



LHMU – Long Day Care Parent Survey

Research Report

April 2008



Introduction

- In early 2008, the LHMU commissioned an independent polling company to conduct a survey of parents who use Long Day Care (LDC) Centres in Australia.
- The purpose of the survey was to investigate the usage of LDC vis a vis other types of formal and informal care as well as to establish reasons for using LDC and current satisfaction levels and attitudes. Ultimately, the survey results were to be used to guide future campaigning by the LHMU in the childcare industry.
- The target market for the survey were parents of children who attend a Long Day Care Centre at least one day each week.
- The survey was designed as a web based survey and was hosted by the LHMU website and was open from 3rd March until the 4th April, 2008.
- The survey was advertised in various mediums and was supported by Early Childhood Australia (ECA).
- A total of 757 completed surveys were obtained after data cleaning and form the base for the survey results.
- While many steps were taken to encourage as wide a response as possible, it should be noted that in any self-selection survey such as a web survey, respondents who feel strongly about the topic tend to reply.
- For issues that are important to people such as childcare, it can be expected that a wider range of the responses would be received. Due to the use of a web based survey, it was necessarily available to more to parents who have ready access to the internet.



Methodology

- The survey was advertised in the March edition of *Voice*, an ECA publication through an Insert which could be placed on the noticeboard at a Long Day Care centre, advertising the website and encouraging centres to tell their parents about it through email. Unfortunately, the scheduled date for mailing the publication was delayed from the first to the third week in March. *Voice* is mailed to every child care centre in the country.
- During the survey period, three editions of the ECA *WebWatch* email newsletter (#47, #48 and #49) also included information about the survey and included the survey link. Centres, teachers and parents are included on the *WebWatch* email list.
- 10 educational resource booklets were used as an incentive prize draw for the survey to encourage responses.
- LHMU childcare workers were sent an email encouraging their centres to participate.
- The survey was also posted on several relevant websites by LHMU staff, for example; Essential Baby, Bub Hug, Vogue and Womens Weekly blogs.
- 942 “hits” for the first question on the survey occurred. Many dropped out as they did not qualify in having a child attend LDC for at least one day each week. This was reduced to 832 who completed most of the survey.
- Although an option to print a hard copy was available, only 15 did so, 9 through paper and 6 electronically.
- Due to the survey being self-administered, much data cleaning was necessary. In addition to deleting incomplete questionnaires, a number of other surveys were also deleted, eg 6 parents who had completed the survey for Family Day Care and 14 childcare workers who had a child that attended the centre they worked at. The open ended questions on the survey readily identified inappropriate respondents. A very small number had given the same response for all attitude statements and their questionnaire was deleted as well.
- The final data set included 757 survey responses and forms the base for the results presented in this document. Given the detailed open ended responses to the survey and the data cleaning and cross-checking that was conducted, the survey can be considered a reliable and generalisable data set of LDC parents.



Survey responses

- **89% female**
- **Median age of 35-39 years**
 - 3% Under 25 years
 - 11% 25 to 29 years
 - 31% 30 to 34 years
 - 38% 35 to 39 years
 - 13% 40 to 44 years
 - 3% 45 to 49 years
 - 1% 50 years or older
- **Highly educated respondents**
 - 34% University Degree**
 - 27% Postgraduate Degree**
 - 18% Other Diploma/ Certificate
 - 10% HSC/ Year 12
 - 8% TAFE
 - 2% School Certificate/ Year 10
- **Number of adults in the household**
 - 7% One
 - 89% Two**
 - 4% Three or more
- **Age of all children (at next birthday)**
 - 19% 1 year of age
 - 32% 2 years of age
 - 31% 3 years of age
 - 30% 4 years of age
 - 19% 5 years of age
 - 13% 6 to 12 years of age
 - 2% 13 to 18 years of age
 - <1% Over 18 years of age



Children

Age of child in LDC	Age groups of all children next birthday								
	1 year	2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years	6-12 years	13-18 years	Over 18 yrs	Total
Base	209	325	313	317	210	118	19	3	757
1 year of age	82%	5%	11%	11%	7%	11%	20%		16%
2 years of age	10%	98%	6%	20%	20%	17%	13%	50%	32%
3 years of age	25%	4%	95%	8%	27%	27%	40%		30%
4 years of age	23%	17%	8%	98%	10%	38%	13%		29%
5 years of age	6%	9%	11%	5%	81%	32%	40%	100%	16%
Total N	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Responses	145%	133%	132%	141%	145%	124%	127%	150%	123%

For the purpose of the survey, parents were asked to indicate the age of their children at their next birthday. The results for those who were 1 year of age therefore reflect children who are currently less than 12 months of age. 71% of LDC parents had one child, 27% two and 2% three to five. The equivalent percentages in LDC were 79% one child in LDC, 19% two and 1% three or more in LDC.



Work status

WORK AND STUDY	Only use LDC	LDC and Self	LDC and other	Total
BASE:	140	355	225	720
Work Full time	71%	11%	49%	35%
Work Part time	18%	63%	38%	47%
Work Casual	4%	5%	3%	4%
Self Employed	3%	11%	8%	8%
Study full time	7%	3%	3%	4%
Study part time	3%	9%	4%	6%
Home duties	1%	14%	6%	9%
All other work status	1%	3%	1%	2%
Total respondents	100%	100%	100%	100%
Responses N	151	422	254	827
Responses %	108%	119%	113%	115%

- Work status differs by usage of LDC in that 7 in 10 who rely 100% on LDC work full time
- Hours worked
 - 7% 10 hours or less
 - 16% 11 to 20 hours
 - 33% 21 to 35 hours
 - 19% 36 to 40 hours
 - 19% More than 40 hours
 - 4% Declined
- Hours partner works
 - 7% NA No partner
 - 1% Partner does not work
 - 1% 10 hours or less
 - 3% 11 to 20 hours
 - 9% 21 to 35 hours
 - 30% 36 to 40 hours
 - 50% More than 40 hours

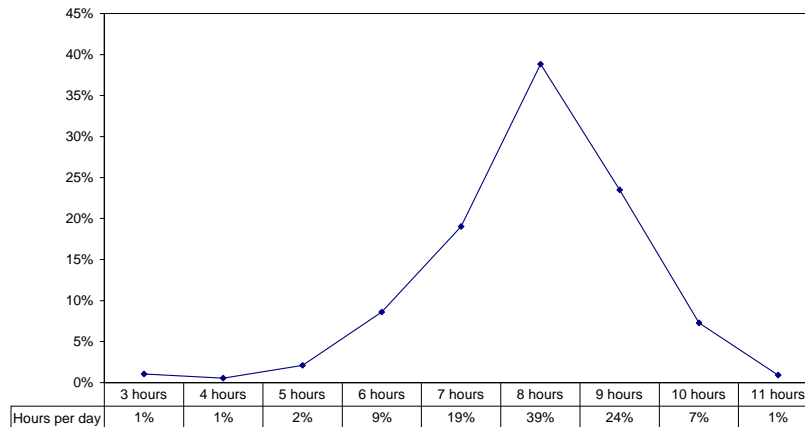
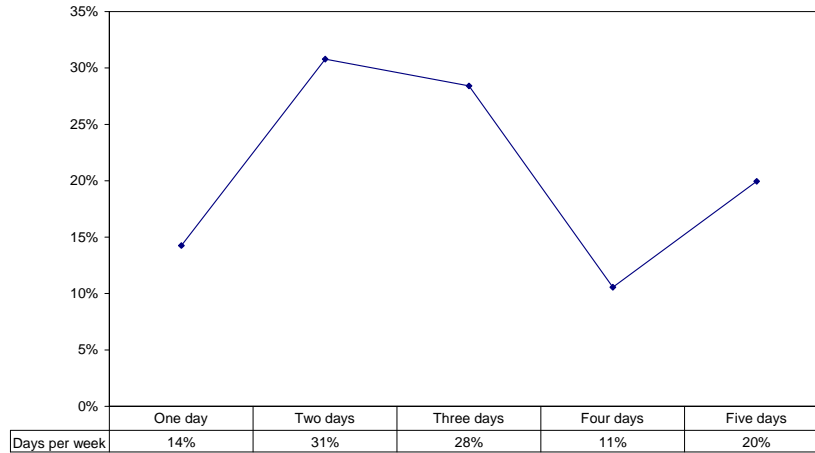


Type of Childcare used

- The survey asked parents to tick the category for their type of LDC centre.
- Although there was much discussion in the formulation of this question, the responses remained ambiguous.
- Parents who responded from the same centre classified it differently, indicating that users are not familiar with the terminology or their centre's classification.
- The responses received were as follows:
 - 55% Community Based NFP
 - 22% Other Private Centre
 - 7% Local Council Centre
 - 5% Work Provided Based Centre
 - 5% ABC Centre
- Other childcare services used weekly
 - 81% Only use LDC
 - 8% Pre-school
 - 5% In home Care
 - 3% All other services
 - 2% Family Day Care
 - 2% Nanny
 - 1% Occasional Care Centre
- Other weekly carer of child in LDC
 - 23% No one else
 - 60% Myself
 - 26% Grandparent
 - 20% Partner
 - 2% Other relative
- LDC Usage Summary
 - 49% Use LDC and parent who completed survey
 - 32% Use LDC and other service and/or carer
 - 20% Only use LDC
- LDC and other service and/or carer
 - 59% Use Long Day Care and at least one other service and another carer apart from self
 - 10% Use LDC and another childcare service
 - 39% Use LDC and a carer other than self
- Other childcare usage is primarily pre-school; 1 in 4 of the above group have a child attending a pre-school compared to 8% overall.



Usage of Long Day Care



- 3 in 5 parents have a child who attends LDC for 2 or 3 days each week.
- 1 in 5 attend five days each week.
- The length of time children attend LDC varies widely from 3 to 11.
- 8 is clearly the average number of hours spent at LDC each day.



Reasons for using Long Day Care

34%	Hours of operation fits with work commitments /hours NFI
18%	Socialise with/learn from other children and staff
13%	Quality Care/Service/Centre/High Quality/ Reputation
11%	Only option/Others Unavailable/ Availability
9%	Regulated/Quality Controlled/ monitored/ staff qualifications
8%	Accessible/ location/ close home/ work
8%	I work/full time/we both work/Employment/I Study, etc ...
7%	Reliability/Security
6%	Affordability / Cost
6%	Own family too far away or Unavailable
6%	Staff Ratios/More People to Monitor/Carer can be sick
5%	Best Option / Suited our Needs / Easiest
5%	Structure / Structured Environment
5%	Continuity/Consistency of care, staff, routine/Stable/Easier to Stay than Leave
5%	Friendly/Caring Staff/Environment
5%	Convenience
5%	Can't afford other options
10%	All other
12%	No information



Choice of Long Day Care Centre

Prompted responses:

68%	Quality of care
64%	Reputation/ recommended
46%	Close to home
43%	Quality educational programs
42%	Close to work
21%	Hours of operation
12%	Cost
9%	First/only one to offer a place
9%	Purpose built centre
8%	New or modern
7%	Only centre available in area
6%	Close to school

Unprompted other responses:

4%	Staff/ friendly/ helpful staff
4%	Community based/ not for profit
2%	Feel/ atmosphere/ welcoming
2%	Work based
1%	Environment/ play area/ facilities
4%	All other

- Parents of children turning 5 next birthday were more likely to report that they choose their centre because it was close to home (49%) or to school (12%) compared to parents of younger children.
- 1 in 2 parents of babies in LDC aged less than 12 months chose their centre because it was close to work. Some noted on the survey that this was due to wishing to continue breast feeding.
- Quality education programs was noted more often by LDC parents with children turning 2, 4 or 5 next birthday.



Satisfaction with Long Day Care Centre

- **Very high levels of satisfaction were identified with the LDC Centre used**

35%	10	Extremely satisfied
31%	9	
19%	8	
8%	7	
4%	6	
1%	5	
1%	3	
1%	1	Not at all satisfied

- **Due to the high concentration of very positive ratings, the reasons listed opposite were further analysed by three groups:**

High - rated their centre 10 out of 10
 Medium - rated their centre 8-9
 Low - rated their centre 7 or lower

- **Reasons for satisfaction with Centre - all parents**

- 47% Caring staff/ lovely/ wonderful staff
- 22% Child loves it/ happy to go
- 16% Good / happy environment/ feel
- 15% Open door policy / approachable / good communication
- 15% Child focused / great relationship with
- 14% Poor programming/ care/ facilities/ management
- 14% Good /excellent personal care
- 13% Good programming
- 13% Good management / director / other positive statement
- 10% Good food / nutrition/ hygenic
- 9% Low staff turnover
- 9% Pro Educational focus/ child learning
- 9% Good Facilities / resources
- 8% High Quality Care
- 7% Negative re staff qualifications/ ratio etc
- 7% Professional Staff / qualified / trained / educated
- 5% Community run / not for profit
- 4% High Staff ratio / Well Staffed / happy staff
- 6% All other positive/ neutral
- 4% All other negative
- 8% No information



Reasons by level of satisfaction

Reasons for rating	High	Medium	Low	Total
Caring staff/ lovely/ wonderful staff	56%	49%	19%	47%
Child loves it/ happy to go	25%	25%	5%	22%
Good / happy environment/ feel	22%	17%	2%	16%
Open door policy / approachable / communicative	17%	17%	4%	15%
Child focused / great relationship with	18%	16%	3%	15%
Poor programming/ care/ facilities/ management	5%	13%	40%	14%
Good /excellent personal care	19%	12%	8%	14%
Good programming	15%	15%	4%	13%
Good management / director	18%	12%	7%	13%
Good food / nutrition/ hygienic	14%	10%	3%	10%
Low staff turnover	12%	10%	2%	9%
Pro Educational focus/ child learning	13%	9%	1%	9%
Good Facilities / resources	11%	9%	3%	9%
High Quality Care	11%	8%	3%	8%
Negative re staff-qualifications / ratio/ turnover		5%	31%	7%
Professional Staff / qualified / trained	10%	7%	1%	7%
Community run / not for profit	8%	4%		5%
High Staff ratio / Well Staffed / happy staff	6%	4%		4%
All other positive/ neutral	5%	7%	9%	6%
All other negative	1%	4%	10%	4%
No information	4%	7%	17%	8%
Total N	265	375	116	756
Total %	100%	100%	100%	100%
Responses N	769	977	197	1943
Responses %	290%	261%	170%	257%

- The staff and the child being happy to go are clearly the most common reasons for being highly satisfied with a LDC.

- Slightly less than perfect ratings of 8 or 9 out of 10 (medium) seem to occur because of concerns with programming, management or procedures. However, in many cases this was not insisting on children wearing a sunhat outside or having sick children attending the centre.

- Lower ratings of LDC centres were much less likely to report that staff were caring or wonderful and less likely to report that their child is happy to go.

- Rather lower satisfaction seems due to a range of programming, facility and management concerns and to a lesser extent staff ratios and qualifications.



Communication with LDC Centre

- **My centre gives me useful information on my child's progress**

39% Strongly agree

47% Agree

7% Neither agree nor disagree

5% Disagree

1% Strongly Disagree

- Note: The first set of figures opposite were pre-coded on the survey and the second set were recorded as other methods, which accounts for the larger difference in results. Had the second set of communication methods been prompted on the questionnaire, their incidence would have been much higher.

- **Type of communication from LDC Centre**

92% Face to face

83% Newsletter

62% Notes at the end of the day

55% Email

49% Booklet/ Report/ Portfolio

29% Regular parent interviews/ quarterly/ yearly

3% Noticeboard / posters

3% Parent/ committee meetings/ seminars

3% Photos/ photo diary/ digital images/ video

2% Class/ room day book/ scrapbook/ PowerPoint

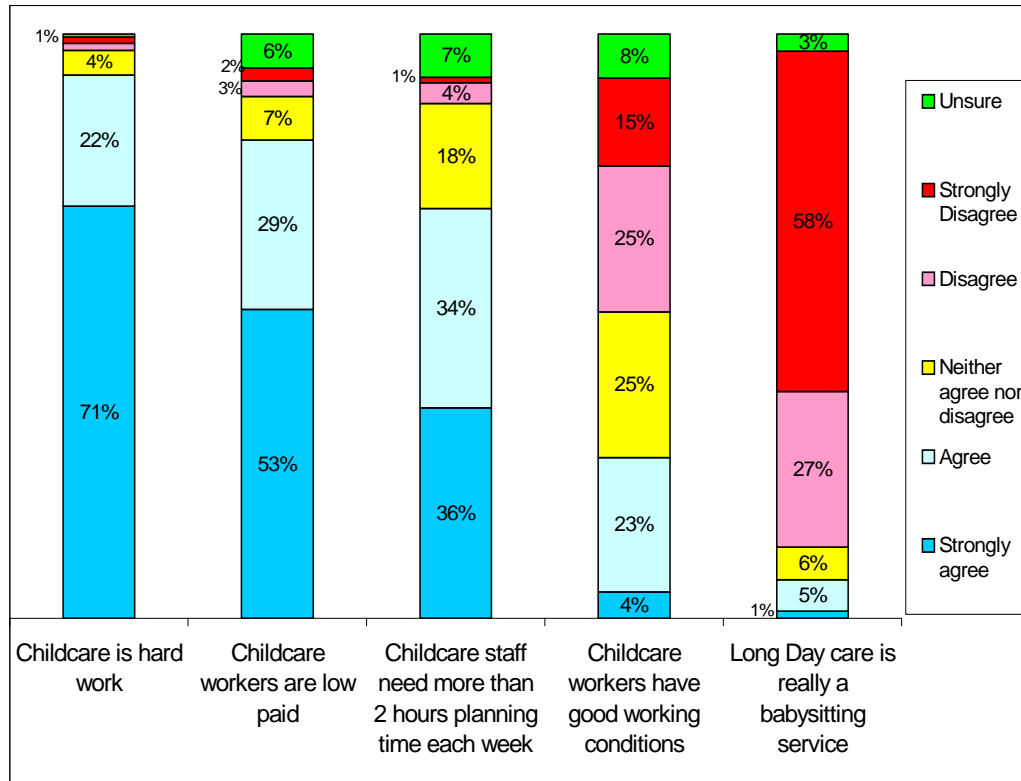
1% Telephone

1% Social events

2% All other communication



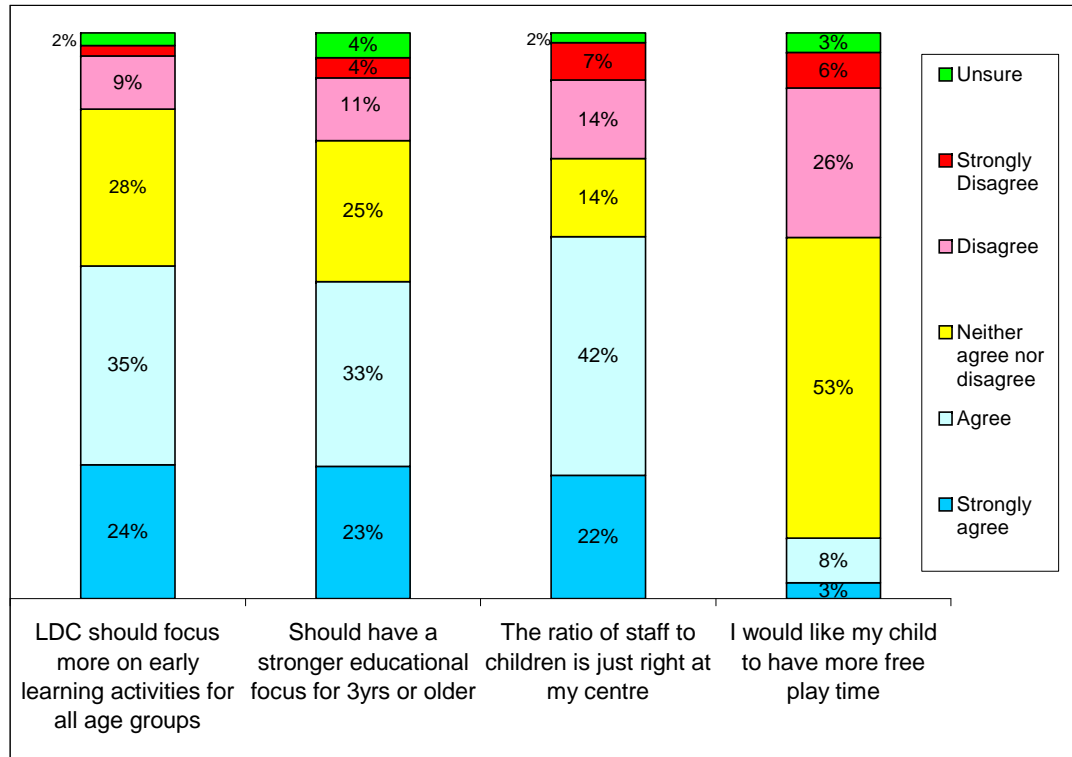
Attitudes to childcare as a profession



- Clearly there is much support amongst LDC parents for the premise that childcare is hard work and low paid. 3 in 4 parents of children under 1yr old strongly agree that childcare is hard work.
- There is also support amongst parents for more planning time.
- 2 in 5 parents believe childcare workers do not have good working conditions and 1 in 3 are unsure or neither agree or disagree to this issue.
- Very few parents of children in LDC view it as a babysitting service and the strength of the opinion increases with the age of the child.



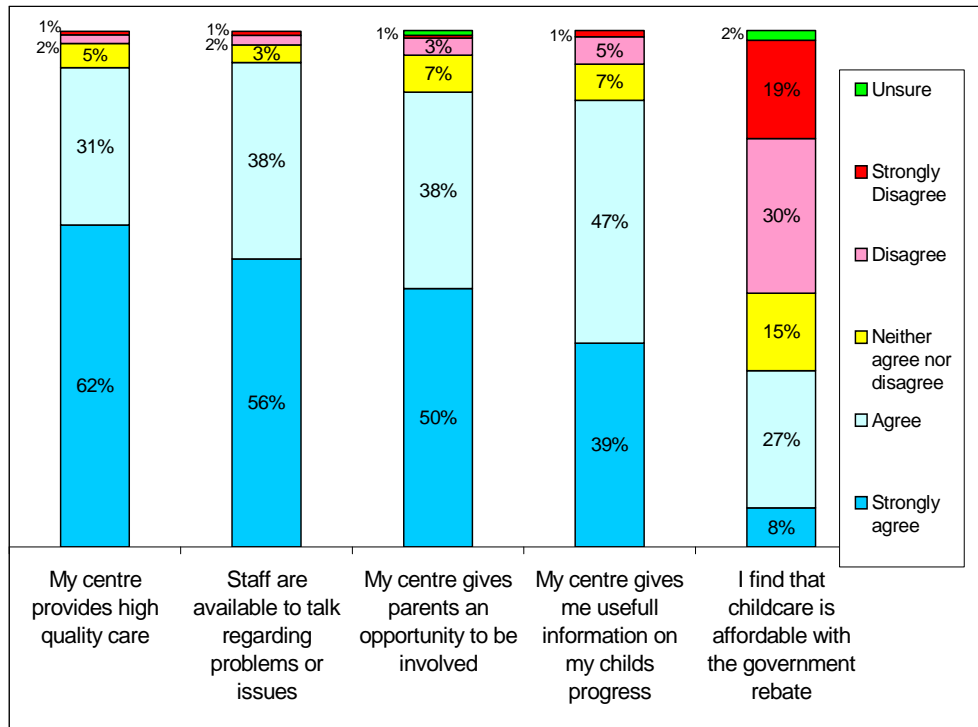
Attitudes to activities in Long Day Care



- There was mixed reactions to the different propositions shown opposite.
- Most parents are happy about the ratio of children to staff at their centre.
- Over half agree with current emphasis on education and learning activities.
- Very few parents want their child to have more free play time at LDC, though the response was slightly less strong for parents of babies under 1 year.
- Parents of children aged 3 years or older next birthday more often strongly agreed that there should be more educational focus.



Other attitudes towards Childcare and Centre

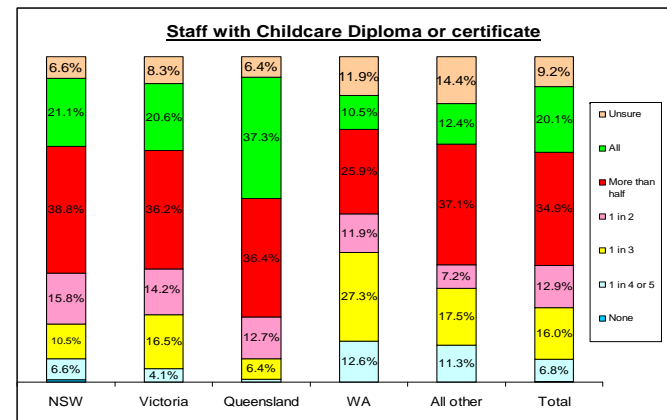


- LDC parents agreed to most of the statements shown opposite, further illustrating their high satisfaction with their current LDC Centre.
- LDC seems to do well in providing high quality care, having approachable staff, providing parents with opportunities to be involved and providing useful information on children's progress.
- 1 in 2 disagree that childcare is affordable with the government rebate.
- LDC parents with a child turning 5 next birthday more often gave strong positive ratings for these issues, reflecting their greater experience with the LDC centre.



LDC staff qualifications

Proportion of staff with ...	Childcare Certificate Diploma	University Degree in teaching or education
None	0%	14%
1 in 4 or 5	7%	38%
1 in 3	16%	11%
1 in 2	13%	5%
More than half	35%	6%
All	20%	2%
Unsure	10%	23%
TOTAL	100%	100%



LDC staff qualifications

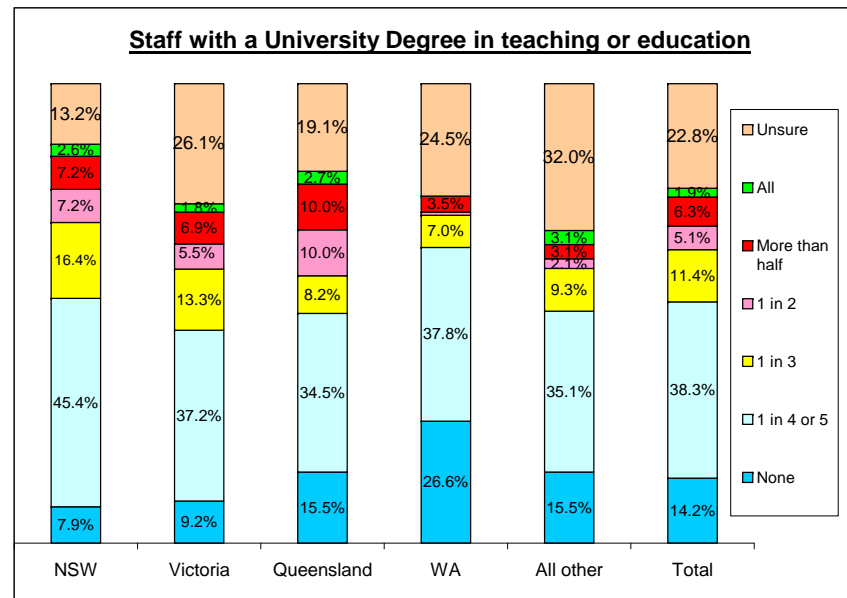
As shown above, LDC parents provided a wide range of responses for the qualifications of childcare workers at their LDC Centre.

1 in 5 believe all childcare workers have a certificate or diploma and no one believed that none of the staff do.

The most common response was that more than half have a Childcare Certificate or Diploma and 1 in 4 or 5 have a degree.

1 in 4 were unsure about whether any childcare staff had a University degree and a further 14% believed none did.

State differences are shown in the two graphs,



Other comments

At the end of the survey parents were asked: *Apart from increasing funding, if you could give the Federal Government one piece of advice to **improve** long day care in Australia, what would that be?* 4 in 5 took the opportunity to provide a suggestion, the most common being increasing the pay for childcare workers.

- 24% More pay for Childcare workers
- 11% More Centres /More Places / More Quality Centres
- 11% Increase ratios of staff for children
- 10% Improve conditions for child care workers / Holidays / More Support
- 9% Value staff / Recognition / Respect for Staff / Professionals / Reward
- 9% Tax Deductible / Tax Rebate/ other comments about finance
- 8% Lower Cost / Affordable for Average Family / Accessible OR Free
- 7% Increase Standards / tighten accreditation/ more spot checks
- 7% Develop Community Based Child Care / Remove private
- 6% Better Qualifications / Increase Staff Standards
- 6% Training Staff / Promote Training / Training Opportunities
- 5% More education/ learning
- 10% All other
- 21% No information / Unable to comment



Conclusions

- The LHMU LDC Parent Survey was based on the responses of 757 parents who have a child attending long day care at least one day each week.
- More than 1 in 2 LDC parents in the sample had a university degree and many had postgraduate qualifications as well, reflecting the education and income levels required to afford LDC.
- Although the median age of the child in LDC was between 2 and 3 years (next birthday), the survey has a good representation of all age groups for this sector.
- Parents who rely solely on LDC for childcare were twice as likely (71%) to work full time compared to all LDC parents (35%).
- The median working time each week was found to be 26 to 35 hours for LDC parents.
- Very few LDC users who responded to the survey were single parents (7%).
- 3 in 5 children attend LDC for 2 or 3 days each week and 1 in 5 for 5 days.
- Most children (82%) attend for 7 to 9 hours per day, the average being 8.
- The hours of operation was not unexpectedly the main reason parents choose Long Day Care over other forms of childcare. Other key reasons include socialisation and quality care or reputable centre. For 1 in 10 there was no other option to LDC.
- Most parents chose the particular LDC centre used due to the quality of care, reputation and then proximity to work or home and the quality of programming.
- The majority of LDC parents who participated in the survey reported they were highly satisfied with their Long Day Care Centre. Caring, wonderful staff was by far the greatest reason for being satisfied, which reflects well on childcare workers.
- Lower satisfaction levels with their LDC were due to range of programming, facility and management concerns and to a lesser extent staff ratios and qualifications.



- There was strong recognition amongst LDC parents that childcare is hard work and low paid and that staff need more than 2 hours planning time each week.
- Low recognition was found amongst parents for the type of centre their child goes to, ie there seems to be confusion for some between community run, not for profit and private, particularly with respect to workplace provided childcare.
- Parents also seemed to be unsure about the qualifications of childcare workers. The results suggest that parents assume childcare workers are more qualified than they actually are.
- Parents of children currently aged 4 years of age were expectedly more knowledgeable about the centre's activities and information. These experienced LDC parents may be a good source for testing future policies and campaigning in childcare for the LHMU.
- LDC seems to do well in providing high quality care, having approachable staff, providing parents with opportunities to be involved and providing useful information on children's progress. There seems to be a trend towards providing more digital information more regularly such as photo diaries, a daily PowerPoint of activities at the class level and a video or photo display of the day.
- Very few parents see LDC as a babysitting service. Rather, the majority expressed a desire for more learning and more education activities, rather than more free play time. Parents of 2 to 4 yr gave the strongest support for more education and learning focus in LDC.

