



Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Committee Members

**Submission to inquiry into Family Assistance Legislation (Cheaper Child Care) Bill  
2022**

**Outside School Hours Council of Australia**

The Outside School Hours Council of Australia (OSHCA) encompasses providers who account for more than 30 per cent of the national OSHC market, including Junior Adventures Group, TeamKids, Camp Australia, TheirCare and The Y. OSHCA members represent approximately a third of the 4,000+ services that are operated on school sites throughout Australia, employing more than 10,000 people across all mainland states and territories.

Our sector provides affordable care for the children of over 350,000 Australian families who rely on our services to be able to work. Without wide and unfettered access to OSHC, there are inherent constraints on productivity, the pace at which parents return to the workplace following the disruption of Covid-19 and continued ever increasing pressure on parents in the burden of juggling work, school and other commitments. Never was the dependance on our sector clearer than in the midst of the pandemic, in remaining open to care for vulnerable children and children of emergency services workers, despite mandated lockdowns and restrictions on movement.

At OSCHA, we are committed to working collaboratively with Government to help manage and address the needs of the OSHC sector and ensure services continue to be available to meet the needs of children and families across Australia.

**OSHCA is generally supportive of the Family Assistance Legislation**

While many elements of the Bill do not directly impact OSHCA members, OSHCA appreciates the Government's commitment to improving access to care and strengthening the integrity of the system.

Of particular interest to OSHCA are the proposed changes in relation to electronic payments as well as opportunities to ensure support for families continues beyond the very early years of their children's lives.

OSHCA also supports the increase to the top tier of need to 90% as well as lifting the eligibility limit to \$530K. Both measures will help ensure that barriers to care are reduced. Providers exist to support children and their families.

## **OSHC Services support women and families and are critical to economic reform**

We note and applaud the focus of the Family Assistance Legislation on better supporting women and their families to participate fully in the workforce. We are acutely aware that as Australia seeks to rebuild its economy, we need to capitalise on the productivity of our entire workforce. In addition to childcare, we feel it is critical that we also keep OSHC services front and centre when considering the needs of families and the social expectation and benefit of gender equality.

In Australia, the proportion of couple families with dependants in which one or both parents were employed was 93.7% (2.5 million) in June 2021, up from 92.1% in June 2020 meaning both parents play an enormous role in Australia's workforce. Specifically, 73.7% of couple families with children under 15 have mothers who are employed. (Ref: ABS data June 2021).

In 2019, 304,002 (or 31.5 per cent) of children aged 0–12 years, attended Australian Government Child Care Benefit approved care services. (Ref: Productivity commission data). OSHC has been the fastest growing care type of the sector over the past five years and the largest in terms of the number of sessions of care delivered.

## **Suggested amendments that would deliver sustained support for families**

Despite the economic and social dependence on OSHC, limiting discounts in the cost of care for subsequent children in care in families to children of 0-5 years in age is both inequitable and a missed opportunity from government and will negatively impact families. Although OSHC is less expensive than pre-school care, it is still an essential service that has a direct and meaningful impact on family budgets. It would seem to be an unintended consequence that parents with school aged children would be disadvantaged for working relative to those with pre-schools aged children.

Primary school aged children of working parents entering Kindergarten, or early years of school are not more able to travel home alone or be without supervision than children aged 0-5 years. The needs of children and families continue in those early years of school and so too should support from government.

Further, as the impacts of the Cheaper Childcare Bill are delivered and more parents with children aged 0-5 years can participate in the workforce, those children will grow and are likely to require care in their primary school years.

Working parents want to be able to look forward and see that they can re-enter the workforce and stay there knowing that even as their children leave childcare, the appropriate care is available.

For a proportionally minimal additional cost government could ensure that parents, could look forward and know that returning to the workforce would be supported by government.

This Bill is an opportunity to acknowledge the significance of all care and ensure that parents who overcome the hurdles of undertaking work with children under five do not face unnecessary challenges and are forced to exit the workforce down the track, as their kids grow and progress into the school system

### **Electronic payments of Gap Fees**

Requiring childcare fees to be paid electronically will have minimal impact on business and families but will help ensure government funding goes to those who need it most.

We support the requirement for fees to be paid electronically noting this is how the majority of our families pay anyway. Importantly, fees being paid electronically will be easier to administer.

We welcome the opportunity to further brief the committee as required.

Yours sincerely

**Michael Abela**  
OSHCA President