

***Have you experienced difficulty accessing suitable care?***

Access to child care has become a bit of a joke and there is a need for a more transparent and speedy process to access care. It is not acceptable to be on a waiting list for 2-3 years before getting a place. The system also doesn't properly assess the need for childcare and has become so competitive that many families now try to get on as many waitlists as possible just to try to maximise the chances of getting a place, meaning that waiting lists just keep getting longer.

***What factors influence whether you use early childhood education and care (ECEC) services?***

Quality of care is more of a factor in our decision to choose early childhood education and care versus caring for our child at home. We are in the fortunate situation of being close to our parents who are still young enough to take care of our child for part of the week.

***Quality of different ECEC services?***

The quality assessment on the MyChild website is not of sufficient detail and I don't have confidence in its consistency, so I definitely don't use it as a key selector in the selection of an ECEC service. Affordability is not a key issue for our family right now, so if there were a reliable and trusted source of assessment and proven outcomes then I would be willing to pay a premium for a service which can deliver better outcomes for our child.

***Are problems with access to, or the flexibility, cost or quality of ECEC preventing you from undertaking work or study?***

Extending child care hours would be the key thing I would propose in order to better align with the real working hours of parents and carers. In reality most professional work beyond 6pm, so having a services which shut at 6pm is not very helpful.

***Is current support for families (mainly through the Child Care Benefit, Child Care Rebate and Jobs, Education and Training Childcare Fee Assistance) adequate?***

The whole system for family support is too complex and difficult to understand. It is also a cumbersome and timely process to complete the applications. I think it is entirely appropriate that families receiving childcare support may also receive other government payments if there is a genuine need. I also think that those in higher income brackets (\$100-\$150k salaries) should still be eligible for some funding support.

***Should support be extended to types of childcare not currently funded or funding increased for specific types of childcare?***

Unless there is action with regard to increasing the number of childcare places then other types of childcare (e.g. nannies, grandparents) should be funded at least partially. Many parents who wish to return to work have no choice but to use other forms of childcare as the waiting lists for places in a funded childcare are so long.

***What factors other than ECEC are influencing your decisions about participation in work or study?***

If the government is serious about increasing workforce participation, improving productivity and promoting gender diversity then it needs a quality childcare system that is more accessible (more places), more affordable (funding, support), more diverse (include nannies, occasional care, etc.) and more inclusive (recognise both fathers and mothers). The cost of childcare currently is a big disincentive to return to work for many parents – increasing thresholds for paid parental leave does not help to encourage parents to return to work, but more quality childcare places will.