

# 3 Children

The census of child care centres collected information on various characteristics of children and families using services. All long day care centres and family day care services provided information on these characteristics. This chapter examines the number of children attending long day care services, the time children spent in care, the age of children using services, family type, whether the children had additional (special) needs, workforce status of parents, child characteristics according to parents' workforce status, and the receipt of Childcare Assistance.

Most of the information was collected for all children using Commonwealth-funded long day care services even if they were absent in the census week, provided that they were booked into and charged for care. However, data on the number of hours that children spent in care were recorded only for children using services in the census week.

## 3.1 Number of children in long day care

The number of children using services per long day care centre during a week is greater than the number of places (see Section 2.1). This is because many 'places' are used by more than one child in a census week, since most children are not in care full-time (see Section 3.2). The number of children using services per centre reflects the total number of places available and the attendance patterns of children using services at the centre in a week.

In 1999, nationwide, the average number of children using services per long day care centre was 75 for community-based and private-for-profit centres and 64 for 'other' centres (Table 3.1). However, the average varied between jurisdictions. Community-based centres and private-for-profit centres in South Australia, for instance, had a relatively high average number of children using services per centre – 91 and 88 respectively. Tasmania also had relatively high averages for community-based centres (102) and 'other' centres (98). The Northern Territory had the lowest average number of children using services for all types of centres.

Community-based and private-for-profit centres had the same average number of children using services per centre, but the distributions were quite different. Private-for-profit centres were more likely than community-based centres to have either a relatively large number of children using services per centre or a relatively small number. In 1999, 25% of private-for-profit centres had 100 or more children using services in the census week compared with 18% of community-based centres. On the other hand, 11% of private-for-profit centres had fewer than 35 children using services per centre compared with 6% of community-based centres.

**Table 3.1: Number of children using long day care centres, by type of centre and State/Territory, 1999 (per cent)**

Type of centre/ Number of children per centre	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
<i>Community-based</i>									
< 35	5	4	10	9	1	3	17	0	6
35–54	20	22	14	20	9	10	20	58	19
55–74	28	35	26	18	21	16	40	37	28
75–99	35	25	27	27	36	16	13	5	29
100+	12	13	23	26	33	55	10	0	18
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>Average number of children per centre</i>	74	71	77	77	91	102	62	55	75
<b>Total (n)</b>	<b>382</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>1,016</b>
<i>Private-for-profit</i>									
< 35	14	11	6	18	6	6	11	14	11
35–54	29	26	11	23	12	31	16	43	22
55–74	23	21	16	24	18	25	16	0	21
75–99	19	17	26	24	19	19	21	29	21
100+	15	25	42	11	45	19	37	14	25
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>Average number of children per centre</i>	66	74	92	63	88	75	80	62	75
<b>Total (n)</b>	<b>984</b>	<b>401</b>	<b>630</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2,335</b>
<i>'Other'</i>									
< 35	17	13	3	7	13	17	30	0	14
35–54	31	25	7	40	38	0	20	75	27
55–74	29	30	40	40	31	0	25	13	30
75–99	15	19	27	7	6	17	15	13	17
100+	7	13	23	7	13	67	10	0	12
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>Average number of children per centre</i>	61	65	83	57	59	98	56	56	64
<b>Total (n)</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>282</b>

Source: AIHW analysis of FaCS Census of Child Care Services Unit Record File (1999).

In 1999, the average number of children being cared for in the reference week per family day care scheme was 256, although there were wide variations across jurisdictions, with the average ranging from 199 in the Northern Territory to 645 in South Australia (Table 3.2). All the schemes in the Northern Territory cared for fewer than 300 children, while in South Australia more than half the schemes (58%) cared for 400 or more children.

The average number of children being cared for per family day care provider, however, was fairly similar across the States and Territories, and ranged from 5 in the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory to 8 in Tasmania.

Nearly two-thirds of carers nationwide (64%) had between 3 and 8 children in their care in the reference week. Tasmania had the largest numbers of children per provider being cared for during the reference week, with more than half (53%) of providers caring for 9 or more children in the reference week. The Northern Territory had relatively low numbers, with nearly half (46%) of providers caring for fewer than 5 children in the reference week.

**Table 3.2: Number of children using family day care services, by State/Territory, 1999 (per cent)**

Number of children per family day care scheme/provider	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
Family day care —coordination unit									
< 100	17	11	18	15	17	0	14	50	16
100–199	32	21	43	5	0	18	43	17	29
200–299	27	31	29	40	25	27	0	33	29
300–399	12	11	6	20	0	18	14	0	10
400–500	5	14	5	5	8	18	14	0	8
500+	7	11	0	15	50	18	14	0	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<i>Average number of children per scheme</i>	230	292	190	306	645	386	343	119	256
<b>Total (n)</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>313</b>
Family day care providers									
1–2	8	12	10	6	16	8	10	14	11
3–4	18	23	25	12	22	10	26	32	21
5–6	27	24	27	22	19	12	37	27	24
7–8	21	18	19	22	14	16	19	18	19
9–10	13	10	10	19	11	17	5	6	12
11+	12	12	9	20	18	36	2	4	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<i>Average number of children per provider</i>	6	6	6	7	6	8	5	5	6
<b>Total (n)</b>	<b>3,505</b>	<b>3,284</b>	<b>2,638</b>	<b>782</b>	<b>1,157</b>	<b>466</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>12,436</b>

Source: AIHW analysis of FaCS Census of Child Care Services Unit Record File (1999).

In 1999 there was considerable variation between the States and Territories in the proportions of children being cared for by the different types of service providers (Table 3.3), reflecting the differences in the distribution of the types of service providers. In Queensland, New South Wales, Western Australia and Victoria, children were more likely to attend private-for-profit centres than long day care services provided by other types of service providers. Around two-thirds of children (67%) in long day care in Queensland and just over half (53%) in New South Wales were in private-for-profit centres. In the Northern Territory a greater proportion of children in long day care used community-based centres (40%) and 'other' centres (17%) than in other jurisdictions. The use of family day care was highest in Tasmania (46%), followed by the Australian Capital Territory (35%) and South Australia (34%).

**Table 3.3: Children using long day care services, by type of service provider and State/Territory, 1999 (per cent)**

Type of service provider	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
<i>Long day care centres</i>	81	72	82	76	66	54	65	73	77
Community-based	23	24	12	22	35	34	27	40	22
Private-for-profit	53	40	67	51	26	13	22	16	50
'Other'	5	7	3	3	4	6	16	17	5
<i>Family day care</i>	19	28	18	24	34	46	35	27	23
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<b>Total (n)</b>	<b>123,736</b>	<b>73,152</b>	<b>87,528</b>	<b>25,997</b>	<b>22,464</b>	<b>9,210</b>	<b>6,915</b>	<b>2,651</b>	<b>351,653</b>

Source: AIHW analysis of FaCS Census of Child Care Services Unit Record File (1999).

## 3.2 Time spent in care

The number of hours that children spent in care was similar for all types of service providers. In all the census years, more than half of all children were in care for less than 20 hours in the census week and less than a fifth were in care for 40 or more hours a week (Table 3.4). The main trend over the 1991 to 1999 period was an increase in the proportion of children using care for less than 20 hours per week and a decrease in the proportion in care for 40 hours or more. For instance, the proportion of children in community-based centres in care for less than 20 hours per week increased from 53% to 62% over the period, and the proportion in care for 40 hours or more fell from 19% to 12%. The increase in the proportion of children in care for less than 20 hours per week was considerably lower for other types of service providers. In all census years only a small minority of children were in care for 50 hours or more – by 1999 the proportion was less than 5% for all types of service providers.

**Table 3.4: Hours children spent in long day care services during the census week, by type of service provider, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1995, 1997 and 1999 (per cent)**

Type of service provider	Hours per week	1991	1992	1993	1995	1997	1999
Community-based centres	< 10	26	22	24	23	26	30
	10–19	27	27	28	28	30	32
	20–29	16	18	18	20	19	18
	30–39	12	13	13	14	11	9
	40–49	17	14	13	12	10	9
	50+	2	6	4	4	3	3
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
<b>Total (n)</b>		<b>63,126</b>	<b>66,155</b>	<b>71,922</b>	<b>73,575</b>	<b>79,139</b>	<b>76,450</b>
Private-for-profit centres	< 10	27	22	25	24	25	28
	10–19	31	32	33	33	33	34
	20–29	15	18	17	18	19	18
	30–39	9	10	10	11	10	9
	40–49	10	10	9	10	9	8
	50+	8	9	5	5	5	4
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
<b>Total (n)</b>		<b>56,667</b>	<b>71,780</b>	<b>90,716</b>	<b>136,757</b>	<b>172,562</b>	<b>175,599</b>
'Other' centres	< 10	29	31	35	28	26	28
	10–19	23	26	27	28	29	30
	20–29	16	17	16	18	19	19
	30–39	11	10	10	13	11	11
	40–49	13	10	10	10	11	9
	50+	7	6	2	3	3	3
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
<b>Total (n)</b>		<b>7,326</b>	<b>10,420</b>	<b>11,246</b>	<b>15,861</b>	<b>18,193</b>	<b>18,186</b>
Family day care services	< 10	31	31	31	32	34	34
	10–19	29	28	28	28	28	29
	20–29	15	16	16	16	17	17
	30–39	10	10	10	10	10	9
	40–49	12	11	11	10	9	8
	50+	4	4	4	4	3	3
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
<b>Total (n)</b>		<b>58,235</b>	<b>66,835</b>	<b>73,928</b>	<b>82,199</b>	<b>83,471</b>	<b>81,418</b>

Sources: DHHCS 1992; DSHS 1994, 1995; DHFS 1997; AIHW analysis of FaCS Census of Child Care Services Unit Record File (1997, 1999).

In 1999, the number of hours that children spent in long day care varied by State and Territory (Table 3.5). A higher proportion of children in Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania spent less than 10 hours in long day care centres than those in other jurisdictions. For instance, among children in community-based centres, although 30% Australia-wide attended centres for less than 10 hours per week, 45% of children in Tasmania, 37% in Western Australia, and 42% in South Australia were in this category.

**Table 3.5: Hours children spent in long day care during the census week, by type of service provider and State/Territory, 1999 (per cent)**

Type of service provider	Hours per week	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
Community-based centres	< 10	26	29	27	37	42	45	24	18	30
	10–19	36	28	32	28	29	30	24	19	32
	20–29	19	19	18	16	15	14	19	20	18
	30–39	9	11	10	8	7	6	12	13	9
	40–49	8	10	10	8	5	4	19	24	9
	50+	2	4	3	3	1	1	3	6	3
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<b>Total (n)</b>		<b>28,138</b>	<b>17,858</b>	<b>10,825</b>	<b>5,667</b>	<b>7,866</b>	<b>3,175</b>	<b>1,867</b>	<b>1,054</b>	<b>76,450</b>
Private-for-profit centres	< 10	28	27	25	35	31	49	13	20	28
	10–19	40	26	33	28	27	27	19	19	34
	20–29	18	16	20	15	18	12	18	16	18
	30–39	7	11	10	8	11	5	16	11	9
	40–49	5	13	8	8	8	4	25	22	8
	50+	3	7	4	5	4	4	9	13	4
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<b>Total (n)</b>		<b>65,371</b>	<b>29,562</b>	<b>58,240</b>	<b>13,352</b>	<b>5,914</b>	<b>1,202</b>	<b>1,525</b>	<b>433</b>	<b>175,599</b>
'Other' centres	< 10	24	29	25	41	47	58	17	18	28
	10–19	35	26	34	30	28	25	21	14	30
	20–29	21	19	19	14	15	10	18	16	19
	30–39	11	13	10	8	6	5	21	9	11
	40–49	7	10	10	6	3	2	20	18	9
	50+	3	3	3	1	1	<1	3	24	3
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<b>Total (n)</b>		<b>6,717</b>	<b>5,020</b>	<b>2,480</b>	<b>860</b>	<b>949</b>	<b>586</b>	<b>1,124</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>18,186</b>
Family day care	< 10	31	41	28	38	35	46	27	19	34
	10–19	28	28	28	31	31	30	28	25	29
	20–29	19	15	18	14	22	14	17	15	17
	30–39	10	8	11	8	7	6	12	16	9
	40–49	8	6	11	7	3	3	14	22	8
	50+	3	2	4	1	2	0	3	4	3
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<b>Total (n)</b>		<b>23,510</b>	<b>20,712</b>	<b>15,983</b>	<b>6,118</b>	<b>7,735</b>	<b>4,247</b>	<b>2,399</b>	<b>714</b>	<b>81,418</b>

Source: AIHW analysis of FaCS Census of Child Care Services Unit Record File (1999).

In comparison, children in the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory used long day care for longer periods of time than those in other jurisdictions. For instance, among children in private-for-profit centres, 34% in the Australian Capital Territory and 35% in the Northern Territory were in care for 40 or more hours in the census week, compared with 12% of children Australia-wide.

### 3.3 Age of children

Long day care services are funded primarily to care for children under school age, including babies and very young children. However, in all census years there were substantial variations in the age distribution of children using services delivered by the different types of service providers. In comparing age distributions between the various years, however, it is worth noting that one reason the age distribution in 1999 is slightly younger than in 1997 is because the 1999 Census was conducted in May and the 1997 Census in August (see Section 1.2).

In each of the census years, over half or more of all children using centre-based long day care were aged 3–4 years, compared with just under a third of children in family day care services (Table 3.6). The proportion of children who were ‘young’ (aged 2 years and under) was lowest in private-for-profit centres, although it increased between 1991 and 1999, from 23% to 33%. The increase in the proportion of children who were ‘young’ reflects the increase in the availability of places for children of this age (see Section 2.2).

Although long day care services are specifically targeted at children under school age, a small proportion of children in long day care centres (particularly private-for-profit centres), and a relatively large proportion of children using family day care services were 5 years of age or older. Many of these children would be attending primary school. In 1999, 13% of children in private-for-profit centres and 29% in family day care were 5 years of age or older. The tendency for private-for-profit centres to have a higher proportion of children using services for school-age care compared with other types of centres may reflect the fact that they are more likely to have outside school hours care places (see Section 2.3).

**Table 3.6: Age of children using long day care services, by type of service provider, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1995, 1997 and 1999 (per cent)**

Type of service provider	Age	1991	1992	1993	1995	1997	1999
Community-based centres	0–1	18	16	17	17	18	20
	2	24	22	22	22	23	25
	3–4	55	55	54	54	52	51
	5	3	6	6	6	7	3
	6+	1	1	<0.5	<0.5	1	1
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
<b>Total (n)</b>		<b>65,708</b>	<b>68,562</b>	<b>75,172</b>	<b>76,857</b>	<b>79,139</b>	<b>76,450</b>
Private-for-profit centres	0–1	8	8	8	10	12	13
	2	15	15	16	18	19	20
	3–4	63	64	63	58	54	54
	5	8	9	9	9	10	6
	6+	4	4	4	4	5	7
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
<b>Total (n)</b>		<b>58,857</b>	<b>74,072</b>	<b>94,177</b>	<b>142,513</b>	<b>172,562</b>	<b>175,599</b>
'Other' centres	0–1	22	21	21	19	19	20
	2	23	23	23	21	22	23
	3–4	49	50	49	50	51	51
	5	5	5	5	7	7	3
	6+	1	1	1	2	1	2
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
<b>Total (n)</b>		<b>7,711</b>	<b>10,980</b>	<b>11,822</b>	<b>16,655</b>	<b>18,193</b>	<b>18,186</b>
Family day care	0–1	23	23	22	21	20	21
	2	18	19	19	19	18	18
	3–4	30	30	30	31	31	31
	5	7	8	8	8	8	7
	6+	20	21	21	22	22	22
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
<b>Total (n)</b>		<b>60,202</b>	<b>68,447</b>	<b>76,356</b>	<b>84,212</b>	<b>83,471</b>	<b>81,418</b>

Sources: DHHCS 1992; DSHS 1994, 1995; DHFS 1997; AIHW analysis of FaCS Census of Child Care Services Unit Record File (1997, 1999).

There was some variation between the States and Territories in the age distribution of children using different types of long day care centres in 1999 (Table 3.7), to some extent reflecting differences in the availability of places for children of different ages (see Sections 2.2 and 2.3). For instance, in New South Wales, the proportion of children in private-for-profit centres who were 2 years of age or younger was somewhat lower than the national average (26% compared with 33%), while in the Australian Capital Territory the proportion was higher (49%). The proportion of children in community-based and private-for-profit centres aged 3–4 years was relatively high in New South Wales, reflecting the tendency of children in that State to attend preschool programs in long day care centres.

There were also substantial differences between the States and Territories in the age distribution of children using family day care services. In New South Wales, children using these services tended to be relatively young, while those in South Australia tended to be older. Half the children in family day care (50%) in New South Wales were 2 years or younger and 18% were 5 years or older. In contrast, in South Australia, just over a quarter (27%) were 2 years or younger and 45% were 5 years or older.



**Table 3.7: Age of children using long day care services, by type of service provider and State/Territory, 1999 (per cent)**

Type of service provider	Age	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
Community-based centres	0–1	16	22	20	25	24	22	24	23	20
	2	24	26	24	28	25	25	24	25	25
	3–4	57	48	49	42	49	48	48	50	51
	5	2	3	6	3	1	4	3	1	3
	6+	< 0.5	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<b>Total (n)</b>		<b>28,138</b>	<b>17,858</b>	<b>10,825</b>	<b>5,667</b>	<b>7,866</b>	<b>3,175</b>	<b>1,867</b>	<b>1,054</b>	<b>76,450</b>
Private-for-profit centres	0–1	8	20	14	18	20	18	25	14	13
	2	18	24	20	23	23	22	24	19	20
	3–4	65	47	49	40	48	49	46	55	54
	5	4	4	8	7	3	4	3	8	6
	6+	5	6	8	12	6	7	2	4	7
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<b>Total (n)</b>		<b>65,371</b>	<b>29,562</b>	<b>58,240</b>	<b>13,352</b>	<b>5,914</b>	<b>1,202</b>	<b>1,525</b>	<b>433</b>	<b>175,599</b>
'Other' centres	0–1	20	20	19	25	25	20	20	26	20
	2	22	22	22	28	27	17	21	29	23
	3–4	54	52	51	43	45	40	53	44	51
	5	2	4	5	2	1	8	5	1	3
	6+	1	2	3	2	2	16	1	0	2
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<b>Total (n)</b>		<b>6,717</b>	<b>5,020</b>	<b>2,480</b>	<b>860</b>	<b>949</b>	<b>586</b>	<b>1,124</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>18,186</b>
Family day care	0–1	27	18	22	19	14	17	18	22	21
	2	23	17	17	21	13	18	14	20	18
	3–4	33	32	27	35	28	35	29	35	31
	5	5	8	8	7	8	9	8	6	7
	6+	13	25	26	18	37	21	31	16	22
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<b>Total (n)</b>		<b>23,510</b>	<b>20,712</b>	<b>15,983</b>	<b>6,118</b>	<b>7,735</b>	<b>4,247</b>	<b>2,399</b>	<b>714</b>	<b>81,418</b>

Source: AIHW analysis of FaCS Census of Child Care Services Unit Record File (1999).

### 3.4 Work-related care

Under priority of access guidelines that applied for most of the 1990s, all Commonwealth-funded long day care services were required to give parents who needed child care for 'work-related reasons' first priority in accessing child care places (AIHW 1995:137). In the period under review (1991 to 1999), service providers were required to give first preference to:

- children in two-parent families where both parents were in the labour force (employed or unemployed) or studying/training for employment
- children in one-parent families where a single parent was in the labour force or studying/training for employment.

These children are defined in the census as being in 'work-related care'.

Since 1999, priority of access guidelines have changed to give highest priority to children at risk of serious abuse or neglect, followed by children of a single parent who satisfies, or children of parents who both satisfy, the work/training/study test (FaCS 2000b:5) – primarily children needing ‘work-related care’.

Between 1991 and 1999 the proportion of children who were in work-related care increased for every type of service provider (Table 3.8). The increase was greatest for private-for-profit centres, where the proportion in work-related care rose from 61% in 1991 to 82% in 1999. The proportion of children in work-related care in community-based centres and ‘other’ centres also increased – from 74% to 83% for community-based centres and 82% to 88% for ‘other’ centres. In 1991, the proportion of children in family day care who were in work-related care (87%) was considerably higher than in other long day care centres. This proportion increased from 87% to 91% from 1993 to 1995 and then fell to 89% from 1997 to 1999. Throughout the period, the proportion of children who were in work-related care was highest for family day care services and lowest for private-for-profit centres.

**Table 3.8: Percentage of children using long day care services who are in care for work-related reasons, by type of service provider, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1995, 1997 and 1999**

Type of service provider	1991	1992	1993	1995	1997	1999
Community-based centres	74	75	76	82	86	83
Private-for-profit centres	61	60	61	69	79	82
‘Other’ centres	82	77	77	82	87	88
Family day care	87	87	87	91	91	89

Sources: DHHCS 1992; DSHS 1994, 1995; DHFS 1997; AIHW analysis of FaCS Census of Child Care Services Unit Record File (1997, 1999).

In 1999, the proportion of children in all types of long day care services who were in care for work-related reasons was highest in the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory (Table 3.9). Almost all children in family day care in the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory (97% in both jurisdictions) were in work-related care. The proportion of children using family day services for work-related reasons in South Australia, however, was 71%, which was considerably lower than the national average (89%). Among children using private-for-profit centres, the proportion in New South Wales who were in care for work-related care reasons was considerably lower than in other jurisdictions. This probably reflects their use as an alternative to ‘sessional preschools’ (see Section 2.3).

**Table 3.9: Percentage of children using long day care services who are in care for work-related reasons, by type of service provider and State/Territory, 1999**

Type of service provider	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
Community-based centres	83	85	82	82	83	79	92	91	83
Private-for-profit centres	77	87	84	89	85	81	93	93	82
‘Other’ centres	89	90	82	83	76	88	91	95	88
Family day care	92	89	94	84	71	84	97	97	89

Source: AIHW analysis of FaCS Census of Child Care Services Unit Record File (1999).

Over the period 1991 to 1999 the proportion of children from one-parent families who were using centre-based long day care for work-related care reasons increased, as did the proportion from two-parent families (Table 3.10). In private-for-profit centres the proportion of children from one-parent families who were in work-related care increased from 65% to 85%, while the proportion from two-parent families increased from 60% to 82%. There were

also substantial increases in the proportions of children in work-related care in community-based and 'other' centres, for both one- and two-parent families. In contrast, in family day care, and the proportion of children from two-parent families in work-related care increased slightly (from 89% to 91%) the proportion from one-parent families fell slightly (from 85% to 82%). In each census year, the proportion of children from two-parent families who were in work-related care was higher than the proportion from one-parent families in community-based centres and family day care services.

**Table 3.10: Percentage of children using long day care services who are in care for work-related reasons, by family type and type of service provider, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1995, 1997 and 1999**

Family type/Type of service provider	1991	1992	1993	1995	1997	1999
Community-based centres						
One-parent family	72	73	74	80	82	78
Two-parent family	75	75	77	82	87	85
Private-for-profit centres						
One-parent family	65	66	69	76	82	85
Two-parent family	60	58	59	67	79	82
'Other' centres						
One-parent family	80	78	82	88	88	87
Two-parent family	82	77	75	81	87	88
Family day care						
One-parent family	85	85	83	89	87	82
Two-parent family	89	88	88	92	93	91

Sources: DHHCS 1992; DSHS 1994, 1995; DHFS 1997; AIHW analysis of FaCS Census of Child Care Services Unit Record File (1997, 1999).

As shown in Table 3.8, in 1999 most children using long day care services were in care for work-related reasons, i.e. they were from families with both parents (or a sole parent) in the labour force or studying/training for work. Children in 'non-work-related care' may be in child care to enable parents to participate in community or personal activities or for family support reasons. Parents of all children in long day care services may use child care services to satisfy children's needs for companionship and play opportunities and for their social, physical, emotional and intellectual development. Child care services have been found to be particularly beneficial for children from low-income families (Centre for Community Child Health 2000:16).

In 1999 there were some differences between the age distribution of children in work- and in non-work-related care (Table 3.11). Children in work-related care were more likely to be 'young' and more likely to be 'school age'.

In long day care centres, for instance, the proportion of children in work-related care who were under 2 years was higher than the proportion in non-work-related care. For example, in community-based centres 21% of children in work-related care were under 2 compared with 14% of children in non-work-related care. In family day care services, on the other hand, the proportion of children in non-work-related care who were under 2 was the same as the proportion in work-related care (21%).

The proportion of children in work-related care who were 'school age' (5 years or older) was higher than the proportion in non-work-related care, particularly in private-for-profit centres and family day care services. In family day care services, for instance, 31% of children in work-related care were aged 5 or older, compared with 20% of children in non-work-related care.

**Table 3.11: Children using long day care services by age and work-related care status and type of service provider, 1999 (per cent)**

Age/Type of service provider	Work-related care	Non-work-related care
Community-based centres		
0-1	21	14
2	24	28
3	28	34
4	23	22
5+	4	3
Total	100	100
<b>Total (n)</b>	<b>63,762</b>	<b>12,688</b>
Private-for-profit centres		
0-1	14	9
2	20	22
3	27	34
4	25	29
5+	14	6
Total	100	100
<b>Total (n)</b>	<b>144,389</b>	<b>31,210</b>
'Other' centres		
0-1	21	12
2	22	24
3	27	35
4	23	25
5+	6	4
Total	100	100
<b>Total (n)</b>	<b>15,939</b>	<b>2,247</b>
Family day care		
0-1	21	21
2	18	24
3	17	22
4	14	14
5+	31	20
Total	100	100
<b>Total (n)</b>	<b>72,214</b>	<b>9,204</b>

Source: AIHW analysis of FaCS Census of Child Care Services Unit Record File (1999).

Not surprisingly children who were in long day care for non-work related reasons spent considerably fewer hours in care than those in work-related care, albeit with some variation by type of service provider (Table 3.12). Around half of the children who were in non-work-related care spent less than 10 hours in care a week and only a relatively small proportion spent more than 20 or more hours a week in care. For instance, in community-based centres, 57% of children in non-work-related care spent less than 10 hours a week in care and 9% spent 20 or more hours. In contrast, 27% of children in work-related care spent less than 10 hours a week in care and 43% spent 20 or more hours.

**Table 3.12: Children using long day care services by hours in care, work-related care status and type of service provider, 1999 (per cent)**

Hours/Type of service provider	Work-related care	Non-work-related care
Community-based centres		
0-9	27	57
10-19	30	34
20-29	19	6
30-39	11	2
40-49	10	1
50+	3	0
Total	100	100
<b>Total (n)</b>	<b>12,688</b>	<b>63,762</b>
Private-for-profit centres		
0-9	26	47
10-19	31	40
20-29	19	9
30-39	10	2
40-49	9	1
50+	5	1
Total	100	100
<b>Total (n)</b>	<b>31,210</b>	<b>144,389</b>
'Other' centres		
0-9	28	51
10-19	28	37
20-29	20	7
30-39	12	3
40-49	10	1
50+	3	0
Total	100	100
<b>Total (n)</b>	<b>2,247</b>	<b>15,939</b>
Family day care services		
0-9	35	47
10-19	27	33
20-29	17	14
30-39	10	3
40-49	8	2
50+	3	1
Total	100	100
<b>Total (n)</b>	<b>9,204</b>	<b>72,214</b>

Source: AIHW analysis of FaCS Census of Child Care Services Unit Record File (1999).

One of the reasons children in non-work-related care spent fewer hours in care a week than those in work-related care is because parents with children in non-work-related care can access fee relief only for up to 20 hours of 'paid care' a week (see Section 3.6).

### 3.5 Children and parents with special needs

Parents and children with special needs include single parents and their children, children and/or parents with a disability, children of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent, children from culturally diverse backgrounds and children at risk of abuse or neglect. It is important to note that any one child may be from more than one special-needs group, for instance, the child may come from a one-parent Indigenous family. The Commonwealth Government provides funding for special programs to help those parents and children with special needs to access services.

Under the Jobs, Education and Training Scheme (JET), for instance, parents dependent on Centrelink payments and allowances (including single parents) who want to enter or return to the workforce are helped to find child care.

The Supplementary Services Program (SUPS) (which operated throughout the 1990s) provides funding to integrate children with additional needs – such as children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and children with a disability – into Commonwealth supported services.

In 1997 a complementary program, the Special Needs Subsidy Scheme (SNSS), was introduced to help families with children who have ongoing high support needs to access child care. Parents and children with special needs are also given priority of access to Commonwealth-supported child care services. This includes children at risk of abuse and neglect, single parents and their children, Indigenous families, families with a parent and/or child with a disability, and children in families with a culturally diverse background (AIHW 1995, 2001a).

#### One-parent families

Between 1991 and 1995 the proportion of children in long day care services who were from one-parent families fell slightly from 23% to 21% and then remained unchanged to 1999 (Table 3.13). The proportion fell for all types of service providers except private-for-profit centres, where it increased from 16% to 20% between 1991 and 1999. The increase in the proportion of children using private-for-profit centres who were from one-parent families may reflect the improvements in the accessibility of their services between 1991 and 1999, with the proportion opening for 11 or more hours per day almost doubling over the period (see Section 2.4).

**Table 3.13: Percentage of children in long day care services from one-parent families by type of service provider, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1995, 1997 and 1999**

Type of service provider	1991	1992	1993	1995	1997	1999
Community-based centres	23	20	19	18	18	18
Private-for-profit centres	16	18	18	19	21	20
'Other' centres	20	19	19	17	18	16
Family day care	30	30	29	28	27	27
<b>All long day care services</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>21</b>

Sources: DHHCS 1992; DSHS 1994, 1995; DHFS 1997; AIHW analysis of FaCS Census of Child Care Services Unit Record File (1997, 1999).

Throughout the period from 1991 to 1999 the proportion of children in long day care services who were from one-parent families was highest in family day care services. In 1999, for instance, 27% of children in family day care were from one-parent families compared

with 20% of those in private-for-profit centres, 18% in community-based centres and 16% in 'other' centres. One of the reasons single parents are more likely to use family day care is that it is more affordable than centre-based care. On average, single parents have lower incomes than couples and family day care fees are lower than fees for centre-based care (see Section 2.6).

Family day care services are also more flexible than long day care centres, in terms of providing care during 'non-standard' hours – that is, at nights and on weekends. This would be of particular assistance to single parents who do not have a co-resident parent available to help them with child care. In 1999, 7% of children in family day care Australia-wide were in 'overnight care' during the census week; of these nearly two-thirds came from one-parent families. The proportion of children in long day care services who were from one-parent families was higher than the proportion of children in the Australian population who were from one-parent families – 16% of children aged 0–4 years in 1997 (AIHW 1999:114). This reflects the greater need of sole parents for child care.

In 1999 the proportion of children in all long day care services from one-parent families ranged from 18% in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory to 26% in South Australia (Table 3.13). In the Australian Capital Territory, the proportion in long day care centres was lower than the national average, while the proportion in family day care was higher.

**Table 3.14: Percentage of children in long day care services from one-parent families, by type of service provider and State/Territory, 1999**

Type of service provider	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
Community-based centres	19	16	19	16	18	17	13	17	18
Private-for-profit centres	17	19	24	25	20	21	11	18	20
'Other' centres	16	15	15	26	21	21	13	16	16
Family day care	21	26	27	30	40	25	30	32	27
<b>All long day care services</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>21</b>

Source: AIHW analysis of FaCS Census of Child Care Services Unit Record File (1999).

## Children with special needs

The census collects data on 'children with additional needs' which the census defines as children and/or parents with a disability, children at risk of abuse or neglect, children of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background, and children with a culturally diverse background. The definition of 'culturally diverse background' has varied slightly over the years, but in 1997 and 1999 it referred to 'children with a culturally diverse background including those with a parent born overseas in a country where the first language is not English'.

Over the period 1991 to 1999, the proportion of children in long day care services who had 'additional needs' increased slightly from 14% to 16% (Table 3.14). The proportion was highest in community-based and 'other' centres and lowest in family day care services. Between 1991 and 1999 the proportion of children in community-based centres who had additional needs fell slightly, from 21% to 19%, and in 'other' centres it fluctuated between 17% and 20%. In contrast, the proportion of children using family day care services who had special needs increased slightly from 10% to 12%, and the proportion in private-for-profit centres increased from 10% to 15%. These increases were mainly due to increases in the proportion of children who were from a culturally diverse background.

**Table 3.15: Percentage of children using long day care services with special (additional) needs by type of service provider, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1995, 1997 and 1999**

Type of service provider/Additional needs	1991	1992	1993	1995	1997	1999
<b>Community-based centres</b>						
Child with a disability	3	4	3	3	2	2
Parent with a disability	1	1	1	1	1	1
Child at risk of abuse or neglect	2	1	1	1	1	1
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	1	1	1	1	2	2
Culturally diverse background	15	15	15	14	15	15
Any additional need	21	21	20	20	20	19
<b>Total (n)</b>	<b>65,588</b>	<b>68,562</b>	<b>75,172</b>	<b>76,857</b>	<b>79,139</b>	<b>76,450</b>
<b>Private-for-profit centres</b>						
Child with a disability	1	2	2	2	2	2
Parent with a disability	< 0.5	< 0.5	1	< 0.5	1	1
Child at risk of abuse or neglect	1	< 0.5	< 0.5	< 0.5	< 0.5	< 0.5
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	< 0.5	1	1	1	1	1
Culturally diverse background	7	11	10	9	11	11
Any additional need	10	14	13	13	14	15
<b>Total (n)</b>	<b>58,857</b>	<b>74,0722</b>	<b>94,177</b>	<b>142,513</b>	<b>172,562</b>	<b>175,599</b>
<b>Other centres</b>						
Child with a disability	2	2	2	2	2	2
Parent with a disability	< 0.5	< 0.5	< 0.5	1	1	1
Child at risk of abuse or neglect	1	1	< 0.5	1	< 0.5	< 0.5
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	1	1	1	1	1	1
Culturally diverse background	15	17	14	15	17	17
Any additional need	19	20	17	20	20	20
<b>Total (n)</b>	<b>7,711</b>	<b>10,980</b>	<b>11,822</b>	<b>16,655</b>	<b>18,193</b>	<b>18,186</b>
<b>Family day care</b>						
Child with a disability	2	2	2	2	3	3
Parent with a disability	1	1	< 0.5	< 0.5	< 0.5	< 0.5
Child at risk of abuse or neglect	1	1	1	1	< 0.5	1
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	1	1	1	1	1	1
Culturally diverse background	6	7	6	6	7	8
Any additional need	10	10	10	10	12	12
<b>Total (n)</b>	<b>60,202</b>	<b>68,447</b>	<b>76,356</b>	<b>84,212</b>	<b>83,471</b>	<b>81,418</b>
<b>All long day care services</b>						
Child with a disability	2	2	2	2	2	2
Parent with a disability	1	1	1	1	1	1
Child at risk of abuse or neglect	1	1	1	< 0.5	< 0.5	< 0.5
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	1	1	1	1	1	1
Culturally diverse background	10	11	10	10	11	11
Any additional need	14	15	14	14	15	16
<b>Total (n)</b>	<b>192,358</b>	<b>222,061</b>	<b>257,527</b>	<b>320,237</b>	<b>353,365</b>	<b>351,653</b>

Note: Some children may be included in more than one additional needs category.

Sources: DHHCS 1992; DSHS 1994, 1995; DHFS 1997; AIHW analysis of FaCS Census of Child Care Services Unit Record File (1997, 1999).



In every census year under review, children with a culturally diverse background comprised the largest group of children with additional needs using long day care services. In 1999, for instance, children from a culturally diverse background comprised 11% of children using all long day care services compared with 2% or less of children from any of the other 'additional needs' groups (Table 3.15).

The proportion of children using long day care services who had a disability and the proportion who were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin were somewhat lower than the proportions of these groups of children in the Australian population (AIHW 2001a). Among children using long day care services in 1999, 2% had a disability, compared with 4% of children aged 0–4 years of age Australia-wide in 1998 (ABS 1998). Similarly, 1% of children in long day care in 1999 were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background, but this was lower than the proportion of children under 5 in the Australian population who were Indigenous—4% in 1999 (AIHW 2001a). One reason for the relatively low representation of Indigenous children in long day care services is that in every jurisdiction except the Australian Capital Territory, the Commonwealth funds special services for Indigenous children, i.e. multifunctional Aboriginal children's services (MACS). These services operate as long day care centres with other services provided to meet the needs of the particular Indigenous community (Moyle et al. 1996:35). Another reason for the low representation is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families are less likely than other families to use formal child care services since they tend to prefer to use informal care provided by families and friends (ABS 1995).

No population data are available to classify Australian children according to the definition of 'culturally diverse background' used in the Child Care Census. There are also no population data on parents with a disability or children at risk of abuse or neglect.

The proportion of children with additional needs varied considerably between the States and Territories (Table 3.16), to some extent reflecting differences between State and Territory populations. For instance, for each type of service provider, the Northern Territory, the jurisdiction with the highest proportion of children under 5 who were Indigenous (39% in 1999), had the highest proportion of children in long day care who were Indigenous—9% of children in community-based centres and 3% in family day care services were Indigenous.

Some other differences between jurisdictions may relate to differences in State and Territory policies and programs. In South Australia, for instance, where the State Government sponsors family day care services, 9% of all children in family day care have a disability compared with 3% of children using these services Australia-wide.

**Table 3.16: Percentage of children using long day care services with special (additional) needs by type of service provider and State/Territory, 1999**

Type of service provider/ Additional needs	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
<b>Community-based centres</b>									
Child with a disability	3	2	2	1	3	2	2	1	2
Parent with a disability	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0.5	1
Child at risk of abuse or neglect	1	1	1	1	< 0.5	1	1	< 0.5	1
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	2	1	3	2	1	< 0.5	1	9	2
Culturally diverse background	20	17	9	12	6	3	16	12	15
Any special need	25	20	14	17	11	6	20	22	19
<b>Total (n)</b>	<b>28,138</b>	<b>17,858</b>	<b>10,825</b>	<b>5,667</b>	<b>7,866</b>	<b>3,175</b>	<b>1,867</b>	<b>1,054</b>	<b>76,450</b>
<b>Private-for-profit centres</b>									
Child with a disability	2	1	2	1	2	2	1	1	2
Parent with a disability	1	1	1	1	1	< 0.5	1	< 0.5	1
Child at risk of abuse or neglect	< 0.5	< 0.5	< 0.5	< 0.5	< 0.5	< 0.5	< 0.5	0	< 0.5
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	1	< 0.5	2	2	1	< 0.5	1	4	1
Culturally diverse background	16	13	7	8	6	3	11	9	11
Any special need	20	15	12	11	9	6	14	14	15
<b>Total (n)</b>	<b>65,371</b>	<b>29,562</b>	<b>58,240</b>	<b>13,352</b>	<b>5,914</b>	<b>1,202</b>	<b>1,525</b>	<b>433</b>	<b>175,599</b>
<b>Other centres</b>									
Child with a disability	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	1	2
Parent with a disability	1	< 0.5	1	1	1	1	< 0.5	0	1
Child at risk of abuse or neglect	< 0.5	< 0.5	0	< 0.5	0	0	0	0	< 0.5
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	4	1
Culturally diverse background	23	15	11	8	11	4	13	10	17
Any special need	27	18	15	13	15	6	16	16	20
<b>Total (n)</b>	<b>6,717</b>	<b>5,020</b>	<b>2,480</b>	<b>860</b>	<b>949</b>	<b>586</b>	<b>1,124</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>18,186</b>
<b>Family day care</b>									
Child with a disability	2	4	3	2	9	3	2	1	3
Parent with a disability	< 0.5	< 0.5	< 0.5	< 0.5	0	1	< 0.5	0	< 0.5
Child at risk of abuse or neglect	1	1	< 0.5	< 0.5	< 0.5	1	< 0.5	1	1
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	1	< 0.5	1	2	2	< 0.5	1	3	1
Culturally diverse background	9	9	4	9	8	2	9	6	8
Any special need	12	14	9	13	18	5	13	11	12
<b>Total (n)</b>	<b>23,510</b>	<b>20,712</b>	<b>15,983</b>	<b>6,118</b>	<b>7,735</b>	<b>4,247</b>	<b>2,399</b>	<b>714</b>	<b>81,418</b>
<b>All long day care services</b>									
Child with a disability	2	2	2	2	5	2	2	1	2
Parent with a disability	1	1	1	1	0.5	1	1	< 0.5	1
Child at risk of abuse or neglect	1	0.5	< 0.5	0.5	< 0.5	0.5	< 0.5	< 0.5	0.5
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	1	< 0.5	2	2	1	< 0.5	1	6	1
Culturally diverse background	16	13	7	9	7	2	12	9	11
Any special need	20	16	12	13	13	5	16	17	16
<b>Total (n)</b>	<b>123,736</b>	<b>73,152</b>	<b>87,528</b>	<b>25,997</b>	<b>22,464</b>	<b>9,210</b>	<b>6,915</b>	<b>2,651</b>	<b>351,653</b>

Note: Some children may be included in more than one special needs category.

Source: AIHW analysis of FaCS Census of Child Care Services Unit Record File (1999).

## 3.6 Childcare Assistance

All the censuses from 1991 to 1999 collected data on whether or not a child received Childcare Assistance (see Section 2.5). However, separate data for private-for-profit centres and 'other' centres are not available for 1991.

In all census years under review, two-thirds or more of children using long day care services received Childcare Assistance. The proportion of children in community-based and private-for-profit centres receiving assistance increased up to 1993, remained relatively stable between 1993 and 1997, then fell to 1999 (Table 3.17). For 'other' centres, the proportion increased slightly between 1992 and 1993 and then fell to 1999. In contrast, the proportion of children in family day care receiving Childcare Assistance increased markedly between 1991 and 1997 and then fell slightly to 1999.

Throughout the period the proportion of children in 'other' centres who were receiving Childcare Assistance was substantially lower than the proportions in other types of centres and family day care. In 1999, 62% of children in 'other' centres received Childcare Assistance, compared with 70% of children in community-based centres, 77% of children in private-for-profit centres and 81% of children in family day care.

**Table 3.17: Percentage of children using long day care services receiving Childcare Assistance, by type of service provider, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1995, 1997 and 1999**

Type of service provider	1991	1992	1993	1995	1997	1999
Community-based centres	69	74	75	74	74	70
Private-for-profit centres	n.a.	75	81	81	81	77
'Other' centres	n.a.	66	68	66	66	62
Family day care	69	77	80	81	82	81

Sources: DHHCS 1992; DSHS 1994, 1995; DHFS 1997; AIHW analysis of FaCS Census of Child Care Services Unit Record File (1997, 1999).

There were marked variations in 1999 between the States and Territories in the extent to which children in long day care received Childcare Assistance (Table 3.17). For all types of service providers, the proportion of children receiving Childcare Assistance was relatively high in Queensland and South Australia and relatively low in the Australian Capital Territory. For instance, among private-for-profit centres, 86% of children using these services in Queensland received Childcare Assistance compared with 36% in the Australian Capital Territory. The proportion of children in family day care services in South Australia who were receiving Childcare Assistance was very high – 98% compared with 81% Australia-wide.

**Table 3.18: Percentage of children using long day care services receiving Childcare Assistance, by type of service provider and State/Territory, 1999**

Type of service provider	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
Community-based centres	70	68	75	65	77	79	49	55	70
Private-for-profit centres	71	74	86	80	80	77	36	73	77
'Other' centres	58	63	71	71	67	78	39	55	62
Family day care	73	83	82	82	98	89	66	67	81

Source: AIHW analysis of FaCS Census of Child Care Services Unit Record File (1999).

In 1999 the income threshold for maximum Childcare Assistance was \$528 per week. This was the level at which the maximum level of the (then) More than Minimum Family

Payment for low-income families cut out. Since Childcare Assistance is an income-tested payment, the proportion of children receiving the payment reflects the income levels of the families using the services. Thus, among families and children using private-for-profit long day care centres, the proportion of families with a family income of \$528 a week or less was lowest in the Australian Capital Territory (16%), the jurisdiction with the lowest proportion of children receiving Childcare Assistance (36%) (Tables 3.18, 3.19). Similarly, the proportion of families using private-for-profit centres with a family income of \$528 a week or less was highest in Queensland (56%), the jurisdiction with the highest proportion of children receiving Childcare Assistance (86%).

**Table 3.19: Percentage of families with adjusted incomes of \$528 per week or less (receiving maximum Childcare Assistance), by type of service provider and State/Territory, 1999**

Type of service provider	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
Community-based centres	41	37	42	36	40	41	21	30	39
Private-for-profit centres	41	41	56	48	42	44	16	33	46
'Other' centres	35	37	37	45	39	39	18	22	35
Family day care	38	45	44	48	65	49	32	33	45

Source: AIHW analysis of FaCS Census of Child Care Services Unit Record File (1999).

The proportion of children whose parents received Childcare Assistance also reflects, to some extent, the proportions of children in non-work-related care. This is because most children in work-related care have both parents (or a single parent) employed and these families would, on average, have higher incomes than other families of the same family type. In 1999, for every type of service provider the proportion of children in non-work-related care who received Childcare Assistance was greater than the proportion in work-related care (Table 3.20). Of children in community-based centres, for instance, 83% of children in non-work-related care were in receipt of Childcare Assistance compared with 68% of children in work-related care. Further, children in non-work-related care were more likely to receive the maximum Childcare Assistance than children in work-related care.

**Table 3.20: Percentage of children using long day care services receiving Childcare Assistance (CA) by work-related care status and type of service provider, 1999**

Type of service provider	Work-related		Non-work related	
	Receiving maximum CA	Receiving CA	Receiving maximum CA	Receiving CA
Community-based centres	35	68	61	83
Private-for-profit centres	44	76	56	81
'Other' centres	33	60	50	73
Family day care	40	79	77	92

Source: AIHW analysis of FaCS Census of Child Care Services Unit Record File (1999).

Childcare Assistance is paid on the basis of the hours that a child is booked into care, i.e. 'paid hours' of care (AIHW 1999). Between 1995 and 1999, there were two important changes regarding access to Childcare Assistance:

- From 1 April 1997, any one child could not receive Childcare Assistance for more than 50 'paid hours' per week, except where families needed more care to meet working commitments (DHFS 1996a:184).

- From 28 April 1998, Childcare Assistance for non-work-related care was limited to 20 'paid hours' per week per child, except for families and children in specific circumstances, including families in crisis, children at risk of abuse and neglect, and children with a disability and their siblings (AIHW 1997).

Data from the 1995 and 1999 censuses show that these policies had a large impact on the number of 'paid hours' of care used by children in work-related and non-work-related care receiving Childcare Assistance (Table 3.21).

In 1995 among children in long day care centres who received Childcare Assistance, there was a relatively high proportion of children in work-related care for more than 50 'paid hours' of care a week. This proportion was highest in private-for-profit centres – 24%. The proportion of children receiving Childcare Assistance who were in work-related care and who were using more than 50 'paid hours' a week was considerably lower in family day care (3%).

In 1995, among children in long day care centres who received Childcare Assistance and were in non-work-related care more than a third were in care for more than 20 'paid hours' a week. This proportion was considerably lower in family day care (15%).

The tendency of children in long day care centres receiving Childcare Assistance to be in care for a higher number of 'paid hours' a week than those in family day care may partly reflect the different charging practices of long day care centres and family day care services. Parents with children in long day care centres are generally required to book into a centre for a given period – for instance, half a day or a full day – and pay for that period, even though the children may not attend for the entire period. Given this, the 'paid hours' of care are generally higher than the 'actual hours' the children spend in care. In family day care, however, parents are often charged by the hour, so that the 'paid hours' of care are more likely to be similar to the 'actual hours'.

The introduction of the '50-hour limit' in April 1997 for children in work-related care had a marked effect on the paid hours of care of children in work-related care. In community-based centres the proportion of children receiving Childcare Assistance who were in work-related care for more than 50 paid hours fell from 19% in 1995 to 7% in 1999. Similar drops were recorded for children in private for profit (from 24% to 6%) and 'other' centres (from 10% to 5%). The corresponding fall for children in family day care was from 3% in 1995 to 2% in 1999.

The introduction of the '20-hour' limit in April 1998 had a similar effect on the paid hours of care per week of children receiving Childcare Assistance who were in non-work-related care. In community-based centres the proportion of these children who were in care for more than 20 paid hours fell from 40% to 23%. Similar drops were recorded for children in private for profit (from 52% to 25%) and 'other' centres (from 34% to 22%). The corresponding fall for family day care was from 15% in 1995 to 13% in 1999.

**Table 3.21: Children using long day care services receiving Childcare Assistance (CA) by work-related care status, type of service provider and 'paid hours' of care, 1995 and 1999 (per cent)**

Type of service provider/ Work-related care	Paid hours of care			Total
	20 or less	21–50	51+	
<b>1995</b>				
Community-based centres				
Work-related	30	51	19	100
Non-work-related	60	34	6	100
Private-for-profit centres				
Work-related	31	45	24	100
Non-work-related	49	44	8	100
'Other' centres				
Work-related	43	47	10	100
Non-work-related	66	31	3	100
Family day care				
Work-related	59	38	3	100
Non-work-related	85	14	1	100
<b>1999</b>				
Community-based centres				
Work-related	41	52	7	100
Non-work-related	78	22	1	100
Private-for-profit centres				
Work-related	39	55	6	100
Non-work-related	76	24	1	100
'Other' centres				
Work-related	46	50	5	100
Non-work related	78	22	0	100
Family day care				
Work-related	63	35	2	100
Non-work-related	87	12	1	100

Sources: AIHW analysis of FaCS Census of Child Care Services Unit Record File (1995, 1999).

It is clear that these policy initiatives had a substantial effect on the number of 'paid hours' of care used by families with children in work-related and non-work-related care receiving Childcare Assistance. These trends suggests that the demand for child care services is 'highly elastic' (demand is highly responsive to price) – with parents' use of services falling as price rises because of changes in eligibility for Childcare Assistance.