

Out of School Hours Care (OSHC)

Issues Paper

February 2023

Why OSHC?

Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) provides care and recreation to school-aged children before school, after school, on student free days and in school holidays¹.

OSHC is regulated under the *Education and Care Services National Law Act, 2010*², and it provides a safe environment for children, in turn assisting families to work and study at hours beyond the length of the traditional school day.

As part of the wider education and care system, OSHC not only provides care and supervision for children outside the usual school hours, but it is supported by a national framework 'My Time, Our Place' which extends the principles, practices and outcomes of the Early Years Learning Framework to children aged over five years³. The framework articulates the opportunity that OSHC provides for meaningful play and leisure, contributing to the wellbeing, learning and development of children.

OSHC tends to be charged per session of care and fees are determined by each individual service provider. Costs are subsidised under the Australian Government's Child Care Subsidy, with eligibility assessed according to family income and circumstances⁴. In South Australia, in March 2022, the average hourly fee for OSHC was \$6.70, (and children were accessing on average, 13 hours per week), the lowest hourly fee in Australia against a national average of \$7.90 per hour⁵. The Royal Commission notes that changes to Child Care Subsidy later in 2023 will make both long day care and OSHC more affordable for families, and is expected to increase the opportunities for women to participate in the workforce⁶.

In the Community Survey of the Royal Commission into Early Childhood and Care, many families have indicated that OSHC is critical to enabling them to continue to engage in the workforce at the hours they need or want to be working⁷.

¹ SA Department for Education Website: [About out of school hours care services \(OSHC\) \(education.sa.gov.au\)](https://www.education.sa.gov.au/about-out-of-school-hours-care-services-oshc)

² Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority website: [ACECQA](https://www.acecqa.gov.au)

³ Australian Government Department of Education and Training (2011) [My Time Our Place](https://www.education.gov.au/my-time-our-place), Framework for School Age Care in Australia

⁴ Australian Government Department of Education website [Child Care Subsidy - Department of Education, Australian Government](https://www.education.gov.au/child-care-subsidy)

⁵ Department for Education (Commonwealth) [March Quarter 2022 data tables](https://www.education.gov.au/march-quarter-2022-data-tables) (early childhood education and care)

⁶ Australian Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee (2022) [Report into Family Assistance Legislation Amendment \(Cheaper Child Care\) Bill 2022](https://www.senate.gov.au/report-into-family-assistance-legislation-amendment-cheaper-child-care-bill-2022) [Provisions]

⁷ Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care YourSAy summary Oct 22 – Feb 23



T/ 08 7322 7034

E/ royalcommissionecec@sa.gov.au
GPO Box 11025, Adelaide SA 5001

www.RoyalCommissionECEC.sa.gov.au

The Royal Commission is inquiring into OSHC specifically to consider ‘how all families can have access to out of school hours care at both preschool and primary school ages, including consideration of accessibility in all parts of the state, affordability and quality in public and private settings’⁸.

The Terms of Reference specifically note the challenges of balancing work and education for families and that OSHC is not universally available, accessible or convenient.

In undertaking this inquiry, the Royal Commission is seeking to understand accessibility and demand for OSHC, structural barriers to OSHC for preschool aged children and governance of OSHC as a part of the wider education system.

Questions

1. What is the core purpose of out of school hours care?
2. Are there secondary but still important drivers behind why South Australian families, schools and children need out of school hours care?
3. What are the elements of quality in OSHC provision that matter most to parents?
4. What are the elements of quality in OSHC provision that matter most to school leaders/governing councils?

⁸ Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care (2022) [Terms of Reference](#)



OSHC in South Australian Schools

OSHC services are mostly located on primary school sites in South Australia. As at September 2021, there are 382 OSHC services across the state, providing 24,033 places to 47,280 enrolled children (about 29% of primary school population)⁹.

Services are run by a mix of providers, including school governing councils and private providers, and are located in both government and non-government schools.

Table 1 (below) shows the distribution of OSHC in primary schools in South Australia.

OSHC Services in SA compared to total number of schools ¹⁰			
	OSHC Services	Number of schools enrolling primary school age children ¹¹	% of schools with OSHC service
Non-government schools	137	179	77%
Government schools	245	425	58%
Total	382	604	63%

Table 1: OSHC Services in SA compared to total number of schools

The SA Department for Education has indicated that it is difficult to quantify unmet demand for OSHC, noting that there is anecdotal evidence of demand for services where there are none, and some limited data held by government about community requests for new OSHC services, particularly in rural areas and small schools¹².

The department's OSHC Policy states that 'school-age children attending a South Australian government school should have access to an OSHC service, where possible'¹³. The responsibility for establishing and maintaining OSHC services in government schools sits with each individual school governing council¹⁴. It may be that the governing council is the provider and is the employer of the OSHC staff (in which case there are specific governance arrangements¹⁵), or a third party may be engaged to deliver the service. The

⁹ SA Department for Education (2022) Background Information Paper to the Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care p32 (using data from ACECQA Register, accessed August 2022 and Cwllth Department of Education usage date Sept 202 – Sept 2021)

¹⁰ Table adopted from SA Department for Education (2022) Background Information Paper to the Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care, p33 table 7

¹¹ Report on Government Services (2022) School Education – number of schools (table 4A.1) note: count includes primary and combined schools

¹² SA Department for Education (2022) Background Information Paper to the Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care p33

¹³ SA Department for Education (2023) [OSHC Policy](#)

¹⁴ SA Department for Education (2023) [OSHC Procedure](#) (note: The exception to this are the small number of Department for Education rural care services, which are provided directly by the Department and provide both long day care and OSHC)

¹⁵ SA Department for Education [website](#)



department provides a range of tools and supports online for governing councils and providers, including a panel of approved providers¹⁶.

If a provider is contracted, the service contract will be managed by the school's Principal on behalf of the governing council¹⁷. The policy also requires a service to be financially viable. If a service is not financially viable, the need for OSHC must be reviewed before the service closes, and options provided to families for alternative care options if OSHC ceases to operate. The Department for Education does not have a systematic program offering financial support for the establishment or maintenance of OSHC services on government school sites.

OSHC services on a school site will typically provide things like a healthy snack after school, access to outdoor areas, indoor activities, and excursions or incursions in school holidays. While there will be a mix of children from reception to year 6, OSHC services make efforts to provide children with a variety of activities which are age appropriate and well supervised.

Questions

5. Where are the gaps in OSHC service provision in South Australia and what is driving those gaps?
6. What are measures of unmet demand that the Royal Commission should consider?
7. Are there any regulatory burdens that prevent OSHC services from operating or expanding?
8. What are the specific limitations faced by small schools/rural and regional South Australia in relation to the provision of OSHC?
9. What works / what doesn't work about current governance of OSHC in Department for Education schools?
10. How important is physical infrastructure / land availability to provision? Please provide examples
11. Are there opportunities for innovation or collaboration in areas of demand that can increase availability of OSHC? If yes, please provide examples
12. What do children of all ages need to engage in OSHC? (including upper primary school ages)

¹⁶ SA Department for Education [website](#)

¹⁷ SA Department for Education (2023) [OSHC Policy](#)



T/ 08 7322 7034

E/ royalcommissionecec@sa.gov.au
GPO Box 11025, Adelaide SA 5001

www.RoyalCommissionECEC.sa.gov.au

OSHC for preschool age children

Most (approximately 80%) South Australian 4-year-old children attend a government preschool (kindy) for 15 hours a week in the year before they start school¹⁸. This 15 hours per week is commonly delivered as 2 full days one week and 2.5 days on the alternate week. Day lengths tend to mirror those of primary school and in government preschools will run across four school terms, with holidays the same as government primary schools.

For many families, this results in children moving between long day care and kindy on different days across a fortnight, with gaps in care options during school holidays. Other children might miss the alternate half day per fortnight, or access alternative care arrangements around kindy.

There are currently limited options for OSHC-type care for preschool aged children who attend a sessional kindy for 15 hours a week and need supervision during the holidays, around kindy hours, or on that alternate half day per fortnight. The Royal Commission's community survey indicated some level of demand for OSHC for preschool aged children¹⁹, however there is no current data to indicate true levels of demand.

Sessional preschools do not attract Child Care Subsidy. Rural care services in government settings may provide after preschool care if they have the capacity to accommodate those children²⁰. For approved OSHC services to be eligible for Child Care Subsidy, care must be delivered to **primarily** children who are attending school, so an OSCH where most students are in preschool would not meet the definition of OSHC. Along with this, long day care services must seek exemptions to operate for less than a minimum of 48 weeks per year, and so offering OSHC around a sessional preschool (which operates the same weeks as a government school per year) is also difficult²¹. In addition, adding a dedicated long day care service or OSCH service to Department for Education preschools would be significant work, involving establishing a new business, governance and staffing (noting the increased need for Early Childhood Workers, management of different industrial conditions, new rostering etc).

Some OSHC services will take preschool children, particularly where the preschool is co-located on a primary school site, however this is service dependent and not uniformly available. The Department for Education notes that preference is generally given to school aged children, due to that requirement for a service to be primarily for school aged children to be eligible for Child Care Subsidy²².

We also know that ratios of care for preschool aged children is higher (1:11) than for school aged children (1:15), and anecdotally, primary school OSHC services may be reluctant to take preschool children, noting that the wider the age range of children in a service (such as

¹⁸ SA Department for Education (2022) Background Information Paper to the Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care p25

¹⁹ Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care YourSAy summary Oct 22 – Feb 23

²⁰ SA Department for Education (2022) [Rural Care Program Procedure](#)

²¹ *A New Tax System (Family Assistance) (Administration) Act 1999* s195C

²² SA Department for Education (2022) Background Information Paper to the Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care p34



preschool up to year 6), the more challenging it is for a service to provide age appropriate, safe and supervised care.

In the non-government school sector, often preschool is delivered in services (for example Early Learning Centres) that operate for longer hours, every day of the week and for more weeks in the year. These services are often structured in a way to be eligible for Child Care Subsidy, either as a long day care with an early childhood teacher, or as a sessional preschool with wrap around OSHC.

Where long day cares deliver preschool, they again attract Child Care Subsidy and provide education and care across a longer day, and over more weeks per year than a sessional government kindy.

We are seeing a modest but persistent trend in declining enrolments of 4-year-old children in government sessional preschool²³. This is thought to be partly due to the challenges that operating hours of sessional preschool present for working families, and the lack of OSHC-type services for preschool aged children.

Issues of consistency for children have also been raised by stakeholders, and the challenges of 'fragmented' weeks for children moving between home and different services on different days (and sometimes on the same day).

The Royal Commission is interested to understand the structural access barriers and to contemplate how they may be overcome to expand the opportunity for OSHC-type services for 3 and 4-year-old children regardless of preschool setting, which is mindful of the needs of children, providing feelings of security and consistency.

Questions

13. What are the levers that state government can use to make OSHC available for children attending a government preschool?
14. What are the barriers (physical, transport, other) that mean children who attend a government preschool can't attend OSHC and what might overcome those?
15. Where are the opportunities for innovation or collaboration to make OSHC more available for children attending a government preschool?
16. What is the demand for OSHC before or after kindy? How do we know?
17. Does OSHC before or after kindy need to look different to offerings for school aged children?
18. What are the markers of quality in OSHC for preschool aged children?
19. How could/should OSHC around a government preschool be governed?

²³ SA Department for Education (2022) Background Information Paper to the Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care p28



What is happening interstate?

Even under a national framework of regulation and funding, different state and territory government policy priorities mean different governance arrangements and access to OSHC.

Most Australian jurisdictions offer OSHC services to primary school aged children, with limited opportunity for preschool children.

However, in 2020, the ACT conducted a 12-month trial at four primary schools as part of the 'Set up for Success: An Early Childhood Strategy for the ACT', with onsite preschools, where OSHC providers delivered their programs within the preschool space, reducing transition for children both before and after preschool hours and opening up opportunity for OSHC for those preschool aged children.

The trial for OSHC at preschool was supported with additional ACT government funding that went to each participating school and each participating OSHC provider. The funding supported staffing, time for collaborative curriculum decision-making, as well as project implementation (which included professional learning and community of practice resourcing and shared materials and resources)²⁴. An evaluation in 2021 indicated the service would continue at the trial sites²⁵.

The option for OSHC for preschool children was well received by participating parents and providers, and as a result, the ACT government continues to offer the model more widely to OSHC providers²⁶.

Elsewhere in Australia policies and investment vary, but tend to be focussed on primary school age access. New South Wales and Victoria have both had a strong agenda in recent years to increase availability and viability of OSHC for primary school aged children. New South Wales are also trialling longer school days in nine public schools, focussing on providing extracurricular activities outside of school hours²⁷.

In Victoria, a school council is an approved provider, but can outsource to a third-party provider. The Victorian state government has established grants to incentivise establishing OSHC services to increase availability in government schools. A 2020 commitment of \$81.6 million is intended to establish up to 400 new OSHC services, with grants of up to \$75,000 per year being made available to government schools which don't already have an OSHC service²⁸.

²⁴ ACT Department for Education (2021) After-hours Care Trial for ACT Public Preschool Students in 2020, [Final Evaluation Report](#)

²⁵ ACT Department for Education (2021) After-hours Care Trial for ACT Public Preschool Students in 2020, [Final Evaluation Report](#)

²⁶ ACT Department for Education [website](#)

²⁷ NSW Department for Education [website](#)

²⁸ Victorian Department for Education [website](#)



Case Study

Before and After School Care (BASC) in New South Wales¹⁹

The New South Wales government refers to OSHC as before and after school care (BASC), and since 2019, has been committed to expanding availability of BASC to primary school children.

This has seen more than 191 new services established on government school sites (945, up from 711) and more than 16,000 additional BASC places created.

Expansion has been supported by the government through a range of initiatives including:

- Grants to providers to support innovation and viability
- New facilities models including collaboration in rural and regional areas and ‘hubs’ of modular buildings onto school sites for OSHC services
- Centralised contract management within government to reduce the administrative burden on schools
- Vouchers for parents of up to \$500 in 2022, which were able to be used to cover the gap between BASC fees and Child Care Subsidy (note this scheme has now closed)

In 2022-23, support is available for priorities including grants that are targeted toward:

- transport to improve access for students in small, regional, and rural schools
- projects, initiatives, and activities to improve service viability
- legal and other costs associated with transitioning to service ownership by Parents & Citizens (P&C) groups
- innovative approaches to ensure best practice in BASC services
- projects to contribute to the viability of vacation care services, particularly to support access for vulnerable children

BASC demand is assessed via parent demand surveys and annual provider census data.

Providers at government schools are licensed by the Department for Education and may be P&C Associations, not-for-profit organisations, or for-profit providers.

¹⁹ NSW Department for Education [website](#)

