

I make my respectful submission highlighting my experience with the current childcare service provider (SDN Surry Hills) and its impact on my twins and myself, a sole parent who has suffered considerable health problems since the birth of the twins.

- the contribution of childcare to workforce participation and child development

Currently each of my twins is being charged \$115 per day at SDN Surry Hills day care. That's \$230 per day for both to attend. It is unaffordable for me to pay this amount as a sole parent.

Yes, having access to this facility enables me to re- enter the workforce, however is not affordable for families with one income so increasingly the facility is filled with double income families who can meet the ever increasing fees (\$20 per day, per child, in the last two years).

I am quite sure I was able to access the childcare facility as a priority given our situation; however I have ended up refinancing my property to pay for fees.

- current and future need for childcare in Australia, particularly given changes in work patterns, early learning needs, childcare affordability and government assistance

I understand the SDN 'community' facility received a substantial contribution for the City of Sydney accommodation grant program which is on the basis of the centre being a 'community' facility. But as you can see the letter received from SDN when I enquired about my bond money and the pricing structure – which is as expensive as the commercially operated centres in the area who receive no grant – SDN responded that they used 'competitive' pricing.

As the childcare fees increased again, I increased my work days to 3 per week; however my childcare benefit (CCB) ended up being reduced thus increasing my fees by \$225 per week. In response I have needed to drop a day's care, and it was during this day that I would normally attend to my health needs.

I previously received JET, but it only lasts for 2 years and given my ex-husband left when the twins and I were in intensive care following the birth, I need affordable childcare for 5 years. I understand that it is well documented that many family-breakdowns occur with a child aged less than 1 yet the support is not there for families who find themselves in this situation.

I am also concerned that the provider does not hold the substantial 'bond money' in an escrow account. They also increase the 'bond' when they increase their fees which seem unacceptable – for example this does not occur with rental bonds. I am concerned at the lack of security and governance structure around these large sums of money and believe this needs to be addressed.

Despite the fees being more than at many private schools, the provider is unwilling to offer me a discount on the 'sibling' basis which is normal practice across the private education sector.

- the capacity of the childcare system to ensure a satisfactory transition to schools, in particular for vulnerable or at risk children

The centre is located next to a housing commission, yet I was told by the ex-director that children from the housing commission cannot access the facility as they cannot afford the bond, even if

they're offered a place. I feel strongly that this practice is wrong, on so many levels, and is not being addressed.

Also, I am unable to use a pre-school as the opening hours of the pre-schools in the local area to not enable me as a sole parent to put in a full day's work.

- options - within existing funding parameters - for improving the accessibility, flexibility and affordability of childcare for families with diverse circumstances

I understand that a condition of the grant was that the centre looked at extending operating hours. However, it is doing the opposite with requests that children are collected by 5.45pm. They are also now moving all children upstairs for the last 15-30mins thus dispensing with carers earlier. This does not appear to be in the spirit of increasing operating hours, a need that the community would like to be addressed.

Sole parents are in greater need of increased operating hours – an extra 30 mins morning and night for example – would enable for scope to single/sole parent to accomplish a full day's work, which is often undertaken on contract/pay per hour basis so ensuring a full day is worked is essential. I am sure this minimal change could be easily achieved.

- the impacts of regulatory changes, including the implementation of the National Quality Framework, on the childcare sector over the past decade.

Despite ever-increasing fees, I do not believe the staff are receiving additional training.