and peers. In any case, scarcity of provision means that few parents are in a position to choose between different 'products', each of which can meet their needs.

The clearest evidence about parents' inability to assess quality comes from the Cost Quality and Child Outcomes Study (CQCOS) conducted in the USA. Researchers used the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) and the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS) to measure the quality of care in toddler and preschool settings in 400 centres across four states. Parents were asked to complete a parent-friendly questionnaire about exactly the same items. In comparison with the researchers, parents gave significantly higher scores. Typically, professional scores averaged out at 3 or 4 (mediocre) while parents scored the same items as 5 or 6 (good to very good quality). Parents had difficulty identifying poor quality practices in child care centres (Cryer and Burchinal 1997).

Further analysis of the CQCOS data showed that if an item was assessed as 4.1 (mediocre) or above by researchers using the ECERS or ITERS scales, parents would, on average, give the same item a score of 7 on the same scale. In other words, parents were unable to distinguish gradations of quality (Mocan 2001).

We should not be surprised that parents are not accurate assessors of the quality of early education and care. Most only purchase early learning services a few times in their lives, they generally observe such settings for only short periods of time, and their presence may make a difference to the behaviour of staff. Further, since few parents (and, indeed, few policy makers) have the opportunity to experience high quality child care, they may find it difficult to 'read' what they are observing. Once parents have committed themselves to a particular child care setting they may find it difficult to acknowledge (even to themselves) that the quality is not good.

4.3 Quality

Given Australia's mixed market in children's services, the issue of quality in for-profit care is of paramount importance. In this section, we review the evidence from major studies conducted in the USA, Canada and UK as well as smaller scale findings from Australian research. Australian research capacity is growing rapidly and exciting projects are underway, notably the Child care Choices project conducted by a consortium of researchers based in New South Wales. This research is providing much needed information about the experiences of Australian families using child care. It cannot be used, however, to make claims about the relative merits of for-profit and non-profit care since it was not designed to do this (Bowes et al. 2004). Thus, just as Australian policy-makers and politicians have drawn on international evidence to make claims about the benefits of preschool education so too most (though not all) of the evidence about quality within mixed markets comes from other countries. In considering the relevance of international research, differences between countries in terms of standards and regulatory environments need to be taken into account. For example, Australian services not only have to comply with State regulations, they must participate in the Australian government's quality assurance programme in order to be eligible for approval for Child care Benefit. US research into the quality of for-profit and non-profit centres divides these two broad categories into four subsectors: for-profit independents; for-profit chains; non-profit church centres and non-profit independents. The study was conducted by

psychologists from Yale University (including Edward Zigler, after whom the Zigler Center in Child Development and Social Policy at Yale University is named.) The study involved secondary analysis of data from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Study of Early Child care and Youth Development (NICHD SECCYD), a 'large scale, comprehensive, prospective longitudinal study of the effects of early child care on children's development' (Sosinsky et al 2007, 394).

In analysing the data, the researchers asked three questions:

Do staffing quality indicators (wages and turnover), structural quality characteristics (child/staff ratios, caregiver qualifications and professionalism), and process quality (observed positive care-giving) differ by a centre's for-profit or non-profit status?

Do staffing, structural, and process quality characteristics differ by subsector, controlling for family income and risk?

Does the subsector have an association with quality over and above family characteristics and the centre's staff and structural quality?

The study supported previous US research showing that care provided by non-profits is generally higher than that provided by for-profit services. Although differences were not found on every indicator of quality, for-profit chains were *often* lower in quality and *never* highest in quality (although occasionally they were the *same*). Multiple regression analyses were conducted to pinpoint causation and to ensure that confounding factors (e.g. differences in the characteristics of families using different types of centres) did not explain observed differences. While acknowledging that some for-profit chains (e.g. Bright Horizons) provided high quality care, they noted that this was not the general pattern. In seeking to explain this, the authors speculated that 'the comparatively lower wages, higher turnover, lower levels of educational preparation and professional commitment, and larger numbers of children per adult all found in for-profit chains may combine to have a dampening effect on caregivers' positive interactions with children' (Sosinsky et al. 2007, 406).

In considering appropriate public policy responses to their findings, the researchers confirmed that parents are not particularly good at judging the quality of care and that they are likely to be influenced by other factors such as cost. Accordingly, they argued, strong regulation is required along with incentives for higher quality provision and consumer education. Without such measures, 'not only will parents' inability to reliably distinguish high- and low-quality child care lead to bad choices for their children, it may affect the quality available in the marketplace'. If parents choose lower cost services rather than those providing excellent care, high-quality providers may exit the market leaving only those that provide 'mediocre quality at best' (Sosinsky 2007, 409; see also Mocan 2001).

Canadian researchers have analysed several large data-sets which enable them to make quantitative, as well as qualitative, assessments. Cleveland et al. (2007) began with the knowledge (from previous research) that there are significant differences, on average, in quality between for-profit and non-profit centres. They sought to move beyond these broad stereotypes and to find out under what conditions and circumstances these differences held. They noted that differences do not hold true at the individual level (i.e. not every non-profit is better than every for-profit) and that the distributions of quality between sectors overlap. Thus, some for-profit centres may be of higher quality than some non-profit centres. Moreover, as they noted, straight comparisons might not be fair if, for example, commercial centres were aiming to provide a 'good enough' rather than a particularly high quality service. These hypotheses, and others, were explored in a series of analyses using different data sets.

The 'You Bet I Care!' data set contains information from six Canadian provinces and one territory. It is structured in such a way that many different kinds of analysis can be performed. The researchers initially discovered fairly large differences in quality between the sectors. Separating their data into 'thick' markets (where there is a relatively high geographical concentration of children of the right age to use child care) and 'thin' markets (where there is a relatively small number) they discovered that there are especially large advantages for non-profits in thick markets. In thin markets, non-profit centres typically produced lower quality services than they did in thick markets perhaps because there is no opportunity to produce and sell a differentiated product (Cleveland et al. 2007, 15).

Doherty, Friendly and Forer (2002), using the same data, identified two possible explanations for observed differences between the sectors: firstly, that commercial centres might have access to fewer resources (government subsidies, donations etc) and secondly, that they might have different goals and organisation structures. They found that, *even controlling for variable inputs and resources*, there were strong differences between the sectors. Thus, non-profit status in itself is a predictor of higher quality, when inputs are held constant.

Comparisons between the for-profit and non-profit have not been a major feature of UK research to date, but incidental findings on this issue have emerged from some of the large evaluations conducted in recent years. Until recently, many British analysts have grouped non-government providers into a category of 'private, voluntary and independent' (PVI), blurring the distinction between for-profit and not for-profit. Some indications about differences *within* the PVI sector have emerged from recent evaluations of the Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiative and the EPPE project.

Researchers from Oxford University, evaluating the Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiative, reported that 'maintained' nurseries (i.e. those funded by local authorities and not run for profit) had the highest level of quality, offering 'the most stimulating environment for children's developing language and educational abilities, as well as the highest quality physical environment'. Several reasons were suggested for this. Firstly, maintained centres employ more highly qualified staff than do those in the private or voluntary sector or those run as joint initiatives (Mathers and Sylva 2007, 53-54). Second, maintained nurseries were seen to have advantages in terms of their access to 'educational infrastructure' e.g. professional help in supporting children with special needs. Finally, differences in pay and working conditions were suggested as an explanation for the higher quality in the maintained sector (Mathers and Sylva 2007, 55).

Similar findings emerged from the Effective Provision of Preschool Education (EPPE) project. The Final Report from the EPPE researchers, discussing the outcomes for children on the Early Childhood Environments Rating Scale (ECERS) noted that, while children attending private day nurseries performed better than those serviced by playgroups, they were generally rated lower than children in the five other educational or state sector service (nursery schools and integrated centres) types.

Another finding was that children attending centres whose auspice was within the educational or state sector had higher scores than those in the voluntary or private sectors (Sylva et al 2004, 16).

The EPPE project also found that integrated settings produced better outcomes for children than services built exclusively around child care:

... children who attended local authority day nurseries and private day nurseries show poorer behavioural outcomes than those who attended other forms of provision. Moreover children who attended integrated provision or nursery classes tended to make greater gains in social/behavioural development during the preschool period. Nonetheless, there was significant variation in effectiveness on social/behavioural gains within each type of provision; thus differences between individual preschool centres and differences between types of provision are both important⁵ (Sylva et al. 2004, 31).

These findings, as the EPPE team noted, were similar to those found by the UK Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED) which reported on variations in the quality of preschool provision across sectors. Similar results were found in a study using ECERS in 44 preschool centres in London (Lera, Owen and Moss 1996).

This finding was also expanded upon in a report of quality in the Millennium Cohort Study:

Local Education Authority (LEA) maintained status was linked to higher quality provision in almost all dimensions measured, with the exception of provision for personal care routines. Maintained settings offered higher quality interactions, provision for children's developing language and reasoning skills, and higher curricular quality for literacy, maths, science and diversity. The relationships with 'interactions' and 'maths' were only apparent when staff qualifications were removed from the regression model. This suggests that staff qualification may be one of the main factors driving the higher quality achieved by the maintained sector in these areas (Mathers, Sylva and Joshi 2007, 8).

How relevant are these findings to Australian conditions? There are no large-scale systematic, Australian studies that allow us to test these finding in the local context. However, the small-scale studies conducted in Australia are consistent with international research. In 2006, the Australia Institute conducted a mail-out survey of staff working in long day care across Australia with the aim of eliciting staff perceptions about the quality of care in the centres in which they work. The Institute drew a random, stratified sample reflecting the proportion of long day care centres between the States and the approximate balance between metropolitan and regional locations in each State. The sample matched the distribution of service types (community-based, independent private and corporate chain) across Australia (Rush 2006, 24). The response rate to the survey was 15 per cent, which is considered relatively low. However, at least one valid response was received from a staff member at 45 per cent of the centres to which questionnaires were sent which adds a measure of confidence. Nevertheless, it is appropriate to regard the findings of the Australia Institute survey as indicative rather than conclusive.

The survey confirmed the widely held view that there is great diversity in the quality of care provided in Australian long day care settings. Some staff from all three service types reported that their centre provided high quality care. In aggregate terms, there were clear trends in staff perceptions of quality. On a number of key measures, the perceptions of staff employed in community-based centres and the perceptions of staff working in independently owned private services clustered together at the higher quality end of the spectrum. Staff working in

⁵ The study also noted that proportionately more of the children in local authority day nurseries and private day nurseries started at their preschool centre before 2 years of age.

corporate chains reported the most concerns and the least confidence in the quality of the care provided at their workplace.

Another Australian study comparing the performance of for-profit and community-based long day care is the *Review of the Early Childhood Teachers Interim Policy* (Purcal and Fisher 2003). This assessed a New South Wales policy introduced to deal with an apparent shortage of qualified early childhood teachers (ECTs) in New South Wales. Regulations in that state require an ECT to be employed in services licensed for more than twenty-nine children. The interim policy allowed services, in particular circumstances, to appoint a person studying towards an ECT degree or willing to enrol in such a course in lieu of an ECT, as an interim measure. The research showed that the interim policy, intended as a short term measure, was being used by some providers to circumvent the regulation. Contrary to Departmental requirements, some providers abandoned their recruitment efforts once an interim approval was granted. In other cases, interim approvals were granted to new services, or to enable services to increase child numbers – even though this was contrary to the intent of the policy.

Privately-owned services were highly over-represented among services with interim approvals. Such services represented 52 per cent of all those requiring ECTs, but 79.4 per cent of those with interim approvals. Of the 176 interim approvals given at the time, more than 84 per cent were held by private licensees. One company, which owned 4 per cent of the centres requiring ECTs at the time, held 17.6 per cent of the interim approvals (Fisher and Purcal 2003).

4.4 Staffing

The availability of suitably qualified staff willing to work in long day care centres will be a major issue for the Commonwealth and State governments as they seek to extend and expand high quality early childhood services. International evidence suggests that for-profit providers employ younger, less-qualified staff than do non-profit services, that these staff have higher turnover rates and that their pay and conditions are poorer.

New Zealand research shows that for-profit centres generally employ staff with lower educational qualifications than non-profit services. Compared with community-based child care services, for-profit services:

- Employed less qualified staff
- Held less frequent staff meetings
- Had only the minimum annual leave entitlement
- Had higher rates of teacher turnover
- Staff described workload as excessive
- Staff less likely to regard selves as part of decision-making team in all areas (policy and pedagogy) (Mitchell, 2002; Mitchell & Brooking, 2007)

A Canadian survey of staff in day care centres found that the extent of staff qualifications in 1998 varied widely across the provinces (Doherty et al., 2000a: 37). However, staff in not-for-profit centres reported higher levels of training than those working in for-profit centres (Doherty et al., 2000a: 38). There are shortages of trained staff in every jurisdiction in Canada. This has forced provincial/territorial governments to grant exemptions to individual programmes so that they can continue to operate without trained staff. All provinces/territories are attempting to develop initiatives to deal with these shortages. Increased funding is not one of the options currently being contemplated.

4.5 Affordability and escalating prices

The issue of affordability is an important one in the current debate about extending services on a universal basis. This is especially the case as children from disadvantaged backgrounds use child care and preschool services less frequently than their peers. As demonstrated in section 2.4, low family income, Indigenous and CALD status, geographic location and disability all affect the likelihood of children attending early childhood services.

We have not been able to identify international research on mixed markets that specifically examines the issue of affordability and escalating prices. In Australia, publicly available Commonwealth data on the costs of child care are minimal. They tend to show similar costs (fees) between the sectors. There are two issues here, however, that need to be kept separate:

- Affordability of services to parents
- Value for money (the connection between fees charged and cost components).

Recently, for example, some providers have been criticised for fee rises coinciding with the increase in the CCTR. There is obvious potential, in a scheme such as the CCTR, for profiteering. More needs to be known about the reasons for the rise in prices. Are increased fees the result of increases wages, enhanced conditions and/or the employment of more highly qualified staff, for example, or are they due to business pressures and/or the desire to increase the surplus (in non-profit settings) or profit (in for-profits)? Without such information, it is difficult for governments to know whether they are getting value for money.

4.6 Free preschool in private centres

Both New Zealand and the UK have experienced difficulty in delivering 'free' preschool to parents through privately-owned centres. Private providers resisted this, arguing that government compensation was inadequate. Currently, around 70 per cent of New Zealand's private providers offer free preschool, but not necessarily the full twenty hours which the government aimed to deliver. ABC Learning Centres have chosen not to deliver government-funded 'free' preschool education to New Zealand parents (Mitchell, 2008).

The UK has experienced problems in delivering free preschool. A survey in 2005 showed that over a third of parents were paying for 'free' early education (Bryson, Kazimirski and Southwood, 2006). Despite the availability of 12.5 hours per week of free preschool, more than a quarter of families who were using less than their full quota reported that they still paid a fee (Butt et al., 2007: 81). Some providers argued that government funding was insufficient to cover the cost of 12.5 hours of preschool and so they needed to top-up the fee or only offer the 12.5 hours as part of a larger package. In response to this situation, a new Code of Practice was introduced in 2006 mandating that parents should not be charged in any way for the free preschool entitlement. Despite the Code of Practice, anecdotal reports suggest that parents continue to be charged for their free entitlement (Hill, 2008). Quebec similarly introduced new legislation after finding some parents were charged additional amounts, above the \$7 daily fee for ECEC services.

4.7 Conclusion

The mixed market is an important, ongoing feature of the Australian ECEC industry and is crucial to this strategic assessment. International evidence and the small number of studies conducted in Australia to date suggest that service quality may be lower in for-profit than in non-profit services. However, such research needs to be treated with caution. Services of high quality can be found in *all* sectors in Australia and, given the rapidly changing regulatory environment, further research is needed to test the relevance of international studies and to

extend the limited amount of research that has already been done. The purpose of such research should not be to pit one sector against another, but rather to shed light on the factors that contribute to the most positive outcomes for children, families and communities.

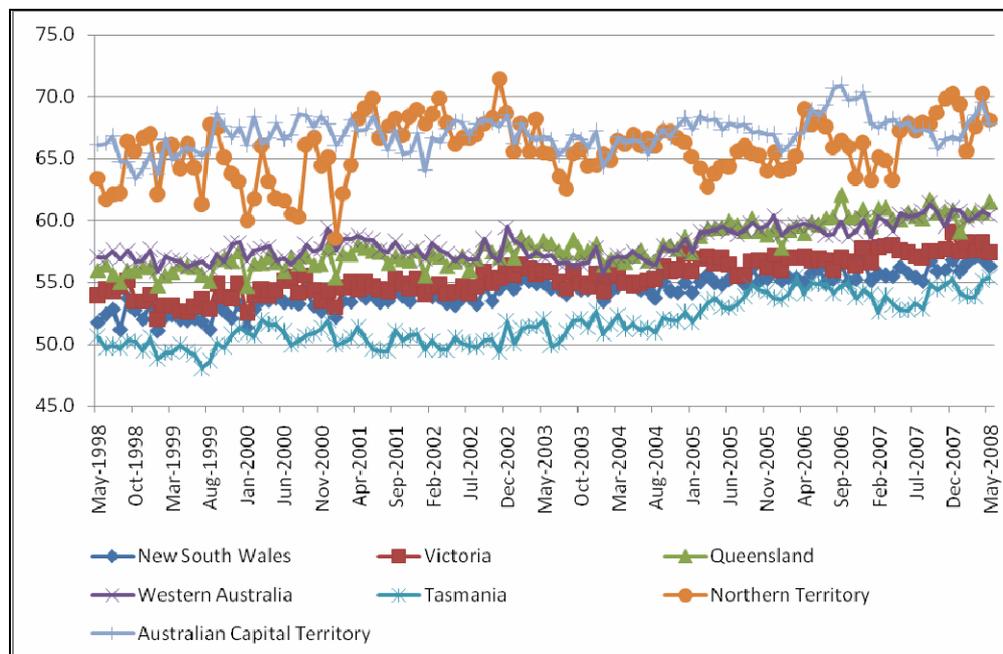
Review and analysis of supply and demand data

One of the factors currently limiting child and family-focused decision making around early childhood services is the paucity of rich, accurate data on supply and demand. In this section we briefly review the strengths and limitations of existing sources and outline the need for richer, more fine-grained information about supply and demand.

As outlined in earlier sections of this report, an increasing proportion of Australian families make use of child care. The proportion of 0-4 year old children using formal child care has grown from 24 per cent in March 1996 to 35 per cent in June 2005 (ABS, 2006: 44). Over this time period, women's overall labour force participation has increased from 54 per cent in March 1996 to 57 per cent in June 2005. (The current rate is 58.4 per cent) (ABS, 2008a). Almost half the mothers of children aged 0-4 years are in paid employment (Davidoff, 2007).

The female labour force participation rate varies across Australia: it is lowest in Tasmania (55.4 per cent) and highest in Northern Territory (68.1 per cent) as shown in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1: Female Labour Force Participation Rate, Original, per cent



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2008) catalogue 6291.0.55.001.

Despite the growth of women's labour force participation since the 1960s, Australian mothers have lower rates of labour force participation than their counterparts in many similar countries. Women in the UK, USA, Germany, France, and Canada all have higher levels of labour force participation. Jaumotte argues that the determinants of women's labour market participation include the availability of paid parental leave, flexibility of working-time arrangements, the taxation second earners, child care subsidies and child benefits. Australia ranks seventeenth out of the twenty OECD countries in its support for working mothers (Jaumotte 2004).

Parental labour force participation rates have a complex relation to the demand for early childhood services. Parents use many combinations of care and education arrangements for their children depending on their family needs (Willer, et al., 1991, SCRGSP, 2008). Parents using Commonwealth supported children's services overwhelmingly cite 'work-related'

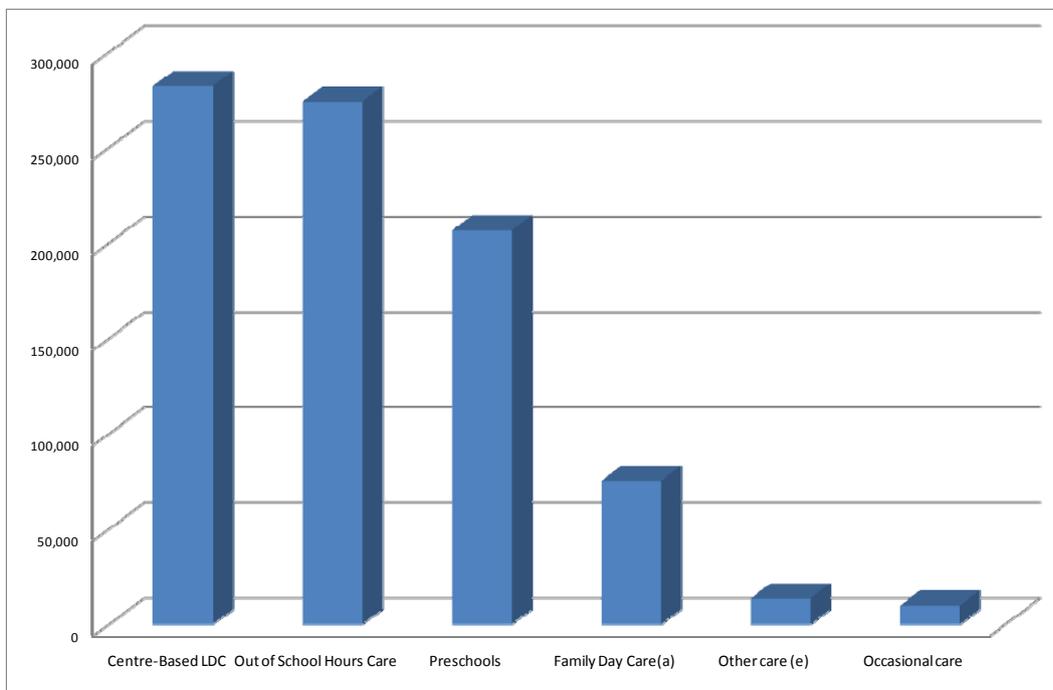
reasons as their major reason. Work-related reasons were cited as the primary reason for using care by 78 per cent of those with children in long day care, 80 per cent of family day care users and 93 per cent of parents of children in outside school hours care (DEEWR, 2008a). Parents combine formal services with informal care being provided by parents, relatives (especially grandparents), friends or neighbours. Use of informal care has been declining in recent years, perhaps reflecting the growing participation of older women (some of whom are grandparents) in the labour force.

From an economic perspective, demand and supply and the interrelationships between them are critical elements of the market for early childhood services (Willer, et al., 1991, Kalb and Lee, 2007). Supply is reflected in the quantity and characteristics of services that providers offer at a given price.

5.1 The supply of children's services

The total number of all funded places, both Commonwealth and State or Territory, in 2006 was 861,434 Australia wide (SCRGSP, 2006).

Figure 5.2: Supply of Children's Services by Type (2006)

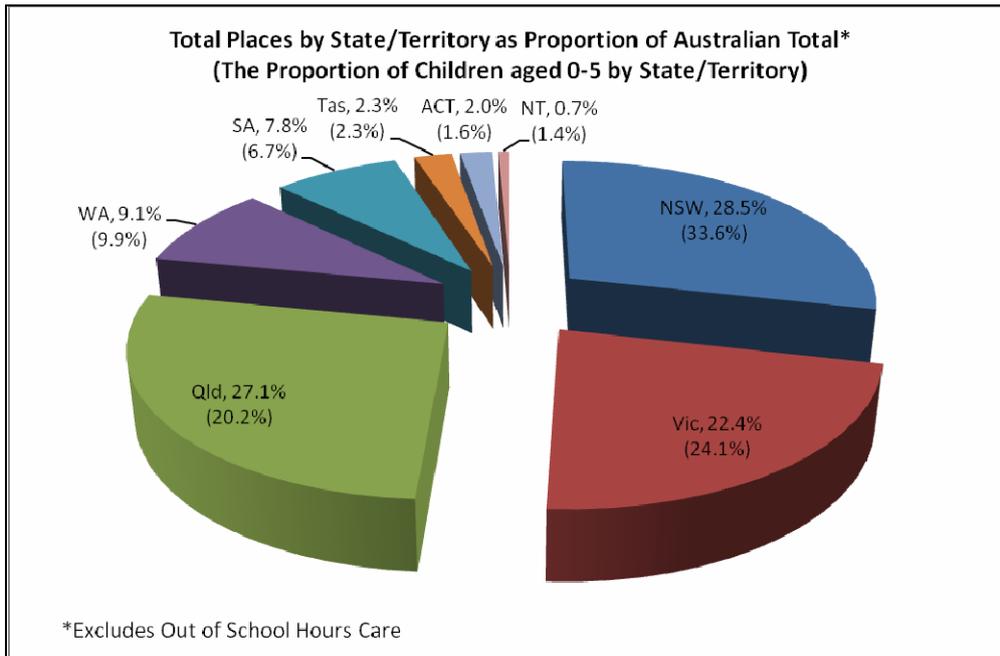


Source: SCRGSP, 2008

Approximately 92 per cent of children using long day care are under 5 years of age (DEEWR, 2008a) while 84 per cent of children attending out of school hours services are aged 6 and over (PC, 2008).

In terms of geographical distribution of available children's services, the States of New South Wales and Queensland have both around 27 per cent of available places, followed by Victoria at 22 per cent of the total.

Figure 5.3: Total Available Places by Geographical Location (2006)

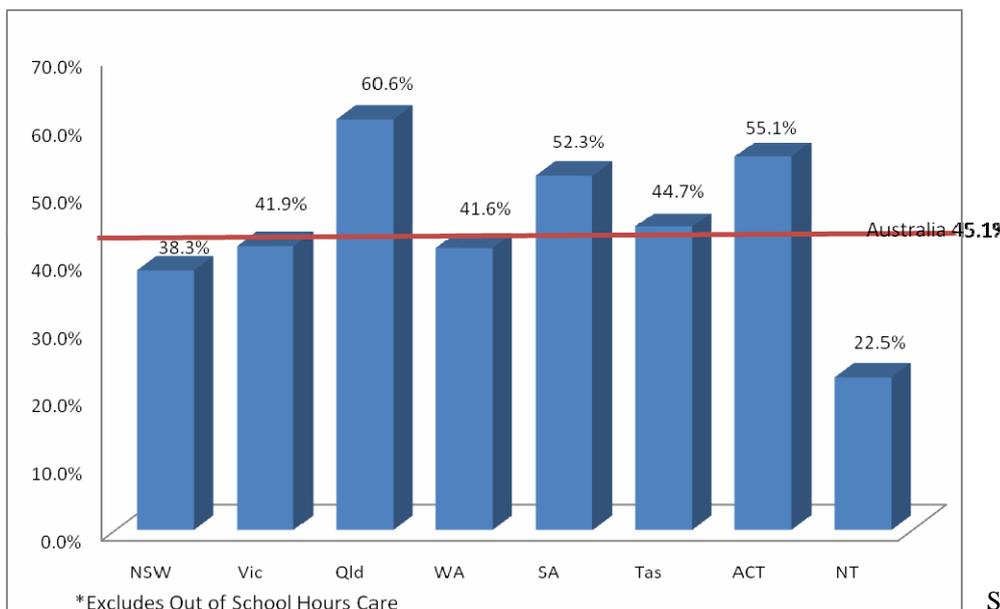


Source: SCRGSP, 2008

The proportion of available places as a proportion of the number of children, for children aged 0 to 5 years differs by geographical region, from 22.5 per cent in the Northern Territory to as high as 60.6 per cent in Queensland with the Australian proportion as 45.1 per cent (SCRGSP, 2008).

A comparison of the distribution of funded ECEC places across Australia and the proportion of children resident in each State shows something of a mismatch. For example, while 20.2 per cent of Australia's 0 to 5 year old children live in Queensland, that State has 27.1 per cent of the places (excluding out of school hours care).

Figure 5.4: Total Number of Available Places as a Proportion of the Number of Children aged 0-5 Years

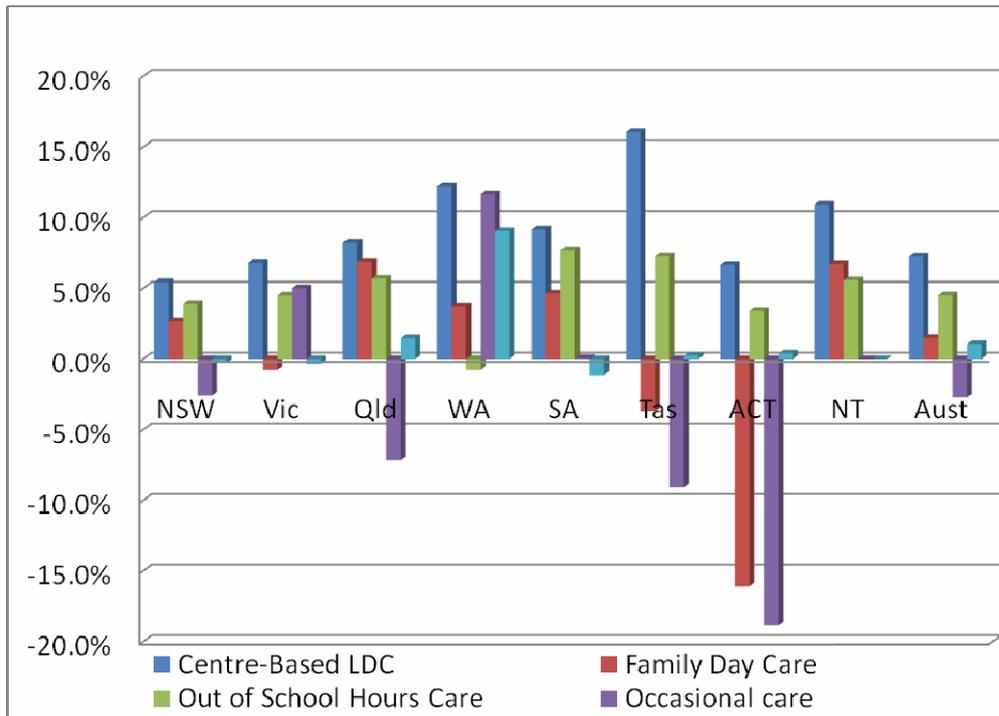


Source: SCRGSP, 2008

Over the past four years, total available places have been increasing on an annual basis by 3.7 per cent across Australia, with Western Australia, Northern Territory and Queensland increasing at faster than average rates (6.5 per cent, 6.2 per cent and 4.9 per cent annually). These increases have been driven predominantly by the growth of long day care, followed by out of school hours care. The annual average rate of growth of these two sectors over a five year period was 7.3 per cent and 4.5 per cent respectively. Other service types have declined during that period, with variations between the States and Territories. In examining these increases the Commonwealth's removal (in July 2006) of the previously existing limit on outside school hours care and family day care places should be noted.

Appendix B provides greater detail of supply data by region, funding source, and over time.

Figure 5.5: Four year annual average change (%) by type and geographical location



Source: SCRGSP 2002, 2008

5.2 Demand for children's services

Demand is a measure of the quantity and characteristics of the services that parents buy at a given price. The other determinants of demand are the number and ages of children and the number of mothers who are employed outside the home. Other demand factors are marital status, family income, number of children in the family, parents' career goals and opportunities, whether relatives live nearby, educational goals for children, types of care available in the community and how accessible or affordable a potential option might be.

Demand for children's services can be measured in several ways. This can be by determining the number of available places, where the full time equivalent place is treated as a unit of service. Alternatively, demand can be determined by the number of children that are accessing the different services by age and level of usage. Both methods will be presented below.

The first measure of demand for child care that will be used is by taking the utilisation rate and multiplying it by the number of available places. The utilisation rate is available for long day care centres and family day care. It is calculated as the total child hours paid for as a

percentage of total available hours (SCRGSP, 2008, DEEWR, 2008a). The national utilisation rate for centre-based long day care in 2006 was 73.9 per cent. This measure was used by Treasury in 2007. Although accurate as a measure of aggregate demand, utilisation rates are a blunt measure which can give a misleading impression of 'slack' in the system. It could be, for example, that the unused hours in a child care service are hours in the early morning and late afternoon. Such hours cannot readily be sold to parents, especially given Australian parents' preference for relatively short hours of care. Long day care centres are obliged to offer these hours, however, as a condition of approval for Child care Benefit. (And it is important that these hours be available for families that need them, even if centres are not full to capacity at the beginning and end of the day.)

Table 5.1: Commonwealth and State/Territory Government Funded Children's Services (2006)

	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>Aust</i>
Centre-Based LDC places available	103,229	54,768	75,782	21,977	14,063	4,271	5,272	2,863	282,225
Utilisation rate (%)	78.2	70.1	71.2	69.8	72.0	72.4	77.1	75.9	73.9
Family Day Care(a)	24,830	16,194	16,204	5,484	6,364	2,732	2,160	1,170	75,138
Utilisation rate (%)	63.2	61.2	64.8	60.3	74.9	64.6	52.0	56.3	63.3
Demand Determined by Total Available * Utilisation Rate									
Centre-Based LDC	80,735	38,370	53,949	15,349	10,124	3,092	4,063	2,172	208,536
Family Day Care(a)	15,688	9,917	10,495	3,309	4,767	1,765	1,124	658	47,577
Total Demand of LDC and FDC	96,423	48,288	64,445	18,658	14,891	4,857	5,186	2,830	256,113
Current Vacant or available places									
Centre-Based LDC	22,494	16,398	21,833	6,628	3,939	1,179	1,209	691	73,689
Family Day Care	9,142	6,277	5,709	2,175	1,597	967	1,036	512	27,561

Source: SCRGSP (2008)

Another method of presenting demand for children's services is to examine the proportion of children who are using these services.

According to the 2006 Australian Government Census of Child care Services (DEEWR, 2008a), the estimated number of children attending long day care was 420,110, with 80 per cent of the children attending for less than 30 hours a week. As at May 2006 (time of the Census), 5 per cent and 23 per cent of children in long day care centres and family day care respectively attended school.

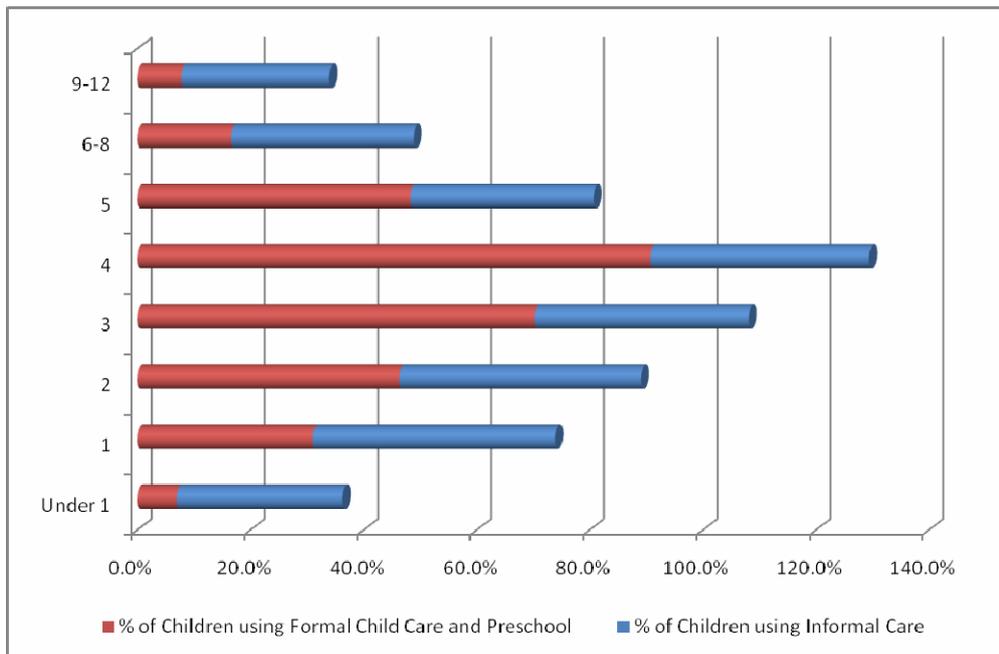
Table 5.2: Children by service type for the 2002, 2004, and 2006 Australian Government Census of Child care Services (DEEWR, 2008a)

	2002		2004		2006	
	Est. No.	%	Est. No.	%	Est. No.	%
Long day care	367,140	50	383,020	51	420,110	52
Family day care	95,630	13	89,300	12	84,350	11
In home care	1,500	<0	3,240	0	3,200	0
Outside school hours care	148,040	20	160,790	21	173,770	22
Vacation care	103,560	14	101,710	14	107,280	13
Other service types	16,280	2	14,700	2	12,350	2
Total:	732,150	100	752,760	100	801,060	100

In June 2005 496,500 children aged less than 6 years used formal care services; thirty-three per cent of the 1.5 million children who were of preschool age (ABS, 2006: 14).

Use of formal care peaks at four years old, when nine children out of every ten attend formal care or preschool (see Figure 5.6). It was at its lowest among infants aged less than one; less than one in ten of those children use formal care services. Use of informal care remains a fairly steady proportion of children throughout their preschool and primary school years, with a number of children combining formal with informal care.

Figure 5.6: Proportion of children using child care by age



Source: ABS, 2006: 4. Notes: (a) Aged 0-12 years.

In June 2005, when preschool is included, 90.7 per cent of 4 year-olds attended ECEC. Many children start school when they are five years old, leading to lower rates of attendance at ECEC services among children of that age (Table 5.3).

Table 5.3. Number of Children aged 0-12 years, type of care by age of child, Child care Survey (Usage)

	Under 1	1	2	3	4	5	6-8	9-12	Total
Children who used child care [^]	83.2	153.9	174.9	175.3	161.1	120.0	342.2	342.7	1553.3
Children who don't use child care	159.4	100.2	72.7	73.1	95.5	139.5	445.1	751.4	1836.9
All children aged 0-12 years	242.6	254.1	247.6	248.4	256.6	259.5	787.3	1094.1	3390.2
Types of Care - Formal									
Before and/or after school care	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.1	35.2	116.7	76.0	230.0
Long day care centre	11.0	53.5	73.9	93.5	71.0	15.7	3.6	2.5	324.7
Family day care	3.9	18.1	26.8	26.5	15.3	5.8	6.2	4.5	106.9
Occasional care centre	2.0	8.2	12.8	14.3	9.9	0.4	1.9	1.9	51.4
Other formal care	0.2	2.1	4.5	3.9	3.0	1.1	2.8	0.9	18.5
Total Children in formal care	16.7	78.8	114.7	132.7	97.0	56.6	130.3	84.8	711.5
Type of Care - Preschool*				41.6	135.8	68.5			246.0
Total Number of Children using Child care and Preschool	16.7	78.8	114.7	174.3	232.8	125.1	130.3	84.8	957.5
Types of Care - Informal									
	71.3	108.9	105.7	94.2	99.2	84.2	254.6	286.2	1104.1
% of Children using Formal Child care	6.9%	31.0%	46.3%	53.4%	37.8%	21.8%	16.6%	7.8%	21.0%
% of Children using Informal Care	29.4%	42.9%	42.7%	37.9%	38.7%	32.4%	32.3%	26.2%	32.6%
% of Children using All Child care	34.3%	60.6%	70.6%	70.6%	62.8%	46.2%	43.5%	31.3%	45.8%
% of Children using Formal Child care and Preschool	6.9%	31.0%	46.3%	70.2%	90.7%	48.2%	16.6%	7.8%	28.2%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2006), Catalogue Number: 4402.0

[^] In the 2005 Child care Survey, preschool was excluded from the definition of formal care or child care

*Estimated by taking proportion of children using preschool by age from ABS (2006) table 24 from total and subtracting the number who are using formal care Table 26

Many children require additional ECEC services. During a period of four weeks, additional formal care was required for 106,100 children aged 0-4, or 8.5 per cent of children that age (ABS, 2006: 30). Nearly half of these children needed long day care services,⁶ most commonly for work related reasons (46 per cent) (ABS, 2006: 31-2). Availability was the main reason given for why children had not attended care that they required; 46 per cent said formal care was booked out or had no places; cost was the main reason for 13 per cent.

6 Note that preschool was not included in this survey as a type of formal care.

In May 2006, children with additional needs as a proportion of all children in child care (all service types) was 16.4 per cent predominately made up of children from culturally diverse backgrounds (11.0 per cent) followed by child with a disability (2.8 per cent) and of Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander (1.7 per cent) (DEEWR, 2008a).

When looking at the economic literature a number of important relationships and trends were noted. A study conducted by the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling at University of Canberra, showed school age children are increasingly making use of formal care, even when other factors were compared; children residing in capital cities were more likely to use formal care than children in other areas, possibly reflecting fewer formal care services for this group in rural areas; no significant differences were noted for the use of formal care by family income categories (Cassells and McNamara, 2006).

A study of demand for child care and household labour supply by Doiron and Kalb (2005), concluded that non-parental child-care costs in Australia are low on average; the costs vary substantially across households depending on the presence of preschool children and on the labour supply of parents; the demand function showed a substantial and negative-price elasticity for formal care; and a 10 per cent increase in the price of child care reduces the participation rate by approximately 0.5 per cent for lone parents and 0.2 per cent for married women (Doiron and Kalb, 2005).

The Kalb and Lee (2007) study on child care use and labour supply (an update to the Doiron and Kalb 2005 study), data from wave 2 of the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey and the Survey of Income and Housing Costs (SIHC) were used. The study found that for couples and sole parents, more formal child care is required when young children are present, particularly 1-4 year olds (Table 5.4). Informal child care costs were found to be highest for children aged 3 and 4 due to attendance at preschools.

Table 5.4. Percentage using care by age of the youngest child and labour force status in Wave 2 of HILDA (2002)

Age of youngest child	0-2	3-4	5-9	10-11	Total
Couple families: Two workers	83.0	92.1	64.1	46.2	70.9
Couple families: One worker	43.3	49.1	37.6	10.4	40.7
Couple families: No Worker	37.2	32.6	18.5	0.0	27.8
All Couple families	60.7	71.5	54.2	35.0	57.1
Sole Parents: One worker	93.0	84.0	80.6	74.6	81.2
Sole Parents: Non worker	43.0	62.3	20.2	3.1	35.0
All Sole Parents	55.1	69.8	55.2	54.0	57.6

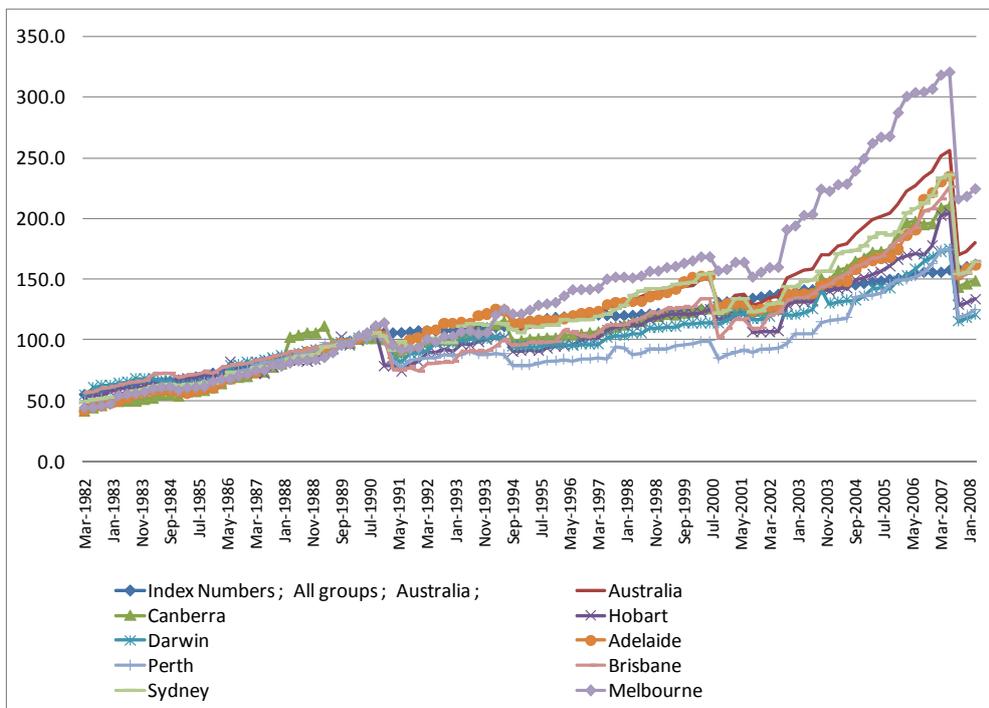
Source: Kalb and Lee (2007)

Kalb and Lee (2007) found that increasing the mother's labour supply by one hour will require 0.21 extra formal hours of child care and 10 cents of extra costs in informal care, the effect is stronger for sole parents. The study also measured the labour supply sensitivity to changes in prices paid and net costs (i.e. prices less the subsidies using 2002 figures). They found that parents with preschool child were quite sensitive to price changes, and more so if they were sole parents. They concluded that a 1 per cent rise in prices will lead to a drop in the hours worked by married women with preschool child of 0.02 hours and 0.58 hours for sole parents, and if they are on low wages as well, the drop is more significant at -.03 hours and 0.93 hours respectively (Kalb and Lee, 2007).

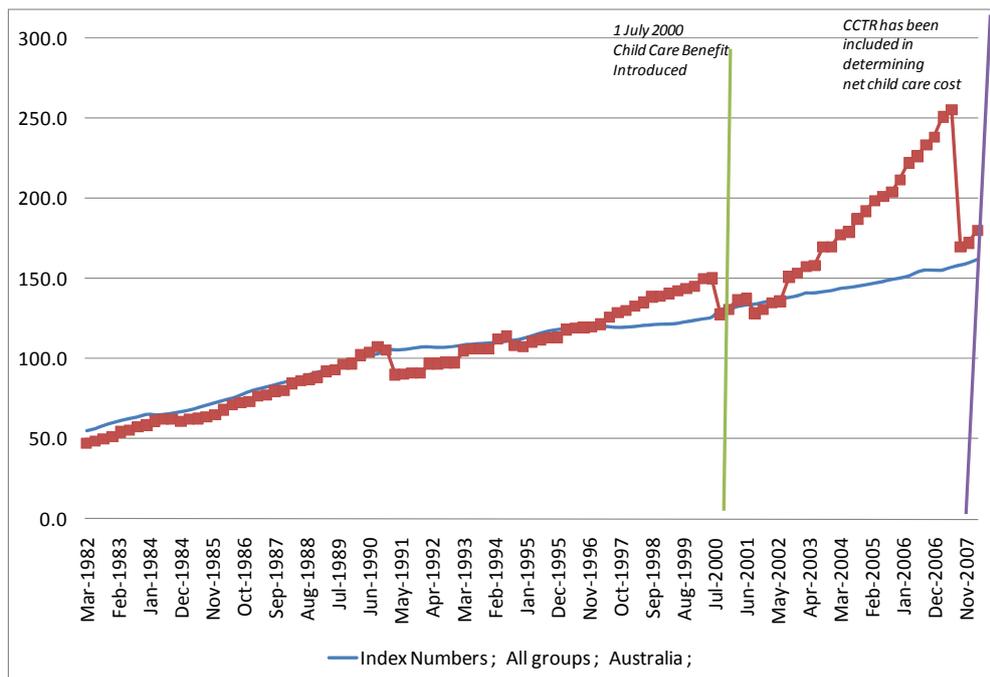
These findings are of particular concern when the price of child care is examined. In looking at the price index of child care, it needs to be noted that the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) measures child care fees minus any subsidies/rebates available to families (ABS, 2007). Currently two subsidies/rebates are factored in. They are the Child care Benefit (CCB) that was deducted from the actual child care prices in measuring the cost recorded in the consumer price index (CPI) from September quarter 2000. The rebate available under the CCTR was not in the scope of the CPI prior to the September quarter 2007 because the CCTR was paid through the income tax system and income tax offsets are excluded from the scope of the CPI. The CCTR ceased to be a tax offset and is now paid directly to families as a rebate by the Family Assistance Office (FAO). This change brought it in scope of the CPI and is included in the CPI calculation from September 2007 onwards.

There are also differential rates of growth depending on geographical location. Melbourne city price index grew at a much faster rate as compared to the national average and other capital cities.

Figure 5.7: Child care consumer price index, Australian and capital cities, quarterly, original



Source: ABS, 2008b

Figure 5.8: Consumer Price Index: All Australian groups and child care, quarterly, original

Source: ABS, 2008b

The rate of price increase for child care has consistently been higher than for all goods and services on an annual basis and quarterly basis since the mid 1990s. The only exception is in September 2000 and September 2007 with the changes in the subsidies or rebates. The child care costs have been increasing on an annual average basis by 12 per cent since 2002 compared to an average for all goods and services of 2.8 per cent.

5.3 Observations on Demand and Supply

In this study, we have considered the macro level of demand and supply of child care. However, it needs to be noted that for child care, unlike other market goods or services, there are distinct and different micro markets. The nature of child care limits the area and types of care that can be accessed. Traditionally, families choose a child care service that is located either close to the employment or close to home (Freeman and Vicary, 2008; Davidoff, 2007).

The utilisation rate was given as one measure of demand. This provides the usage of the service overall, but does not provide detail on the usage patterns by type and geographical location. This suggests that - at the aggregate level - supply of children's services exceeds demand for long day care and for out of school hours care. Nonetheless 20 per cent of urban households have problems accessing sufficient hours of care and 25 per cent fail to find care of adequate quality or care in a suitable location.

Another area that has been highlighted in recent research that needs to be explored is the financial pressures on families with multiple children in child care. Such families comprise 18 per cent of the current users; the concern that arises is the extent to which they are choosing not to use child care because of the cost of accessing it (Davidoff, 2007; Freedman and Vicary, 2008).

5.4 Gaps in ECEC demand and supply data

It is important to move beyond aggregate information and to undertake analysis of the child care market at a more fine-grained level. Freedman and Vicary (2008) emphasise this point, commenting on the difficulty of drawing any useful conclusions from aggregate data. They point to a need for data specifically focused on particular markets, for example, local data on the children's residence and use of services. Data on the availability of services needs to be provided by local government area, not simply by State and Territory.

Even at a macro-level, current data probably underestimates demand for child care. ABS Child care Survey estimations of parents need for additional formal care from 2002 and 2005 are likely to have underestimated the needs of at least two groups. Firstly, those who currently used child care of one type and wished instead to use the same hours of care of a different type. For example, to change from using 10 hours of long day care to 10 hours of family day care. Those currently using child care were only registered as needing additional formal care if they needed additional *hours* of formal care. Secondly, those who had an ongoing need for child care but had not used it in the past week or needed to use it in the last four weeks. For example, someone who needed child care in order to seek and take employment would not have registered as needing child care in the previous four weeks, as they had not yet started work so had not yet needed child care. The 2008 Child care Survey will examine unmet need for formal care differently and will hopefully address these underestimates⁷.

In order for more effective market conditions to apply, information needs to be available not only about the quantity, but also the quality of services available by type and by geographical location, disaggregated at the level of local government area. This is in line with the increasing recognition of the economic benefits of good quality child care (Currie, 2001; Freedman and Vicary, 2001).

The need for good quality, fine-grained data is emphasised by DEEWR (2008b: 20). DEEWR operates the Access Hotline which provides information to parents about child care availability. It has been difficult to collect reliable data which indicates where there is unmet demand and where there is an oversupply of places. Detailed local information about demand and supply would contribute to the operation of this service for parents.

The availability of quality data will be aided by the development by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare of a Children's Services National Minimum Data Set. This was developed by the Children's Services Data Working Group to provide "comprehensive" data on child care and preschool services. The data set is yet to be implemented.

⁷ Heather Crawford, Australian Bureau of Statistics, personal communication, 18 July 2008.

Appendix A: Innovation in early childhood services

The following case studies illustrate innovation by State, Territory and local governments in the planning, design and implementation of integrated children's services. Most were provided to the authors by members of the Children's Services Subcommittee of the Community Services and Disability Services Ministerial Advisory Council.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Early Childhood Schools

In December 2006, the Minister for Education and Training announced that four new early childhood schools would open in 2009. These schools would be located on existing school sites.

It is envisaged that these schools will develop as early learning and development centres. They will become regional hubs, providing integrated services for children (birth to eight years) and their families. In addition to preschool to year 2 classes, these services could include child care, family support services and other services that support children's learning, health and well-being.

The framework provides:

- a rationale for early childhood schools to develop as early learning and development centres (birth to eight years)
- common goals for the early childhood schools
- core elements of service provision
- critical success factors.

The two bodies involved were the Department of Education and Training and Department of Disability, Housing and Community Service, which provided advice on the licensing child care component. Broader community service provision in each site is yet to be determined. A cross government reference group provided input into the development of the early childhood school model.

Child and Family Centres

The Child and Family Centres provide a range of universal services based on the needs of children and their families. They provide a range of early intervention and prevention services for children from birth to age five and their families. There are two Child and Family Centres in the ACT with a third planned for 2009 – 2010.

Services at the Centre:

- Maternal and Child Health Clinics providing support and advice on child health and development and parenting issues
- Speech pathology services for children who need help with their speech, language and pre-literacy skills
- Early Childhood Education services
- Case Management for families with complex needs
- Specialist support for children and their families
- A supportive chat about parenting and information to help manage those 'parenting hurdles'

- Assistance connecting parents and families, including parenting groups.

The service was initially developed by Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services. A number of stakeholders are now involved including ACT Health and the Department of Education and Training.

The development of the Child and Family Centres followed a very successful model of service delivery to the ACT community following the 2003 bushfires. A 'one stop shop' community centre provided ongoing support to the community in a range of services, including insurance, health, counselling etc. This model formed the basis of the Child and Family Centre model.

The first centre was established in temporary premises in 2005; the third centre will be constructed in 2009 - 2010.

NEW SOUTH WALES

Preschool Investment and Reform Plan

The NSW Government provides \$140.5 million per annum to children's services in NSW via the Department of Community Services (DoCS). It will invest an additional \$29.8 million per annum from 2008/2009 under the Preschool Investment and Reform Plan (PIRP) to improve access to quality preschool programmes for all children in their year prior to school, with priority to be given to the needs of disadvantaged children and communities.

DoCS has undertaken a comprehensive mapping of all children's services provided in NSW, at the Local Government Area level, as part of the service system analysis for (PIRP).

This mapping includes all services available — preschools, long day care, occasional care, family day and home based care — and all providers — commercial, community based, Department of Education and Training, and local government. Work is also underway to map the 0-5 years and preschool aged child populations at the LGA level, including mapping key disadvantage indicators (e.g. socioeconomic, Aboriginal, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD), remote locations).

This mapping has provided the information for detailed analysis of the current supply of children's services relative to child population and will inform decisions regarding priority locations for new services and investment.

This is significant as a planning approach as it has been developed to specifically recognise both child care service models and preschool service models and assess relative need for access against a combined measure of services. In the past such assessments have tended to treat the services as separate and distinct.

This new planning approach is complemented by a significant programme of funding reform and increased expenditure.

The basis of the new approach is to match preschool funding levels to the actual characteristics of the children and community in which the preschool operates, and the pattern of usage of services by the community.

This means that the same funding rules will apply across all preschools rather than funding being allocated on largely historical factors which are not responsive to changing child and family needs.

The funding model is also designed to provide higher rates of funding to Indigenous children, children from low income families, and children from CALD backgrounds.

Mobile preschools and preschools located in remote communities will also receive higher rates of funding to reflect the extra costs associated with these services, and to assist families in isolated communities access early childhood education.

NORTHERN TERRITORY***Child care in the Galiwin'ku community on Elcho Island⁸***

In 1999, a purpose-built child care centre was built at Galiwin'ku on Elcho Island for children 0 to 3 years old. In April, 2003 there were 29 children attending, of whom most were children of parents who worked. The child care centre charges parents \$5 per day, which is automatically deducted from their pay. The centre has five community members on the child care committee. All of the staff are Indigenous and have either completed a Certificate III in Community Services (Children's Services), or are currently studying for this and are involved in the Community Development Education Programme (CDEP). Activities with the children include finger-painting, reading stories and singing in both their own language and in English, doing puzzles, and sponge-painting. They are involved in the BBC ("Breathing, Blowing, Coughing") health programme. The centre offers a breakfast programme for all children.

The children are all in together, but in three areas – one for 1 year olds, one for 2 year olds and one for 3 year olds. All the children stay all day (from 8 am to 4 pm), except for those who attend preschool in the mornings until 11.45am (currently four children). A bus brings them back from the preschool, which is part of the school system. The preschool children love singing, and they do activities such as counting, naming shapes, recognising their names and some other words. They also learn manners and the importance of washing hands before eating. The children go from there to the local primary school which has about 400 children. The teachers at the school have commented that the children who have entered school after attending the child care centre are ahead of those who did not attend the centre.

Because the centre is right in the middle of the community, it is convenient for staff to phone the mothers who are breast-feeding to come to the centre when their baby needs to be fed. There is a monthly clinic run by medical staff, but the children and their parents currently feel more comfortable with the child care staff who can worm the children, and monitor their weight and height. Policies have been introduced such as staff have to smoke outside, and parents have to register their child for child care each day and sign them off. If a child is unwell, staff will ring a parent (or relative) to take their child to the clinic. Parents also take their children to the clinic for immunisation.

Parents of the children are involved with the child care centre in several ways, such as raising money for the child care centre by running a market every fortnight, and selling clothes, food, fish and crabs. Other people involved in CDEP help catch the fish. People on CDEP help in other ways too, such as building cupboards and making sandpits, and the Aboriginal Council helps them. Parents and extended family take the children on excursions eg to the beach or to the bush to collect wild honey and other traditional foods.

The staff have a close relationship with the child care service at Yirrkala by talking and sharing ideas over the telephone. The Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services has made some funds available for staff to travel to see other child care centres to exchange ideas.

⁸ Source: Secretariat for National Aboriginal and Islander Child care and Centre for Community Child Health, 2004.

Mobile Preschool⁹

A new initiative in the remote north-east of the Northern Territory (NT) is the establishment, currently as a pilot project, of a mobile preschool service. Prior to mid-2002, preschool-aged children in many remote communities of NE Arnhemland had no access to preschool programmes. As well, the remote Yirrkala community school lost its preschool teacher when student numbers dwindled. The former stand-alone child care service had been providing child care only, and the Department of Health and Community Services wanted the centre to be more focused on early childhood education. Hence, the preschool there joined with the existing child care centre to become an innovative child care centre with preschool. With Yirrkala being just one of several communities supported by the Mobile Preschool Pilot Programme (MPPP), the teacher could be there only one day per week to support the preschool programme to be delivered by the MPPP assistant. This arrangement allowed the child care centre to become more oriented to community and early childhood education, and also made it possible for preschool sessions to be held each morning. Delivery of the preschool programme within the child care centre has extended the programme for all the children in the centre, as well as involving more mothers as they interact with the children in the activities.

During this time, Commonwealth funding through the National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (NIELNS) became available to increase the proportion of Indigenous 3 to 5 year olds in preschool education. This funding source allowed the planning and piloting of a mobile preschool model. Jan O'Shea was appointed as the mobile preschool teacher with the responsibility of resourcing and supporting outlying remote preschools. Jan's qualifications are in primary and special education, specialising in hearing impairment, and she has worked for many years in the Arnhem region. She considers that knowing many of the children and parents there before the project started has helped her to engage with the communities, to employ appropriate 'teachers' (mostly mothers or grandmothers) and to get the mobile preschool programme started. She now visits the Yirrkala Innovative Child care centre / preschool once per week on Monday morning and then on Friday, at a time suitable for the staff, when they work together to develop the following week's programme.

The facility in Yirrkala is great for children. Under child care funding, all the children get morning tea and lunch, paid for partly by the local ASSPA (Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness) committee. ASSPA funding can be accessed by schools for excursions and tutoring, and for breakfast and lunch programmes. At Yirrkala, the ASSPA group helps to fund these aspects of the preschool programme and so facilitates the successful merging of the preschool with the child care service. The relatively new building has all sorts of equipment including climbing frames, a sandpit, push bikes, and play equipment such as paints, paper, puzzles, books, games and construction materials. Most of the children's parents come from less than one kilometre away. Most of the preschool children travel to the centre on a bus which drives around the community, first picking up the teacher, then the children and some mothers who may accompany them.

There is a fair amount of parental involvement in the preschools as about 1/3 or 1/4 of children have their mothers or aunts present, with most getting involved in the activities. Jan herself speaks little of the children's language, but the teacher who is the prime deliverer of the programme does, as do the mothers, aunts and other family members who are involved.

⁹ Source: Secretariat for National Aboriginal and Islander Child care and Centre for Community Child Health, 2004.

Jan talks with them about the programme, and together they decide which books to be read, how best to present something to the children (i.e. individually, in small groups or as a whole group) and how activities will be organised. While English is not the language used by the people in their community, parents and teachers involved with the preschool participate in discussions in both English and Yolngu about the programme, the children's development, and appropriate strategies and ideas, with translation to facilitate understanding and participation.

At each site, she plans with the local preschool person what they would like in the next programme i.e. theme and activities. This follows evaluation of the previous programme, how children are going, what they need, and what is happening in their community. Jan notes their discussions and decisions, assesses what available equipment and resources are available, the programmes are typed up, resources are gathered, and this goes out to the site on the next visit. As the new programme begins, the previous programme resources are packed up to return to the office where they are stored.

While it is too early yet to evaluate the programme, the local people are pleased with the mobile preschool model and are hoping that the pilot programme will continue until it can become sustainable as part of the NT Department of Education.

QUEENSLAND

Integrated Service Delivery - Child and Family Support Hubs

In Queensland there has been a significant focus on the development of integrated services that deliver a range of early childhood education, child care and family support services to meet the individual needs of children, families and communities and which promote the efficient and effective use of community infrastructure. Integrated service delivery covers a range of service types including universal, targeted and intensive support services.

Child and Family Support Hubs are an innovative model of service delivery that has been successful in delivering integrated services particularly in rural, remote and Indigenous communities. In this model, a hub is defined as a multi-functional and highly flexible service focussing on activities for families with young children as a universal entry point, with wraparound family support services. The core of the hub is a specific child care service – often a limited hours care service. The hubs may take the form of a 'one-stop-shop' or a network of integrated services but all respond to the identified and emerging needs of the local community.

As at 31 December 2007 there are 27 hubs, including six Indigenous hubs established across Queensland which deliver a range of child and family support services. In the majority most of cases, hubs have been established in existing services, with a small number involving the establishment of a new service, most often in rural and remote areas where child and family support services did not previously exist. Hubs operate from a range of premises including child care centres, family day care coordination offices, schools, neighbourhood centres, and in a number of cases, purpose built facilities.

Rural and Remote Area Services

The Queensland Government is committed to the provision of quality children's services throughout the State. In particular, the Government is actively engaged in providing innovative early childhood and support services to children and families living in rural, remote and isolated locations within Queensland.

A successful Rural Children's Programme initiative is Frontier Services, which through its Remote Area Family Service provides a range of practical programmes targeting families and children, particularly those under five years of age, through mobile services.

The Remote Area Family Service operates across an area of one million square kilometres serving approximately 1500 families with 2500 children on remote rural properties. The mobile child care services provide opportunities for isolated families to receive early childhood education and care programmes and to interact through playgroups and parents education sessions. Department of Communities funding is used to employ early childhood staff and provide resources for young children.

Indigenous - Children's Services Skilling Plan 2006-09

The *Children's Services Skilling Plan 2006-09* (Skilling Plan) is a joint initiative of the Department of Education, Training and the Arts (DETA) and the Department of Communities, formalised by a Memorandum of Understanding signed in October 2006, to assist child care workers to access affordable child care training to meet the qualifications requirements of the *Child care Act 2002* and support quality child care for Queensland families.

The implementation of the Indigenous Remote Area Strategy (IRAS) is a key component of the Skilling Plan and targets the specific children's services skills development in the North and Far North Queensland regions for Indigenous remote communities, specifically in the Cape/Gulf Peninsular and Torres Strait Islands.

The Department of Communities, also provides grants to non-government organisations in the Cape/Gulf and Torres Strait, to provide support, coaching and mentoring to participating students aimed at ensuring participation, retention and completion outcomes.

Since 2001, approximately 3,875 child care workers have gained children's services qualifications at the Certificate III, Diploma or Advanced Diploma level. This figure includes over 300 students who identify as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background with 139 students from remote Indigenous communities.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Children's Centres for Early Childhood Development and Parenting

Children's Centres for Early Childhood Development and Parenting are family friendly centres designed to improve the health, social, emotional and educational outcomes for children and families. The centres have a strong community spirit, where children and their families feel welcome to visit and participate in activities, or network with others from the community.

A wide variety of programmes are offered at Children's Centres by a range of State Government agencies including:

- Department of Education and Children's Services: long day care, preschool (offering new integrated education and care places), primary school and Learning Together (an early literacy and learning programmes for families with children under four years of age)
- Department of Health programmes
- Department for Families and Communities: anti-poverty programmes
- Office for Women: Women's Information Hub. This hub provides access to literature, pamphlets and online material on a range of topics especially for women. The information hub is run and maintained by parents.

The first Children's Centre - CaFE Enfield was established in 2003 as the result of a joint initiative between the Commonwealth Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA), SA Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS), Children, Youth and Women's Health Services (CYWHS), Enfield Primary School and local community. In addition to the State Government agency partners involved in CaFE Enfield, there is significant collaboration with non-government agencies. This has resulted in referrals of families and children, programme initiatives, service links, joint grant proposals and support for the centre.

Three levels of governance arrangements have been established to oversee the operation and management of the centre: strategic, local, and community.

Integrated Preschool and Child care Services in Rural Communities

The delivery of cost efficient child care in rural communities that would not support a stand-alone/independent child care service has been achieved in South Australia through the delivery of integrated child care and preschool under two operating models that meet the size and needs of the community:-

1. Rural Integrated Services (15 – 30 care places), and
2. Rural Care Worker Model (7 – 12 care places).

Both models were developed under a partnership arrangement between the Australian and South Australian Governments. Each of the services have been established in State owned preschools with cost sharing arrangements for the capital upgrade and operating subsidies. The Australian Government provides ongoing operational subsidy and Child care Benefit. The South Australian government provides ongoing operational subsidy and manages the programmes.

Extensive consultation was undertaken with each community to determine the need for a child care services and outline issues of viability. Of particular importance was the need to consult with the preschool services government council regarding their increased responsibility in taking on the governance for the proposed child care component of the service.

A highlight of this approach was the provision of a child care service for families who otherwise were dependent on private/ informal arrangement for the care of children. Of particular importance was the positive impact for the community in being able to allow:

- professional women (nurses and teachers) to return to the workforce and thus overcome skill shortages in country locations
- partners of farmers experiencing drought being able to return to the workforce to provide an income for the family

An ongoing challenge is the need to maintain strict budget scrutiny because of the fine margins of viability of these small services. The Rural Care Worker Model cost efficiencies have been dependent on the establishment of a unique administrative arrangement where Child care Benefits payments are administered centrally.

The services were implemented over two periods. The Rural Integrated Services (15 – 30 care places) was established in the early to mid 1990s. The Rural Care Worker Model (7 – 12 care places) was established in 2002.

Learning Together

Learning Together is an early literacy and learning programme for families with children under four years of age. It is also a family and community support programme.

Learning Together aims to connect and engage with the 'hardest to reach' families who are not using other children's or family services. *Learning Together* Coordinators work to connect with families, build respectful relationships with them, build and support parents understanding of their children's learning and improve children's literacy learning. Each programme has developed according to agreed values and principles and operates from a strength-based perspective.

It is not an 'off the shelf' programme that looks the same in each location. *Learning Together* activities are developed by *Learning Together* Coordinators in each location, and in consultation with families, to meet the needs of families and communities.

Each *Learning Together* programme has developed strong connections with a range of interagency partners to enhance their work with parents. Families feel more comfortable to seek advice and support when needed if they have developed strong relationships with professionals. Each programme has developed a range of activities for families in collaboration with other agencies such as Children, Youth and Women's Health Services, Community Health, hospitals and Families SA. Activities include: facilitated playgroups, the development of take home literacy packs, parent study groups, family outings, healthy cooking sessions, library visits, parent education groups, and parent use of digital technology to make books for and about their children.

Staff from other agencies report that working in *Learning Together* enables them to connect with families who would not usually access their services. *Learning Together* Coordinators see other professionals (speech pathologists, social workers, occupational therapists etc) as having skills and knowledge to support families that they do not have. Families benefit from

connections with a range of professionals at one time, in one place and an integrated approach to support.

To date, 820 families with 959 children have been involved in Learning Together. Many of these families attend more than one Learning Together activity each week. Currently, 329 families are attending Learning Together. 22% of families are from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds and 37% of families have sole parents. 62% of parents are on a pension or benefit. Only about 2% of families have had any contact with early childhood services prior to engaging with *Learning Together* and many parents have not completed year 12.

A range of positive impacts for families have been reported. These include increased parent confidence and understanding in supporting children's learning, improved parent / child engagement, parent enrolment in further study, increased social support and improved connections for families with a range of children's and family services.

Learning Together has helped parents re-engage with their own learning through both formal and informal paths. In 2008 33 parents are engaged in study for the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE), and 33% of these parents are Aboriginal.

Initially the development of new ways of working in community, using a 'strength based' approach and engaging families that are traditionally 'hard to reach' was challenging to the managers. Extensive consultation and an organic approach to growing and developing the programme over time were critical to this. Finding ways to work with staff from other departments was also challenging.

Currently the greatest challenge is coming from the pressure to extend the programme both within each district and to other districts.

This is now an ongoing programme.

For more information, please contact: Jane Hargreaves, Department of Education and Children's Services, South Australia, hargreaves.jane@saugov.sa.gov.au

Remote and Isolated Children's Exercise (RICE) - including Outback Child care SA

The Remote and Isolated Children's Exercise (RICE) is a not for profit organisation that delivers a programme that aims to assist and support families with their children's development and learning through the provision of integrated health, social well-being and educational / care services for families geographically isolated families in South Australia. RICE provides such services (targeted at children aged 0-8 years) in some areas so isolated that conventional departmental services are not workable.

RICE also sponsors Outback Child care SA, that provides child care (targeted at children aged 0-12 years) to eligible families in their own home for up to six weeks per annum. Due to the high cost of travel to and from placements, care is provided in two week blocks as a minimum.

The RICE model was developed under a partnership arrangement between the Australian and South Australian Governments in 1997.

Ongoing funding from State Government through the Department of Education and Children's Services (currently \$180,000 per annum) and from the Australian Government

through the Department of Families, Community Services and Ingenious Affairs (currently \$215,980 per annum).

Highlights of RICE is the contact and support provided to families who may not otherwise have contact in respect to their children's health, social well-being and educational / care needs.

RICE also provides services that support development in the community. For example:-

- Crèches are provided for meetings and training development throughout the region
- Activity days at community events

Parents through participation in the management committee can develop knowledge and skills in decision making, governance, problem solving and financial management.

Ongoing challenges have included retaining staff and attracting and employing new staff. Maintaining contact with children through a home visiting programme (in remote locations) places demands on staff particularly in relation to OHSW. For example, staff may be required to sleep over in a family home due to their remote location.

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TASMANIA

Launching into Learning

Launching into Learning (LIL) was announced as an election commitment in Tasmania in March 2006. It is a \$12.6m initiative led by schools to support families with young children from birth to four years. *LIL* was implemented to better target children and families at risk in the Tasmanian community and to help to give children the best possible start in life and at school. The programme recognises parents as the child's most influential teacher and aims to build on parental capacity in order to enable them to enhance and support their child's life-long learning. Specifically *LIL* aims to positively impact on children's early learning and school readiness as well as supporting families in need.

Educational Needs Index (ENI), Principal leadership and school readiness determined which schools were involved in the programme. Twelve schools were established as hub schools across the state and, in its first full year, 42 schools participated. Currently 102 schools are funded to participate in the programme.

A management team consisting of Learning Service Managers and Principals oversee the programme. Each Learning Service has *Launching into Learning* Coordinators who work from hub schools to support schools and programmes. Schools are required to keep records of attendance and achievement data.

The programme grew from good practice in schools and the increasing understanding of the research into early brain development and learning. Data from state wide Kindergarten Development Checks and Performance Indicators in Primary School statistics also highlighted the need for early intervention and the importance of engaging parents and children in learning and socialisation.

Those schools already demonstrating their commitment by offering quality birth – four programmes were the first identified for the programme.

Highlights: Parental and child participation in the programme far exceeded targets and early expectations. It was intended that through *Launching into Learning* partnerships with other services and agencies would develop and this has occurred to varying degrees around the state. Partnerships with the Tasmanian Early Years Foundation, 'Good Beginnings', 'Let's Read', Communities for Children', Colony 47, community organisations, local councils, Child Health Services and child care facilities have all added to the quality and diversity of the programmes on offer.

Challenges/hurdles: Whilst participating schools have embraced the programme, the challenge of how to engage our most vulnerable and 'at risk' families continues. Greater interagency collaboration and information sharing is seen as a key to overcoming this hurdle; however we are progressing slowly in this regard.

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Huon Valley Children's Services

<http://www.huonvalley.tas.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u=303>

Over time Huon Valley Children's Services has taken responsibility for a number of stand-alone services, often those with viability issues, to enable them to continue to meet community needs. The service has also expanded its links to other family services in part through funding from the Commonwealth's Child Care Links programme. The services were developed by the Huon Valley Council.

Milpara Early Learning Centre/Burnie Primary School

A child care centre was built by the State Government in 2005 on the Burnie Primary School site (part of a six service programme). As well as meeting an identified need for child care in the area and more effective use of school land, the aim was to move over time from a co-location situation to more integrated service provision and collaborative practice.

Prior to commencing the project, information was provided about the need for care in the area and the choice of Burnie Primary School as the site. School and council staff worked together with the architect and builder (and the Education Department) to achieve the final building. During this time the relationship between the schools and the service provider was further enhanced (the Council already provided OSHC on the school site).

VICTORIA

Victoria's Plan to Improve Outcomes in Early Childhood and the Victorian Government's *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development* recognise the importance of quality early childhood education and care services.

Children's Centres are central to this strategy to improve quality. Since 1999, the Victorian Government has committed to build 95 Children's Centres, of which 66 have already been allocated funds. Children's Centres comprise an integrated service model, providing maternal and child health services, long day care, kindergarten, early intervention services and family services in one location. Children's Centres offer accessible, affordable, high quality early childhood education and care programmes, offering the benefits of stability and convenience for families. The integrated model facilitates the relationship with family services and child protection services to enable earlier intervention and a more coordinated, systemic response to vulnerable children and families.

Children's Centres are designed to offer co-located and integrated services that extend beyond early childhood education and care and may include a range of other community services such as health, recreation, youth, adult learning, library and pre-employment services.

Case Study: Poet's Grove

The Poet's Grove Family and Children's Centre is a multi-purpose venue, co-located with the Elwood Primary School. It is home to a 60 place long day care centre, 30 place sessional kindergarten, the maternal and child health service, as well as a multi-purpose room and specialist consulting rooms for services such as speech therapy.

Poet's Grove Family and Children's Centre was achieved through extensive cooperation and collaboration between the City of Port Phillip, the local community and the State Government.

A land swap with the Department of Education ensured that the centre was built in a convenient location in the school grounds. The City of Port Phillip provided \$2.2m in funding and the state government contributed \$0.5m.

Being co-located with the Elwood Primary School, means there is a 'one stop shop' for services for families and their children from birth to the end of primary school as well as continuity of care. Elwood Secondary College is also located next to the primary school. In addition, the location of services under one roof provides professional development opportunities for all staff.

Child care Planning – Victoria's Child care Register Project

The 2007-08 State Budget for Victoria committed \$2 million over four years to create a centralised child care register. This work is aligned with *Victoria's plan to improve outcomes in early childhood*, with the Victorian Government working to create centralised waiting lists for those looking for child care and matching them with available places.

This followed on from work of the Child care Taskforce, completed in October 2006, which found that demand for child care varies by locality and that state-wide, the demand for child care outweighs the supply. This work allowed for a \$50,000 pilot project with the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) to document systems being developed in the Cities of Darebin and Port Phillip.

The centralised child care register aims to help families, particularly those wanting to return to work, to find available child care places and to provide supply and demand data for government (state and local).

Key deliverables of the child care register are to:

- provide parents with information about child care in selected areas
- provide a single point of registration/entry into the child care system to facilitate choice
- provide parents with an opportunity to initiate a booking with a child care centre
- provide aggregated demand data to support planning at the local level and more broadly
- remove the possibility of double counting demand for child care places
- collect information about available vacancies.

The Information Technology Division, within the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will be completing a feasibility stage for the project by June 2008. Based on this, DEECD will determine a way forward, which will take into account the two Commonwealth programmes.

Peak body organisations and other jurisdictions, through the Community and Disability Services Ministers' Conference, have been consulted and will continue to be engaged throughout this project.

There are high expectations from local government to provide supply and demand data and notification functions to support strategic planning and customer service. In addition, meeting community expectations is also a key factor for this project, with families seeking a system that will allow the greatest access to comprehensive information about the availability of child care and service providers using a system to enter supply data.

This project has significant lead times to establish an effective centralised child care register.

Municipal Early Years Planning by Victorian Councils

Role of Local Government in planning

Under Victorian legislation, local government has responsibility for municipal planning and community development. Each council is required to produce: a *Council Plan*, a *Municipal Public Health Plan* and a *Municipal Strategic Statement*. Victorian local government has also had a long history of investing in and coordinating human services, particularly children's services, something which has set Victorian councils apart from counterparts in other states.

History of Municipal Early Years Plans (MEYP)

Some councils in Victoria have committed increasing resources over many years to sophisticated social planning, including the development of strategies for specific target groups within their community. In some cases the result has been 'forward' plans or 'strategic' plans for specific age-groups. Examples are:

- Good Beginnings for Young Children & Families in the City of Wodonga. 2001, and
- A Great Start: Strategy for Children and their families, 2003-2006. City of Melbourne.

In 2004, MAV and Office for Children agreed to work together to encourage and support *all* councils in Victoria to produce an Early Years Plan for each municipal area.

Defining an MEYP?

An MEYP is a local area plan designed to provide a strategic direction for the development and coordination of educational, care and health programmes, activities and other local developments that impact on children 0-6 years in a municipality. The plan fits with a council's planning cycle – for example three or five years¹⁰. By end 2005, all 79 Victorian Councils had committed to preparing an MEYP.

Future role of MAV with MEYPs

Since 2004, the State Government (Office for Children) has funded a position with the MAV to secure continued awareness and engagement by councils in a range of initiatives by the Office for Children and to facilitate feedback from councils on policy positions and options put by state on early years issues. This is called the MAV Early Years Project, which is now into its second round of 3-year funding. MAV plans to continue to provide support to councils for their MEYP by undertaking, in 2008, an analysis of the approaches undertaken by councils in their MEYPs and the key impacts of their implementation. Many councils are this year reviewing their MEYP, in preparation for development of a second MEYP. A key restraint, identified by many councils in discussion with the MAV, has been a lack of resources at council level for more comprehensive implementation of actions identified in their first Plans, particularly many rural councils.

Case studies from two Victorian councils follow: the City of Port Phillip and the Shire of Golden Plains. The cases demonstrate that MEY Planning has been successful in assisting councils to direct their resources towards outcomes for children and has also influenced corporate processes, community planning and partnerships with other levels of government, on resourcing and policy issues.

Creating a Child Friendly Port Phillip (2005-2009)

In Victoria, Local Government is responsible for the planning, coordination and, in many instances, the delivery of early years services. A Municipal Early Years Plan provides a strategic direction for the development and coordination of early childhood care, education and health programmes that impact on children in a municipality

¹⁰ Extract from *Council Action for Early Years Change: MAV Municipal Early Years Planning (MEYP) Framework, June 2006*; pg. 10.

The City of Port Phillip's (CoPP) Municipal Early Years Plan (MEYP) is underpinned by relevant national and international research and presents a long term vision, and clarity of purpose, for Council and the community.

Vision:

'Port Phillip, a city where childhood is honoured and all children are cherished and supported as active citizens with a voice of their own, secure in their identity and culture; where they are able to play, learn and contribute to their environments, surrounded by nurturing and supportive communities'.

Five principles and five goals were identified to underpin Council's actions and forward direction.

Principles:

Honouring childhood

Valuing Play

Respecting children as active citizens

A child's right to grow in healthy and supportive environments

The importance of family

Goals:

Promote a whole child perspective

Increase child participation

Improve child development

Work in partnership to achieve a fully integrated approach

Build on research evidence

The MEYP was endorsed by Council in 2005. There was broad consultation with families, service providers and staff including surveys (over 400 surveys returned from families), workshops, focus groups and interviews.

Children were not consulted as part of the development of the MEYP. Time constraints and a lack of training at that time restricted our ability to engage in meaningful, ethical conversations with children about what they think about their city and their hopes for the future.

As one of the first actions of the MEYP, the CoPP commissioned the Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood (CEIEC) to design, deliver and report on an action research project that would support increased child participation in CoPP. 142 children had opportunities to express their ideas, views and concerns about living in the City of Port Phillip and/or the services that they used. A *Children's Plan* is currently being developed for council to consider mid 2008. Importantly, it is now an organisation-wide responsibility, to consider the views of children in planning, development and implementation of council policies and services. Importantly, the City of Port Phillip is committed to respecting children as citizens irrespective of age and is committed to leading the community in recognising the rights of children. Council values children's views in making a Port Phillip a vibrant and inclusive city.

The successful implementation of the MEYP (and when finalised, the children's plan) is reliant on there being a high level of commitment and collaboration across council and between staff, and strong relationships with other service providers, children, families and the community.

Through the development of the MEYP, Council has articulated its commitment to the early years, has a clear policy framework and a vision for the future. Council has invested

significant resources towards early years infrastructure and integrated service planning and delivery.

Golden Plains Shire Early Years Plan

Golden Plains Shire recognised in 2004, that development of a Municipal Early Years Plan (MEYP) was a key component of council's commitment to improving planning, development and delivery of community services throughout its municipality. Seeing parallels with the Shire's children services plan the council made a decision to integrate these two planning activities and produced the *Golden Plains Shire Early Years Plan*. Each year council undertakes a review of its *Council Plan*, which articulates the strategic direction and priorities of the council. The *Early Years Plan* is an important reference point with strategies and actions emerging from implementation 'feeding into' the annual strategic review process undertaken by councillors/senior management.

Aim:

The Early Years Plan aims to improve health and wellbeing of children and families living in Golden Plains Shire. It focuses on responding to needs of families and children through pregnancy to end of primary school. The Council's Youth Development Plan compliments this strategy (focusing young people 12 – 18 yrs.). Community consultation was undertaken in 2002/03 when an assessment of services and needs of families with children aged 0-5 yrs was undertaken. The Early Years Plan 2003-2008 had its achievements reviewed in September 2007 and the new MEYP is currently being developed.

Principles:

These provide both the foundation and the reference point for implementation of the EY Plan.

- Active, Healthy Children – children growing up actively learning, healthy, sociable & safe
- Developing, Healthy Communities – communities planning & shaping their future
- Access to and Availability of Services – families with young children have access to services that effectively respond to their health, learning & social needs and
- Quality, Family Centred Services – services are planned, managed and delivered in a manner that promotes healthy families and prevents harm to children.
- Partnerships in Planning and Delivering Services – Communities, organizations, business, governments all working together to plan & resource quality services.

Goals:

The following were committed to as key result areas for the Shire.

1. Planning Together
 - Working with governments for sustainable early childhood services
 - Involving local communities in planning & developing early childhood services, identifying emerging needs
 - Outcome: new Long Day Care service (49 places) established.
2. Promoting Early Childhood Health
 - Working with key service providers to ensure effective delivery of health promotion programmes
 - Working for more effective delivery of local playgroups

- Improving information to families regarding early childhood services
 - Outcomes: development of the Golden Plains Health Planning Forum; playgroup network strengthened. MCH nurse & Children's Services Development Officer conduct information sessions at playgroups.
3. Improving the Quality of E.C. Services Provision
- Outcome: Golden Plains Council now a Kindergarten Cluster Manager.
4. More effective planning, development & management of E. C. Service Infrastructure, specifically:
- A new Family Services Centre in Bannockburn
 - Enhancing provision of services in the north of Shire
 - Opportunities to co-locate early childhood services in Shire and
 - Outcome: the new Bannockburn Family Services Centre won a State Award for successfully integrating a range of services: Long Day Care, Kindergarten, MCH, Innovations programme, community health nurse, Family Day Care, family counselling, podiatry & a dietician.

The Plan clarified key roles played by the Shire council in the early years:

- firstly the service planner and facilitator
- secondly important advocate and
- thirdly service developer/provider.

The development of its first *Early Years Plan*, provided for Golden Plains Shire council, a mechanism for building and focusing resources for early years planning, new infrastructure and improved models of service delivery for the benefit of this rural community. Service co-ordination and health promotion have also significantly improved through mobilizing community partnerships and resources.

Western Australia

Linking Education and Families (L.E.A.F.)

The *Linking Education and Families* (L.E.A.F.) project began in Bunbury 2005 as a school based decision to look for ways to connect families of 0-4-year olds in our community. Organisations form partnerships with each other and families in our community to assist children to arrive at kindergarten with the best possible start.

L.E.A.F aims to strengthen community networks, assist parent to support their child's development, identify developmental delays early and access appropriate assistance for families. In addition, it encourages parents to share information and develop strong links between home/school. Initial funding was from the National Community Crime Prevention Programme in 2007 and Lotterywest 2008.

L.E.A.F has a steering group that is comprised of representatives from Departments of Education, Health, and Communities, Investing In Our Youth, and City of Bunbury. Each stakeholder actively promotes the importance of the L.E.A.F project and currently seven schools are formally involved in the implementation of the project.

Initially funding was provided by Department of Education to release a teacher to research ways for the school to connect with the families of the 0-4 year old children in our community. The programme is based on research into early brain development, and local community agencies were widely consulted.

Benefits include

- decreases anxiety in both parents and children about the transition to school
- expands parent's support system
- increases family links to community services
- facilitates access to early intervention
- provides access to early childhood information and activities
- increases parents awareness of the importance of early childhood development
- increases partnerships between community and school

The model is highly effective. The challenge is future funding and ongoing sustainability.

L.E.A.F. began in 2005 and is ongoing.

For more information please Contact: Bernie Evans, Western Australia, bernie.evans@communities.wa.gov.au

Bunbury Early Years Network

The *Bunbury Early Years Network* was established in 2004 and has been involved in supporting numerous projects in and around Bunbury. The Network's primary purpose is to address the needs of children aged 0-8 years, and their carers.

Currently it supports six projects that range from a young mums group, literacy project, community playgroups, parenting and life skills project for Noongar families, and play cafés that are held in local schools. The Network brings together individuals who have an interest and passion for the Early Years and are aligned with a range of organisations including State and Local Government, education, health, non government agencies, community groups and

individuals. Each stakeholder actively promotes the importance of the Early Years and the Network employs a paid part time coordinator.

The Network was a result of a community forum held in 2004 that looked at Early Years needs in Bunbury and surrounds. In addition statistics from the AEDI and local mapping supported a funding submission to the Early Years Strategy/Lottery west to employ a paid coordinator. The submission was successful and the Network received funding for a three year period.

Benefits of the Network include:

- raising the profile of Early Years issues in the community
- assisting organisations with events, projects and funding applications
- effective and time efficient communication between network members and beyond
- development of a current register of activities and contacts
- provision of a central point for services to discuss and debate issues
- effective network for future planning and
- increase in targeted service delivery and less duplication

An ongoing challenge for the project is a clear need for Network members to agree on key focus areas and the role of the Coordinator, including succession planning.

The Network began in 2006 and will run until 2009

For more information please contact: Bernie Evans, bernie.evans@communities.wa.gov.au

Appendix B: Geographical distribution of children's services

Table B.1: Commonwealth Government funded children's services, longitudinal data

Centre-Based LDC	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>Aust</i>
1998	62,100	43,700	55,000	15,300	10,100	2,600	3,930	1,800	194,530
1999	62,150	41,350	54,350	14,600	9,900	2,400	3,700	1,850	190,300
2000	62,600	41,800	54,800	13,900	9,800	2,400	3,800	1,900	190,900
2001	62,800	41,500	54,800	14,000	10,000	2,300	3,900	1,900	191,200
2002	64,196	42,156	55,297	13,896	9,904	2,355	4,096	1,909	193,809
2003	69,715	43,815	61,906	15,688	10,761	2,745	4,735	2,280	211,645
2004	74,276	45,698	68,693	18,426	11,710	3,309	4,819	2,672	229,603
2005	79,644	49,910	72,789	20,688	12,570	3,814	5,050	2,853	247,318
2006	83,935	54,768	75,782	21,977	14,063	4,271	5,272	2,863	262,931
Family Day Care	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>Aust</i>
1998	20,500	16,800	11,800	4,000	5,100	2,000	2,600	900	63,700
1999	20,900	16,900	11,900	3,600	5,200	2,040	2,600	900	64,040
2000	21,800	16,800	12,400	4,400	5,400	2,100	2,600	900	66,300
2001	22,000	16,900	12,700	4,600	5,400	2,100	2,600	900	67,200
2002	22,371	16,727	12,547	4,772	5,323	3,247	4,949	904	70,840
2003	23,718	17,052	13,285	5,449	5,453	2,593	2,565	1,008	71,123
2004	24,734	16,306	15,884	5,348	5,889	2,732	2,530	1,085	74,508
2005	25,033	16,184	16,210	5,478	6,394	2,732	2,490	1,135	75,656
2006	24,830	16,194	16,204	5,484	6,364	2,732	2,160	1,170	75,138
OSH Care	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>Aust</i>
1998	46,600	28,900	25,000	9,900	14,900	2,200	4,020	2,450	133,970
1999	49,600	40,900	33,150	11,400	16,100	2,850	3,800	3,200	161,000
2000	54,400	49,100	34,600	11,300	19,700	3,400	4,400	2,800	179,700
2001	57,200	49,400	40,800	12,300	20,500	3,800	4,800	4,100	192,800
2002	61,963	57,432	57,872	15,349	23,167	4,264	6,724	3,740	230,511
2003	65,029	61,885	49,891	13,802	24,925	4,711	5,761	3,930	229,934
2004	68,385	65,612	60,810	14,109	28,089	5,239	7,133	4,343	253,720
2005	69,683	66,609	64,376	14,100	29,194	5,451	7,445	4,380	261,238
2006	72,201	68,354	70,021	14,779	31,084	5,638	7,419	4,636	274,132
Occasional care	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>Aust</i>
1998	1,500	1,300	800	500	450	200	130	50	4,930
1999	1,500	1,400	750	500	450	200	130	50	4,980
2000	1,490	1,230	730	500	410	170	130	40	4,700
2001	1,510	1,250	740	510	410	180	130	50	4,800
2002	1,186	722	516	376	83	79	102	10	3,074
2003	1,253	766	520	348	83	77	102	10	3,159
2004	1,192	605	471	361	83	77	102	10	2,901
2005	1,179	598	481	361	97	77	106	10	2,909
2006	1,177	614	423	333	68	77	106	10	2,808
Other care (e)	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>Aust</i>
1998	550	250	300	270	180	40	0	200	1,790
1999	500	300	250	300	200	30	0	200	1,780
2000	500	270	260	280	200	30	0	260	1,800
2001	520	270	250	280	200	30	0	250	1,800
2002	520	270	250	280	200	30	0	250	1,800
2003	515	270	254	277	199	27	0	251	1,793
2004	420	145	164	151	125	29	0	110	1,144
2005	563	445	216	225	180	0	0	116	1,745
2006	364	145	164	152	128	27	0	140	1,120
Total places	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>Aust</i>
1998	131,250	90,950	92,900	29,970	30,730	7,040	10,680	5,400	398,920
1999	134,650	100,850	100,400	30,400	31,850	7,520	10,230	6,200	422,100
2000	140,790	109,200	102,790	30,380	35,510	8,100	10,930	5,900	443,400
2001	144,030	109,320	109,290	31,690	36,510	8,410	11,430	7,200	457,800
2002	150,236	117,307	126,482	34,673	38,677	9,975	15,871	6,813	500,034
2003	160,230	123,788	125,856	35,564	41,421	10,153	13,163	7,479	517,654
2004	169,007	128,366	146,022	38,395	45,896	11,386	14,584	8,220	561,876
2005	176,102	133,746	154,072	40,852	48,435	12,074	15,091	8,494	588,866
2006	182,507	140,075	162,594	42,725	51,707	12,745	14,957	8,819	616,129

Source: SCRGSP 2002, 2008

Table B.2: Australian and State/Territory Government funded children's services, longitudinal data

Centre-Based LDC	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>Aust</i>
2002	83,525	42,156	55,297	13,896	9,904	2,355	4,096	1,909	213,138
2003	88,891	43,815	61,906	15,688	10,761	2,745	4,735	2,280	230,821
2004	93,619	45,698	68,693	18,426	11,710	3,309	4,819	2,672	248,946
2005	98,958	49,910	72,789	20,688	12,570	3,814	5,050	2,853	266,632
2006	103,229	54,768	75,782	21,977	14,063	4,271	5,272	2,863	282,225
Family Day Care(a)	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>Aust</i>
2002	22,371	16,727	12,547	4,772	5,323	3,247	4,949	904	70,840
2003	23,718	17,052	13,285	5,449	5,453	2,593	2,565	1,008	71,123
2004	24,734	16,306	15,884	5,348	5,889	2,732	2,530	1,085	74,508
2005	25,033	16,184	16,210	5,478	6,394	2,732	2,490	1,135	75,656
2006	24,830	16,194	16,204	5,484	6,364	2,732	2,160	1,170	75,138
OSH Care	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>Aust</i>
2002	61,963	57,432	57,872	15,349	23,167	4,264	6,724	3,740	230,511
2003	65,029	61,885	49,891	13,802	24,925	4,711	5,761	3,930	229,934
2004	68,385	65,612	60,810	14,109	28,089	5,239	7,133	4,343	253,720
2005	69,683	66,609	64,376	14,100	29,194	5,451	7,445	4,380	261,238
2006	72,201	68,354	70,021	14,779	31,084	5,638	7,419	4,636	274,132
Occasional care	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>Aust</i>
2002	2,955	722	1,947	376	3,788	725	490	10	11,013
2003	2,959	983	1,725	348	3,808	647	102	10	10,582
2004	2,740	810	1,581	361	3,833	511	102	10	9,948
2005	2,719	807	1,568	561	3,857	549	106	10	10,177
2006	2,658	822	1,442	533	3,798	484	106	10	9,853
Preschools	<i>NSW*</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld#</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA'</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT^</i>	<i>Aust</i>
2002	24 529	60 282	62 120	18 680	22 180	5 945	4 155	136	198,027
2003	24 485	60 004	64 140	25 011	21 990	6 158	4 064	116	205,968
2004	24 419	59 123	63 695	25 725	21 160	6 325	3 942	na	204,389
2005	24 397	58 397	65 095	26 291	21 400	6 165	4 078	na	205,823
2006	24 263	59 453	65 838	25 569	21 170	5 994	4 213	..	206,500
Other care (e)	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>Aust</i>
2002	18,481	270	250	280	500	105	0	250	20,136
2003	11,831	270	254	277	399	77	0	251	13,359
2004	11,896	145	164	151	345	79	0	110	12,890
2005	12,319	445	216	225	360	50	0	116	13,731
2006	12,640	145	164	152	268	77	0	140	13,586
Total places	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>Aust</i>
2002	213,824	177,589	190,033	53,353	64,862	16,641	20,414	6,949	743,665
2003	216,913	184,009	191,201	60,575	67,336	16,931	17,227	7,595	761,787
2004	225,793	187,694	210,827	64,120	71,026	18,195	18,526	8,220	804,401
2005	233,109	192,352	220,254	67,343	73,775	18,761	19,169	8,494	833,257
2006	239,821	199,736	229,451	68,494	76,747	19,196	19,170	8,819	861,434

Source: SCRGSP 2002, 2008

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