



STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION
MICHAEL PETERSSON MLA (CHAIR), JOHNATHAN DAVIS MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), PETER CAIN MLA

**Inquiry into referred 2019–20 Annual and Financial Reports
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**

Asked by Mr Hanson MLA:

In relation to:
Childcare

1. At a median cost of \$595 per week (ABS, 2021), childcare in the ACT is \$70 pw above the national average. Why is ACT childcare the most expensive in Australia?
2. Canberra parents have paid \$70-\$100 per week more for childcare for at least 5 years. Is this of concern to the Government?
3. What is being done to lower the costs of Canberra childcare?

Three-year old preschool (Education AR Page 43)

4. Are there any staffing issues with regard to this service?
5. What are the qualifications of early childhood staff?
6. How many priority places have been made available?
7. What is the current focus of the Koori pre-schools?

Minister Berry MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows: --

1. The factors informing the cost of long day care in the ACT are set out in a report published in 2017, following a review of affordability of the ACT's Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector.

The cost of property, rent, staffing and the ratios of staff to children according to age are all factors.

ECEC providers determine the fees they charge. States and Territories have responsibility for regulating the safety and quality of providers and services, but do not engage in price regulation. The Australian Government provides a national Child Care Subsidy system under the Family Assistance Law.

A copy of the 2017 report is at:

https://www.education.act.gov.au/data/assets/word_doc/0003/1226046/Early-Childhood-Education-and-Care-in-the-ACT-Report-2017.docx

2. The ACT Government is committed to making quality early childhood education and care more accessible to ACT families in need.
3. The ACT Government provides 15 hours a week of preschool for all four year-olds, this



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includes Koori Preschool. Free access to preschool significantly reduces families' overall cost of access to centre based services.

For three year-olds, the ACT Government is providing 15 hours per week of free preschool for up to 500 children experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage and has up to 100 places available for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at Koori Preschool.

4. The quality early childhood education for three year-olds initiative is delivered in an Approved Service under the Education and Care Services National Law, and is required to maintain staffing ratios of suitably qualified staff as per the requirements of the National Quality Framework.
5. The National Quality Framework sets out the minimum educator qualification requirements for working in an Approved Service under the Education and Care Services National Law. At least 50% of required educators, with the relevant educator to child ratios in place, must have, or be actively working towards, an approved diploma level education and care qualification (or higher), all other educators must have or be working towards an approved Certificate iii education and care qualification (Regulation 126 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations).

In addition, all services must have access to an early childhood teacher (Regulations 130 to 134). Services with up to 25 places must have access to an early childhood teacher for 20% of operating hours. All other services are required to have an early childhood teacher in attendance for the following periods:

- Between 25 and 60 places 6 hours a day or 60% of operating hours if operating under 50 hours per week.
- Between 60 and 80 places must have access to a second ECT 3 hours a day or 30% of hours if operating under 50 hours per week.
- Over 80 places must have access to two ECTs for 6 hours or 60% of hours if operating under 50 hours per week.

Services can apply for a temporary waiver for the requirement to have an early childhood teacher if they are unable to find a suitable qualified applicant (Regulation 44).

6. In the ACT Budget announcement in January 2021, the ACT Government increased the number of places for priority three year-olds – those experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage – from 300 to 500, for access to 15 hours per week, 48 weeks per year, of free quality early childhood education.
7. Two initiatives under the first phase of Set up for Success are the provision of up to 100 places in Koori Preschool for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander three year-olds, and expanding the hours offered from 12 hours to 15 hours per week to enhance cultural safety and educational experiences for children. Under the first phase the ACT Education



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Directorate is engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through a co-design process, to ensure Koori Preschool continues to meet the community's needs regarding cultural safety and integrity.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Community Inclusion

Signature:

Date: 12/04/21

By the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Yvette Berry MLA

