



**Childcare in Kalgoorlie-Boulder Survey**  
December 2017

## Foreward

Kalgoorlie-Boulder is a city where many people relocate for bountiful job prospects however it is disturbing that the underlying community support structures are so poorly understood, resourced and supported.

Childcare is a local sector that plays a critical role in underpinning our economic output and prosperity. The availability to affordable, quality care allowing people to freely work their chosen hours, whilst knowing their children are well cared for in a supportive learning environment. As one respondent stated: "You don't get to choose the centre you want based on rating and quality. You get what has a space".

Over the last twenty years, the demand for child care has increased by 75% but Kalgoorlie-Boulder has seen the closure of two centres (approximately 80 places). Access to high quality and affordable care has gone backwards in the city. The scarcity of child care places has a significant negative impact on local labour market participation, especially for women. It is acknowledged that, caring for children remained the most common perceived barrier to labour market participation for women.

***We have a local small business and are unable to operate fully without child care. We also have no family in town to call on for support. Spending years at home with no family support is a very isolating experience and definitely has an effect on mental health.***

Kalgoorlie-Boulder can be a very isolating place to live due to a combination of the geographic location; high cost of flights; lack of family support; and the transient nature of the city. This means that people rely heavily on formal care arrangements. The ability to return to the workforce and work required hours, helps to address issues such as social inclusion and a sense of community connectedness which have a direct effect on mental and physical health.

The survey shows that local parents are unable to access care for their children when they need it, resulting in the need to juggling shifts, split care arrangements, delay returning to work or seeking care outside of Kalgoorlie-Boulder for school holidays.

***Kalgoorlie need's better/ more places for before and after school care. Kalgoorlie is a difficult city to have staff to relocate to the lack of child care facilities and places just adds to the reasons for family's to not want to move here.***

These stresses are exacerbated for single parent families, shift workers, those with multiple births or large families, culminate in people leaving in the city or deciding not to more to the region.

***I have 5 children, the care I need is 7days and 12 hrs week on week off and for me I find this near impossible to find anyone to care for my children.***

The provision of quality childcare is critical to the liveability of Kalgoorlie-Boulder and in the attraction and retention of families to the city. Respondents also rated the affordability of care very poorly, with a score of 60 with 0 being very affordable and 100 not affordable.

In order to document the demand for child care in Kalgoorlie-Boulder, an online survey was conducted from the 18th of November till the 12th of December 2017. 280 individuals responded on behalf of their family.

## Background

There is a significant demographic in Kalgoorlie-Boulder within the child care demand age range. The ABS 2016 Census<sup>1</sup> identifies Kalgoorlie-Boulder (LGA) has a population of that 30,059. Over 20% (6,120) are within the age range of child care (zero to twelve). As identified in the Kalgoorlie-Boulder Liveability and Social Services Review 2016, Kalgoorlie Boulder has a high proportion of families with young children "Consistent with historic trends, families with children are the predominant household type in Kalgoorlie-Boulder representing 48.5% of all family types. Consequently there will be requirements for appropriate children's and family services in the region. Venues such as community or neighbourhood centres create a valuable resource offering a range of activities including parenting classes, playgroups and childcare".

A contributing factor to the high demand for care is the sense of isolation living in WA's largest inland city, made worse by the high cost of flights to nearest city, Perth (600km). Kalgoorlie is the most expensive WA town to fly to (West Australian article): "Kalgoorlie has narrowly beaten four Pilbara mining towns to claim the unenviable title as the most expensive WA destination to fly to". The CKB submission to the Inquiry into Regional Airfares in Western Australia confirms return fares between \$800-\$1200 per person are common, making travel "difficult for individuals and impossible for families". This isolation and no family or support systems, means formal care is vital to address social inclusion and connections.

Liveability is a critical factor in the decision to relocate or remain in town, as identified in the Kalgoorlie-Boulder Growth Plan 2017, "One point that was made by multiple stakeholders was the attraction and retention of highly skilled individuals to the community" and "Enhancing liveability and local amenity become more important as people seek greater opportunities and lifestyle choices". Finally, "The importance of enhancing lifestyle and amenity to promote population attraction and retention is essential for economic growth and increases the importance of investment in industries that service the local population and may not be as significant in the traded economy".

The Council of Australian Governments' reform agenda for early childhood education saw the development of the Early Years Learning Framework; a national early learning framework for children from birth to five years. The Framework's vision is for all children to experience play-based learning that is engaging and builds success for life. "The National Quality Framework (NQF) is the result of an agreement between all Australian governments to work together to provide better educational and developmental outcomes for children using education and care services. The NQF introduces a new quality standard to improve education and care across long day care, family day care, preschool/kindergarten, and outside school hours care."<sup>2</sup>

The Goldfields-Esperance Strategic Development Plan 2011-2021 (State Government), highlights early childhood as a priority through the strategy of addressing developmental needs by the action of **supporting early childhood policy and service provision**. The Strategic Development Plan is a tri-partite agreement (Federal, State and Local Government) outlining the priorities for the Goldfields-Esperance region over the next decade of investment.<sup>3</sup>

The Development Plan has the following priorities, strategies and actions which align to the Goldfields Child Care Centres strategic plan:

- Attraction and retention of the required workforce
- Actively promote the region as a diverse and vibrant work environment.
- **Address priority areas of** housing availability, health, education and childcare.

The Goldfields-Esperance Regional Blueprint, 2016 states "Female workforce participation is an important consideration in the region. The gap between the male and female participation rate is more than 20% in some local government authority areas. **The availability of child care is a serious constraint** in many communities, not simply in terms of attraction and retention, but also in preventing individuals from taking up work, thereby reducing the potential availability of labour".<sup>4</sup>

Priority 8.3 of the Blueprint under the section Enhance Regional Living states; "A regional priority is ensuring our people, communities and places are the best they can be. This means investing in Aboriginal people, **valuing excellence in education and training from early childhood** to whole of life, creating vibrant regional centres and inclusive communities".

The Goldfields-Esperance Workforce Development Plan 2013-2016 developed by representatives from industry groups, local governments and relevant government agencies, working together on a range of priority actions to address regional education, training and workforce development issues. Regional issues identified in the plan include the need for a broader range of housing and **childcare services** to improve workforce attraction and participation.<sup>5</sup>

The Regional Education, Skills and Jobs Plan 2012-2014 (DEEWR, 2013) reported anecdotal evidence that indicates that there may be a **scarcity of child care places with unmet demand for care** and that this is having a negative impact on labour market participation, in particular on paid employment for women.<sup>6</sup>

The City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder (Local Government) Strategic Community Plan, 2013-2023 is a roadmap, which the City will use to guide their planning and decision making. One of the key goals is to have a family friendly city that encompasses inclusive and accessible sport and recreation with a strategy to **provide appropriate facilities and services for families and children**.<sup>7</sup>

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1 Australian Bureau of Statistics [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au) Kalgoorlie-Boulder Urban Centre Locality 2011.

2 <http://www.acecqa.gov.au/>

3 <http://www.gedc.wa.gov.au/news-and-media/publications>

4 [www.gedc.wa.gov.au/news-and-media/publications](http://www.gedc.wa.gov.au/news-and-media/publications)

5 [www.dtwd.wa.gov.au](http://www.dtwd.wa.gov.au)

6 [www.employment.gov.au/regional-education-skills-and-jobs-plans](http://www.employment.gov.au/regional-education-skills-and-jobs-plans)

7 [www.ckb.wa.gov.au/Council/Corporate-Documents/Strategic-Documents](http://www.ckb.wa.gov.au/Council/Corporate-Documents/Strategic-Documents)

## Background cont.

The City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder Social Plan, 2011-2015 which was developed following extensive community consultation identified that a number of issues were raised in relation to families and children regarding the availability and standard of family friendly facilities. Including the statement: "There were a number of issues raised about affordability, availability and options for childcare. 70% of survey respondents rated childcare facilities poorly, with many stating that it was very hard for families with young children, partners working long hours and being away from family and the usual support networks. Considering the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder was generally regarded as a transient town with many people moving here solely for work, many families said they felt isolated because they had no extended family members around to assist. Respondents said, if childcare hours were extended, then people could work more flexible hours. Access to childcare was raised as an important issue for people in the community." (P. 25)<sup>8</sup>

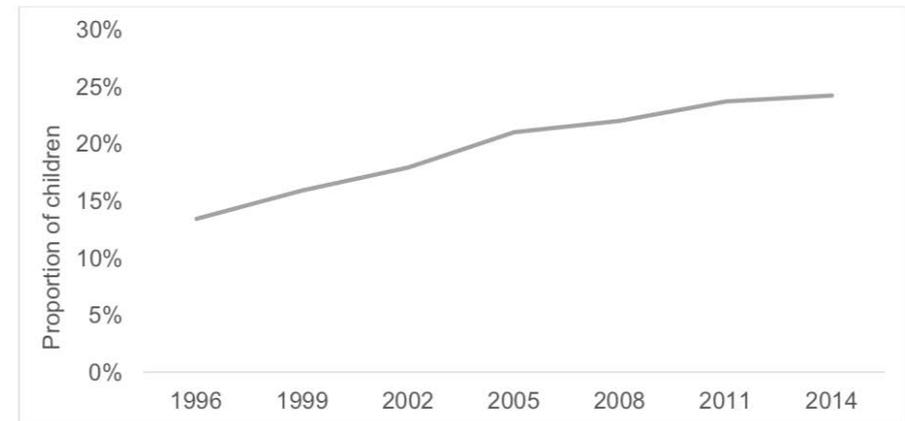
In 2012, the Goldfields Esperance Early Childhood and Child Care Industry Roundtable convened by the (then) Federal Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. Some of the key outcomes from these discussions included the need to support the ECEC workforce, which can be done through increased sustainability of care service providers. The challenges identified included:

- Attracting and retaining qualified early childhood education and care (ECEC) workers to the region.
- Low salaries in the ECEC sector. Workers are leaving the sector to work in jobs that attract higher salaries and are less stressful.
- High costs associated with living in the Goldfields Esperance region and the associated low wages in the ECEC sector make it difficult to attract workers.
- There is a lack of access to flexible training arrangements.
- There are limited career pathways for Indigenous people in the ECEC sector.

A recent Australia Bureau of Statistics report found; Access to childcare was cited as very important to 87% of people (males and females) regarding incentives to increase participation in the labour force. "Caring for children remained the most common perceived barrier to participation in the labour market for women in 2016-17, despite increasing female participation in the labour force, according to new data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)".<sup>9</sup>

Based on the AMP NATSEM report the rate of child care use has increased by 77% since 1996.<sup>10</sup> Locally however, since 2010 Kalgoorlie-Boulder has experienced the closure of two child care centres; a former ABC learning centre in Boulder and the Johnston street centre in central Kalgoorlie. This loss of approximately 80 child care places at a time when demand for child care is increasing has placed increased pressure on Kalgoorlie-Boulder families.

The 2015 Productivity Commission Inquiry Report into Childcare and Early Childhood Learning stated: "Early childhood education and care (ECEC) plays a vital role in the development of Australian children, their preparation for school and in enabling parents to participate in the workforce. Such outcomes are contingent on quality ECEC services being accessible and affordable for Australian families and their provision being flexible to match the variety of



Source: AMP NATSEM 2014, ABS Childhood Education and Care 2014

parents' work arrangements". The report also found "Increased workforce participation can result in benefits to the wider community through for example: reduced social and economic disadvantage; increased economic output and productivity; and improvements in the Government's fiscal position".<sup>11</sup>

The 2014, Price Waterhouse Coopers report, Putting a value on early childhood education and care in Australia, found that the economic benefits of greater access to child care included the financial benefits for Australia of:

- \$6billion benefits to GDP of increased female workforce participation
- \$10.3billion benefits to GDP for children receiving a quality education and care program
- \$13.3billion benefits to GDP of increased participation of vulnerable children<sup>12</sup>

The accessibility of child care enables caregivers to re-join or continue in the workforce, resulting in mental health and wellness benefits. According to a medical journal (att) the job quality is closely correlated to mental health. Factors such as benefits, stability, pay and feelings of control all increase overall job satisfaction, resulting in positive mental health and decreased mental health problems, like depression and anxiety.

<sup>8</sup> www.ckb.wa.gov.au

<sup>9</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics www.abs.gov.au Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation, Australia, July 2016 to June 2017 Media Release 11/12/2017

<sup>10</sup> AMP.NATSEM Income and Wealth Report 2014, p. 5. Master Reference 3

<sup>11</sup> Childcare and Early Childhood Learning Inquiry:

<https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/childcare#report>

## Background cont.

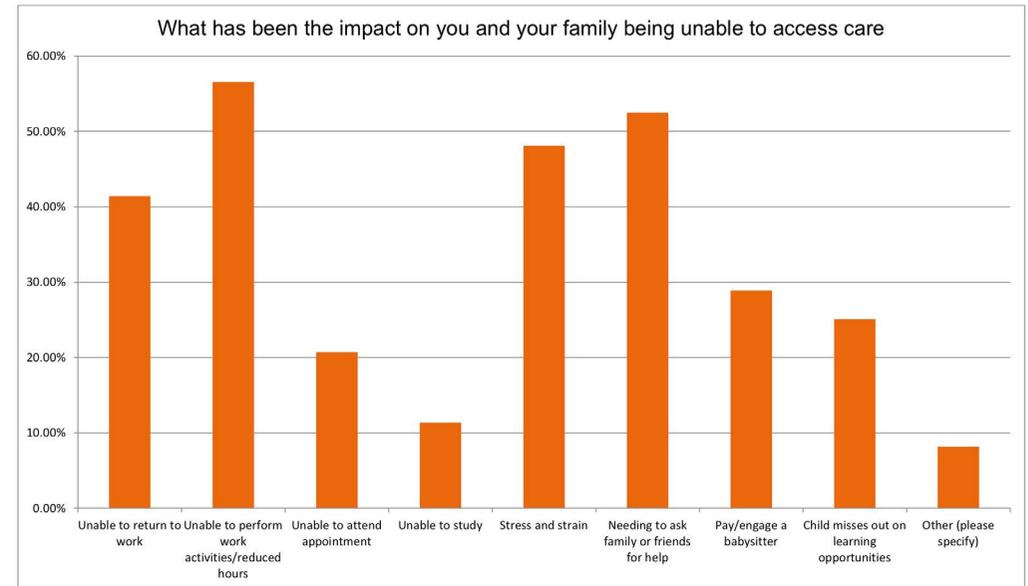
Kalgoorlie is a working town, the 2016 ABS Census evidenced 67% of the population work full time, compared to 57% for WA. The population consists of 4,600 families (couples with children or one parent families). Over 20% (6,120) are within the age range of child care (zero to twelve). For families with children 53.6% have both parents working. Limited child care is particularly critical for one parent families, many of whom have to work to survive. ABS Census evidenced Kalgoorlie has 995 one parent families, many who rely on formal care.

A Cost-Benefit Analysis of child care in Kalgoorlie-Boulder conducted by Pracsys found, the opportunity to work while children are young affects the long-term incomes of caregivers, as additional hours of work and employment continuity results in increased skills attainment. Yearly increase in earnings due to higher workforce participation is assumed to occur 7 years after the facility is operational and equals to \$55,000/year.

The current centres and number of licensed places in Kalgoorlie-Boulder is outlined below:

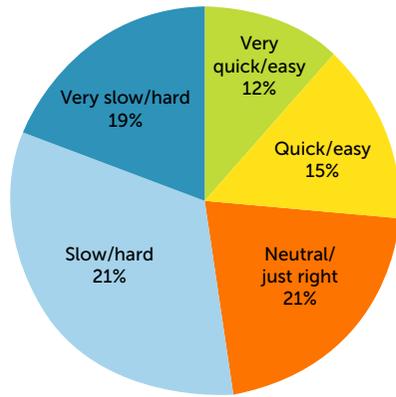
Licensed Places		Comments
<b>Long Day Care</b>		
TOTAL	355	
Hannan St Play and Learn	67	
Goldfields Child Care Centre	58	
Kids on Carrington	60	
Goodstart Early Learning Sommerville	94	
Kalgoorlie Early Learning Centre	76	
<b>Family Day Care</b>		
14 Educators	98	Licensed for 4 children under school age and 3 children school age. 7 total may include their own children. 98 represents the maximum available places, including their own children and if all 7 places are offered
<b>Outside School Hours and Vacational Care</b>		
TOTAL	98	
Goldfields Child Care Centre	20	
Eastern Goldfields YMCA	78	At times due to staffing and building constraints, numbers have been limited to much less than total licensed places.
<b>Occasional Care</b>		
Kalgoorlie Occasional Child Care Centre	35	

Families outlined the impacts the suffered as a consequence of being unable to secure child care.

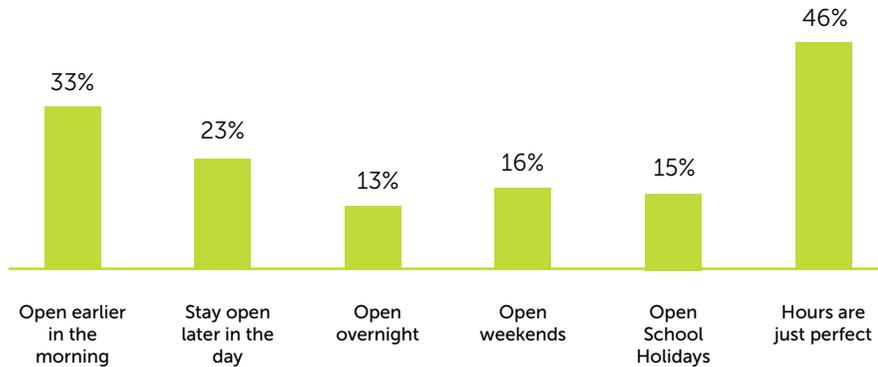


# Long Day Care

Over 50% of respondents found it very slow /hard or slow/hard to access long day care.

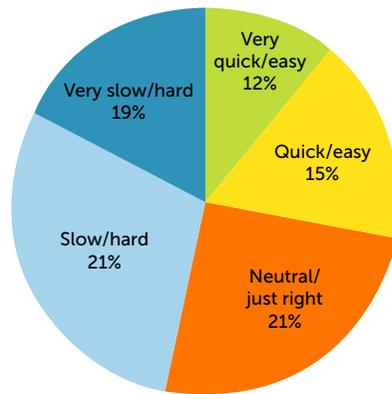


## Quality Rating

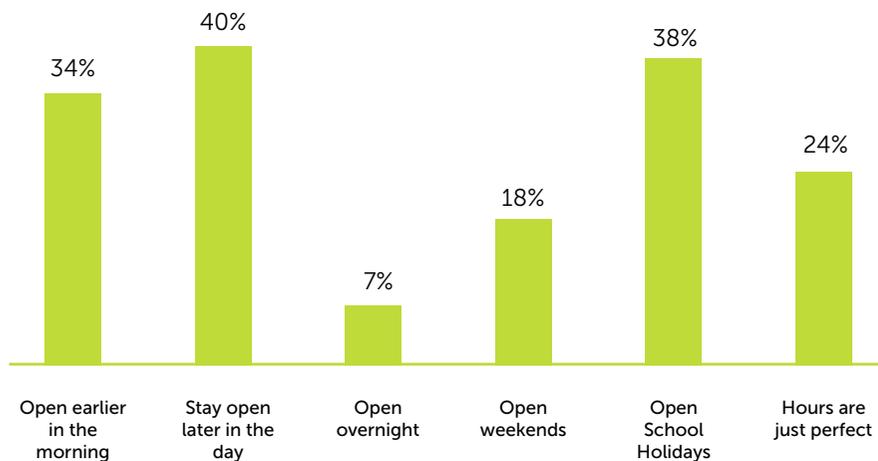


- Put your name down on the waiting list as soon as you find out your pregnant and you want to return to work.
- We picked our day care on the fact of who could take our child not by name etc. as we had to ring around and we told no a lot before they we found a yes.
- Not for myself but as a HR professional at a mine site we are finding when trying to get candidates on board the ability to get a position in day care and the "inflexibility" of day care an issue.
- I have 5 children, the care I need is 7days and 12 hrs week on week off and for me I find this near impossible to find anyone to care for my children.
- This leads to a child having to transition very slowly over from one day care to another. This affects the child negatively, especially if they are moving from a bad childcare centre to a good one.
- I put my daughter down at each day care when she was born. I knew I had 12months off work. It took right up to a few weeks before I could go back to get a spot.
- One child care would not take my child with a physical disability without doing health and safety for their workers. Took a month to get any answers from them and safe to say it was not done. Lost my business.
- Some of our employees have not been able to return to work or work part time as just too hard (and costly)
- My wife is studying full time, I work full time, and our three children are under the age of full time school. It is too expensive to pay for study and child care, we also weren't very happy with the care our children received when they were in day care.
- We have a local small business and are unable to operate fully without child care. We also have no family in town to call on for support. Spending years at home with no family support is a very isolating experience and definitely has an effect on mental health".
- Being a single mum we couldn't live without my wage.
- Day care has been fantastic for my eldest with his learning and social skills. I feel he has learnt more there than if I was a stay at home Mum.
- We have my son in full time even though my husband works 8/6. We pay for 4 days that we don't need. Would be great if Day care's accommodated work rosters.
- Some are national organisations with no local support to staff. They are underpaid and staff are put under a lot of stress and pressure to perform from both management/ corporate and some parents. Basically no localised/regional support.
- Having twins means more than half my income goes to childcare. If I hadn't of worked so hard in my degree I wouldn't bother working as I'm not much better off. I'm just starting in my career so it's necessary. Hopefully short tern suffering financially but long term stability and gains".
- Extremely bitter that they are not open on public holidays yet we are still required to pay.

# Occasional Child Care

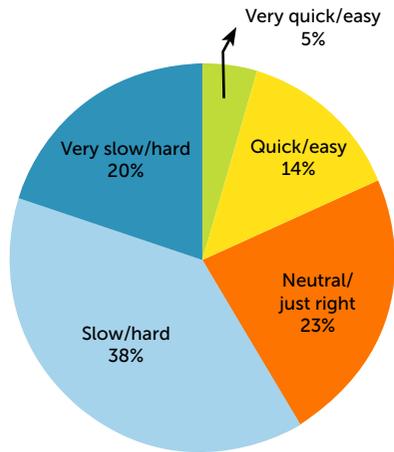


## Quality Rating



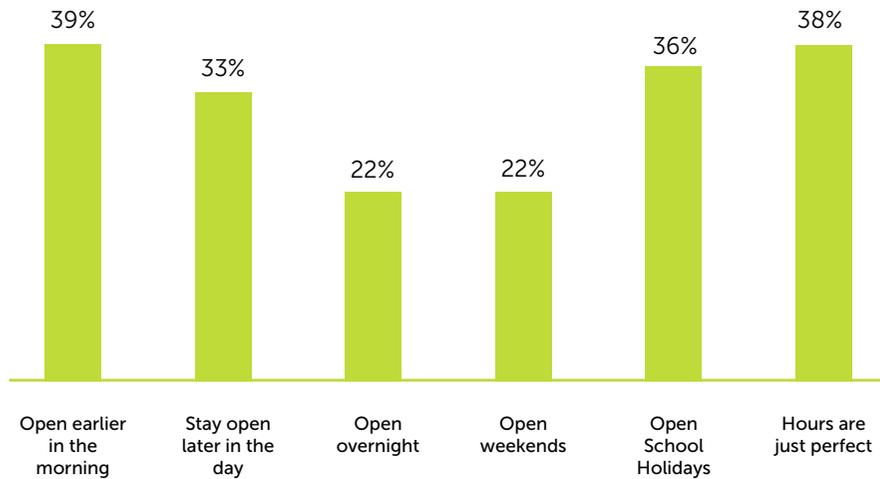
- Very hard trying to find last minute care when you need one child cared for if others are sick and need to go to appointments
- Had to put my child into 2 different day cares initially as unable to get him in to the day care of my choice. One of them had a clause stating that if a child in DCP care needed a spot my child might be bumped from their care that day. This was utterly unacceptable for me, I work full time at the hospital and my position is considered to be "essential services", so even in floods, fires, or storms as we recently had, I was expected at work. But I had nowhere else to put my child. It now turns out that he has a diagnosis of autism, and 2 different day cares with different routines was not beneficial to his wellbeing, but I didn't have any other choices.
- Occasional care is easier but I had to set my alarm for 7:55 each Monday morning and usually redial an average of 70 times until I got through. Sometimes, still couldn't get the days I was after. If I didn't have a friend, who I paid, who could look after my girls while I waited for day care positions, I would not have been able to re-enter the workforce.
- As I only wanted 2-3 days I was lower on the list. A friend who applied for day care 2 months after me was offered a place before me.
- We went away for a 5 week holiday earlier this year, not being about to afford to pay for unused childcare during that time, meant I had to cancel our spot. It took 3 months to get a spot back at the centre, so I could go back to work one day a week. During this time, I needed the occasional child care centre.
- "The other issue being I had the opportunity of going back part-time. When I discuss this with the centre and they told me there was no guarantee that they could guarantee me care for my daughter should my circumstances change. In turn went back full-time and eventually had a breakdown"
- Co-ordinating to take time out whether it be for medical reasons, holidays, visit my elderly father in the eastern states, is a nightmare
- We do not have family in Kalgoorlie, and a limited social network. My husband had to take so much time off when our child caught usual childhood viruses that he was required to bring a medical certificate for every day of leave he took, which was an additional cost of a doctor's visit, loss of wages, and still paying childcare fees on top of this
- With an ill partner and minimal access to family here it's very stressful trying to balance work and family. Occasional care spaces are a waste of time here as they are never available.
- There are many centres and people using child care for free time when they are not even employed. This causes lack of availability. Also working hours are extended for retail to after 7pm let alone mine staff. Public holidays and pupil free days impact working parents as well as regular hours
- There needs to be more centres open and available for parents to book in with an occasional / late notice option.

# Family Day Care

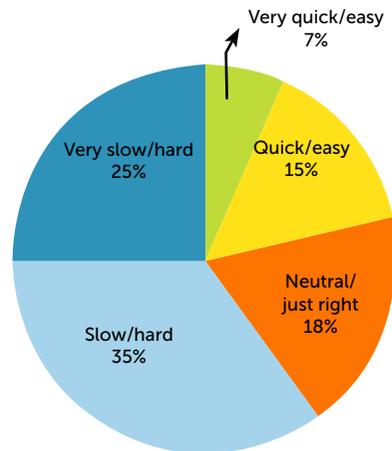


- "I am a stay at home Nanna who has looked after my Grandson since he was approximately 7months old (now almost 7yrs old) because my daughter had to go back to work and couldn't afford childcare".
- The hardest is for Single Parents with no family Support around Town relying on friends for shifts outside normal Business hours.
- The supply and demand for childcare is disproportionate. Family day care is ridiculous as most only open 9-2 while their own kids are at school. I have been bailed on and I found family day care completely unreliable as the operators have their own personal matters affecting care ability. Messaging someone at 830pm at night to cancel care expected for the next day, given the state of care availability in Kalgoorlie, is unacceptable ESPECIALLY if the circumstances/reason for cancelling aren't sudden issues. How is anyone able to work to provide when the services aren't available and nannies/babysitters cost almost as much as your daily earnings.

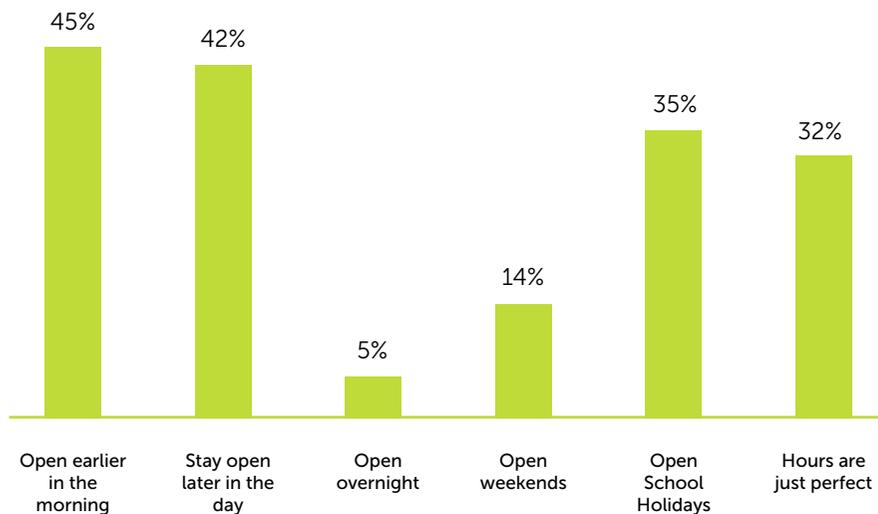
## Quality Rating



## Before and After School Care

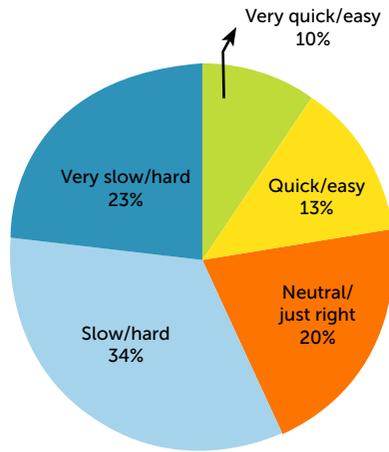


### Quality Rating



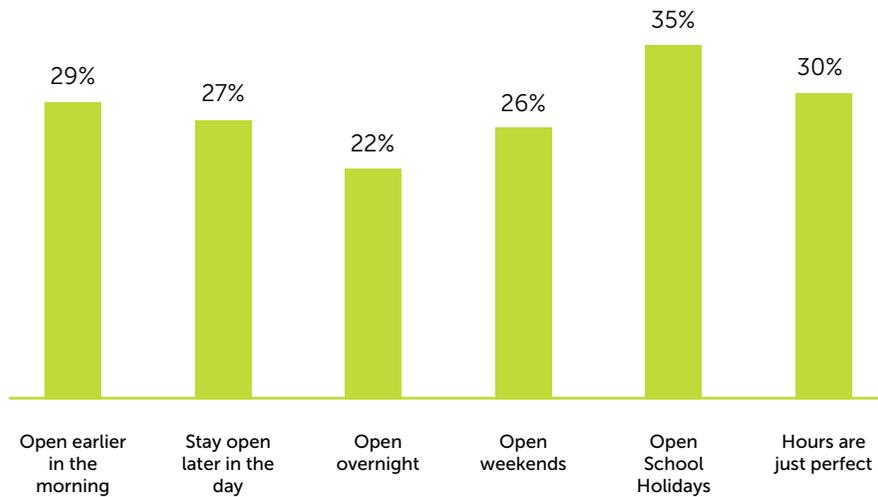
- It was difficult to find details of family day care for before and after school care specific to schools and zones. I had to call around and had to change my daughter's enrolment from St. Josephs to O'Connor as I could not locate a home day care that did pick up and drop of to St. Joseph's that had availability. The outside of school hour's care centres were also booked out so I was out of options. Love the day care and school we are at now however it was not my preferred school. I was seeking care in August 2015 for school year 2016. It was not a last minute decision.
- UNAFFORDABLE!!!! Before and after school care is far too expensive. I am a working Grandmother and I am constantly trying to get people to pick up and my 7yr old Grandson. I have had to change my hours of work to allow me to drop him off.
- My 6 year old son use to attend an after school care program. I found this to be cost effective however I feel that there is no were near enough supervision and for that reason I no longer use this service.
- After school care is hugely important to me as I am a Nurse and have to work outside school hours. I relay on family and friends to pick my son up and look after him. I always feel rushed and that it is a burden to have to do this.
- Kalgoorlie need's better/ more places for before and after school care. Kalgoorlie is a difficult city to have staff to relocate to the lack of child care facilities and places just adds to the reasons for family's to not want to move here".
- My daughter needed morning and after school care but as soon as she turned 10 she wasn't able to attend anymore which put a lot of stress on us

# Vacation Care

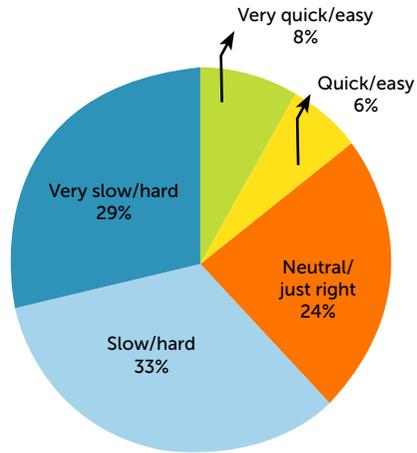


- Closing over the Christmas period is hard as I have to go and source alternative care. During holidays GOSHC is open at 8 - where during school term it is 7 - 8 is normally my starting time and not having day care / GOSHC open at same times can be frustrating as well.
- Student free days often no care centres open.
- Vacation care in this town is disgusting. Horror stories of young children just leaving the (centre name), before/after school care is commercial and is restricted and outside of school. It doesn't leave parents feeling safe. What's wrong with in-school before/after school care?! Works over east! Most families here are individual units without extended support systems!

## Quality Rating



## Au Pair/Private Carer



- Very hard to get an Au Pair to commit to coming to Kalgoorlie. Child care is not affordable or available at child care centres.
- I have applied with au-pair agencies also and have advertised for care. Personally contacted au pairs and carers but have had no luck as they have told me they would prefer to work in the Cities close to the beaches and tourist areas. Not inland where it would essentially cost them a lot more if they wanted to travel and experience 'Australian life'
- I have resorted to recruiting care directly from overseas and this has been through finding contacts through current au pairs already working in Kalgoorlie. This is not convenient as the process is time consuming having to wait on passports and visas to be accepted. It is costly in the short term as it involves purchasing furniture and a vehicle. Looking at health insurance etc. and the terms on a 417 visa allow a person to work for 6 months in one place. The way around this would be to send them away to work elsewhere for a few months, but then the problematic cycle of finding care starts again.
- If childcare centres can't be equipped to handle more children, subsidies for nannies should be made available to deal with crisis

### Quality Rating

