

Overview

Rogan Family Care has provided services to the home-based child care sector for almost 20 years. Initially established to develop and deliver accredited training, the core business is now recruitment and placement of carers for children at home. The service is an approved In Home Care provider with an allocation of 80 EFT. Families must meet eligibility criteria to access this funding and places are fully utilised with families on waiting lists.

Families using home based childcare are a mix of those eligible for In Home Childcare funding and others meeting the full cost of care.

The demand for home-based care has increased as the crisis in other forms of childcare deepens and other factors impact on families' access to quality childcare options. These include:

1. Limited flexibility and operational hours of approved child care services
2. Limited access to funding for home based childcare.
3. Long waiting lists for Long Day Care and In Home Care vacancies particularly for under 2's.
4. Limited access to funding for families accessing in home childcare.

Current demand for in home childcare

Rogan Family Care has experienced increased demand in recent years. Growing numbers of working families rely on nanny carers to provide flexible, quality care for their children. This service has experienced rapid growth in demand for full time, part time and short term care.

The 2011 ABS Census figures (Childhood Education and Care) provides the figure of **80,500 children less than 5 years**, cared for by a person other than a relative. Informal care includes children in care of nanny carers.

Many Australian families are unable to source suitable long day or family day care places for children. Although government may be prepared to fund places, uptake of places and provision of care is a reality for many families.

Local government and other 'not for profit' agencies have largely withdrawn from long day care provision and the industry is generally privatized. Infrastructure costs for operators result in the development of new centres on the suburban fringe and fewer in highly populated suburbs. Recent efforts to increase numbers of Family Day Care services failed to increase vacancies in the sector. Places for babies under two years are in shortest supply.

Changing societal patterns and financial pressures mean that dual income families are now the norm. These families need high quality, flexible childcare to be supported by government and have few choices if childcare places are not available. Limited access to approved childcare impacts on workplace participation rates.

The service receives calls daily from distressed parents unable to access approved childcare places seeking information about nanny care. Although the focus of childcare funding and training is on the long day care sector, many families would prefer childcare at home or a combination of models of care. Advantages of home-based care include:

- ❑ Increased flexibility to increase workplace participation levels
- ❑ Quality care is provided in a secure environment by a familiar carer
- ❑ Suitability of one to one care for infants and young children in evidence based
- ❑ Cost effective for families with two or more children
- ❑ Care delivered in partnership with parents

The Federal Government in Home Care program provides support to a limited number of families for childcare at home. Capping of this program means that many services operate at maximum capacity and even families who meet eligibility criteria may not have access In Home Care.

Funding issues

Serious concerns are raised about the fairness and equity of government support to families accessing home based care.

- ❑ The Federal Government pays childcare benefit (CCB) to subsidise the cost of approved childcare. Payments are means tested and most dual income families are above the income threshold.
- ❑ Childcare rebate is limited to approved childcare. Families paying for home-based care cannot claim this rebate unless they are eligible for In Home Childcare funding.
- ❑ Families can claim a token amount \$30.74 weekly for a child in “informal care” under Registered Care scheme that included nanny care. There is no regulation of this funding.

Training

The challenge for the sector is to establish benchmarks to ensure the provision of quality home based care. The private home based sector is unregulated and no funding is available to train and support carers.

The focus for funded childcare training is employment in the centre-based sector. Graduates have little awareness of children in the context of family and very limited experience with newborn and young baby care.

Currently 75% of nannies employed by Rogan Family Care have qualifications in childcare or related disciplines and 25% have significant on the job experience.

The New Zealand Government has addressed issues for this sector. The model includes:

- ❑ Provision of funding for a one year program customized for home based care (New Zealand Nanny Certificate)
- ❑ Adequate funding to support programs to provide ongoing monitoring, support and education for childcare in home of child of that of the carer
- ❑ Child care subsidy paid to families for all child care models.

Recommendations

The current shortage of childcare is a serious concern for Australian families. The rising cost of long day care makes home based care a viable option for many Australian families

1. Removal current cap on In Home Care allocation of places to meet current demand for care
2. Broader access to In Home Care Funding for families with children under two years and to those unable to access other childcare options. This would ensure that education and care is regulated for all models of care. Ensuring quality care for children and support for carers.
3. Funding for development of Home Based Child training, TAFE and private providers funded to deliver training
4. Increased funding to monitor and support workers, families and children. This program would provide on the job training and be modeled on the New Zealand program
5. Industry consultation to assist with policy development for the sector
6. Reallocation of current Registered Care funding to In Home Care program