

# SYP CHILD CARE SURVEY

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## RESULTS



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# Aims and Vision

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We are a small group of passionate parents and child-focused professionals. For many years now we have observed the struggles of families within our Southern Yorke Peninsula (SYP) community to find adequate care for their children.

Experiencing these same issues ourselves, we have embarked on a journey to advocate for accessible child care options for our community.

Our aim is for all families to be able to access the child care that they require. The provision of quality child care on the SYP is not only an investment in our children's learning and development, but an investment in the future growth and prosperity of our region.

# Response Overview

175 families responded to our online survey, spread via word of mouth on Facebook.

The majority of families live closest to Minlaton (70), followed by Yorketown (36), Stansbury (25), Curramulka (15), Warooka (11), Pt Turton (15), Edithburgh (7), Port Vincent (5) and Hardwicke Bay (3). We requested families select their closest town, as many live on farming properties.

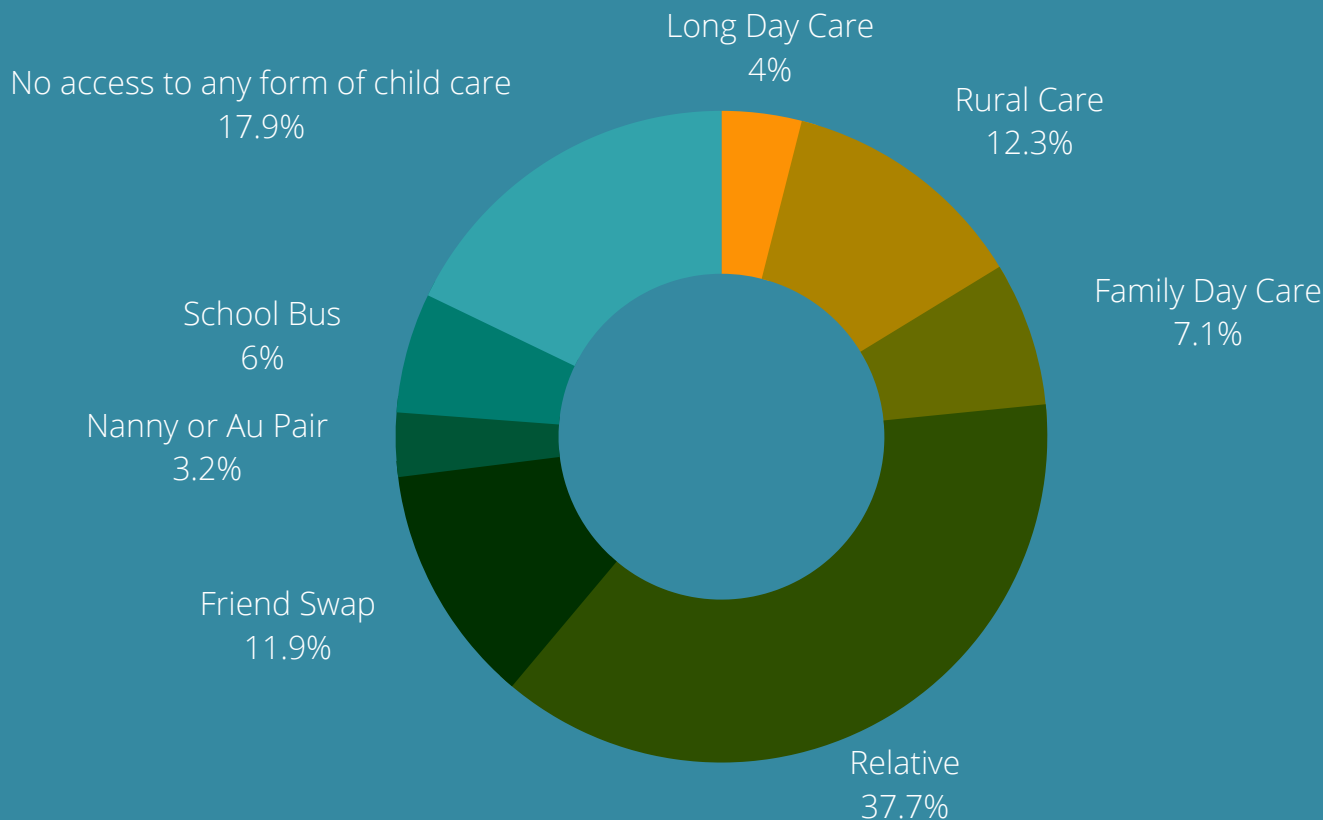


There are 195 children aged 4 and under (including those currently pregnant) who will require some form of child care according to our survey responses. A further 26 families noted that they are planning future pregnancy/ies.

There are an additional 163 children aged between 5-12, whose families expressed a strong need for Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) and school holiday care options. There are currently minimal OSHC and school holiday care options available to families of the SYP, (limited spaces at Yorketown Community Children's Centre and a privately run OSHC at Stansbury).

# Access to Care

Fig. 1: Current access to care options



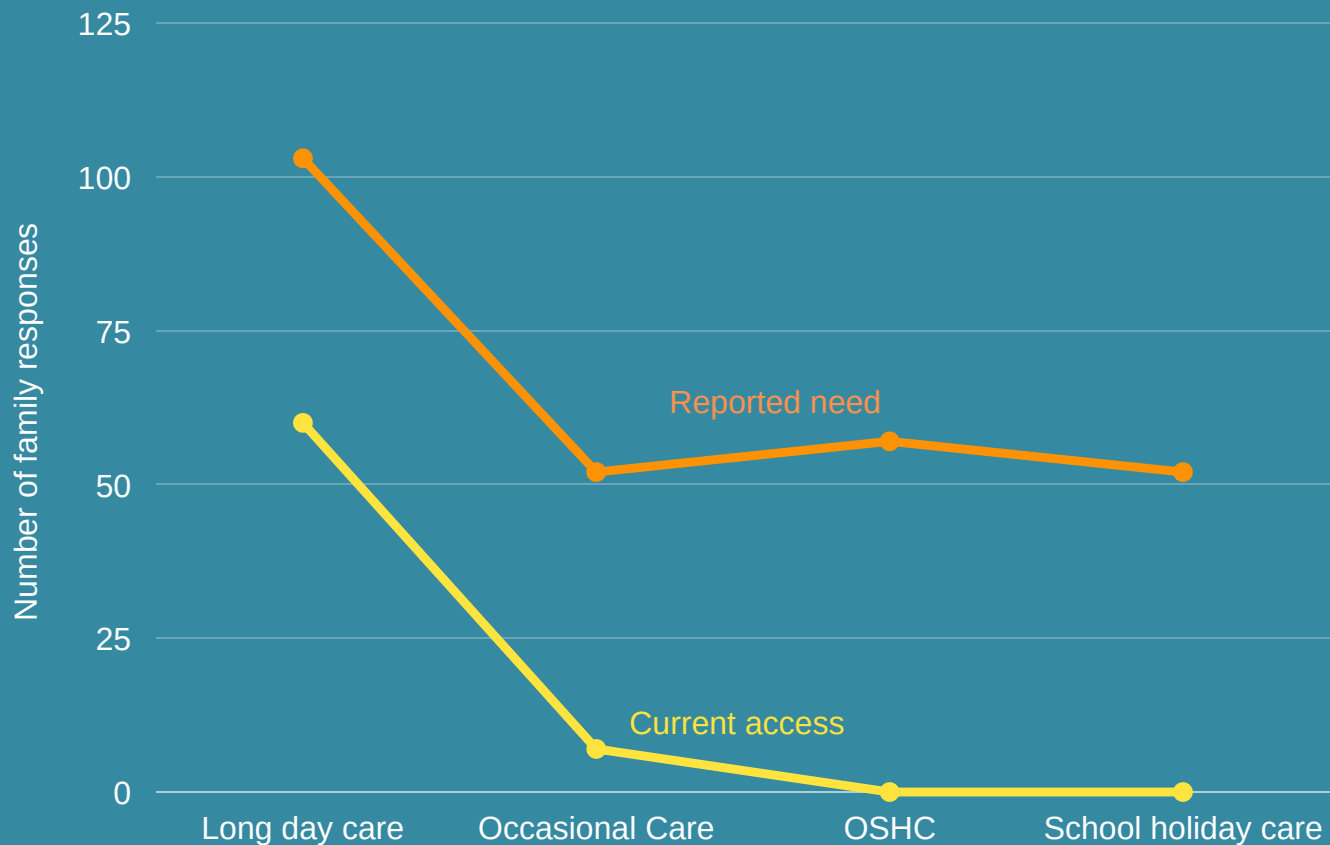
As can be seen in Fig. 1, only a small percentage of families are currently able to access formal child care options (Long Day Care, Rural Care or Family Day Care, 31.7%). The vast majority of parents are having to rely on informal care options including relatives, friends and even placing children on the longest routes of school buses!

45 families (17.9% of respondents) reported having **no access to any** of the child care options listed, including informal options such as family or friends.

Anecdotally, many families reported extensive wait lists for Rural Care and Family Day Care. Currently, Rural Care at the Yorketown Community Children's Centre is the only long day care facility on the SYP, south of Maitland. Rural Care services an area of over 5,000 square km, with a population of over 11,000 including 445 children aged 0-4 (2016 Census Quickstats). Many families travel up to an hour to drop their children off at the centre, which has the capacity to care for 15 children each day.

*"No care options available. No offers of care despite being on a waiting list for in excess of 12 months."*

Fig 2: Current access vs need



The graph above (Fig 2) provides a brief snapshot of current access to care, vs need. It is important to note responses were per family - not the number of children requiring care.

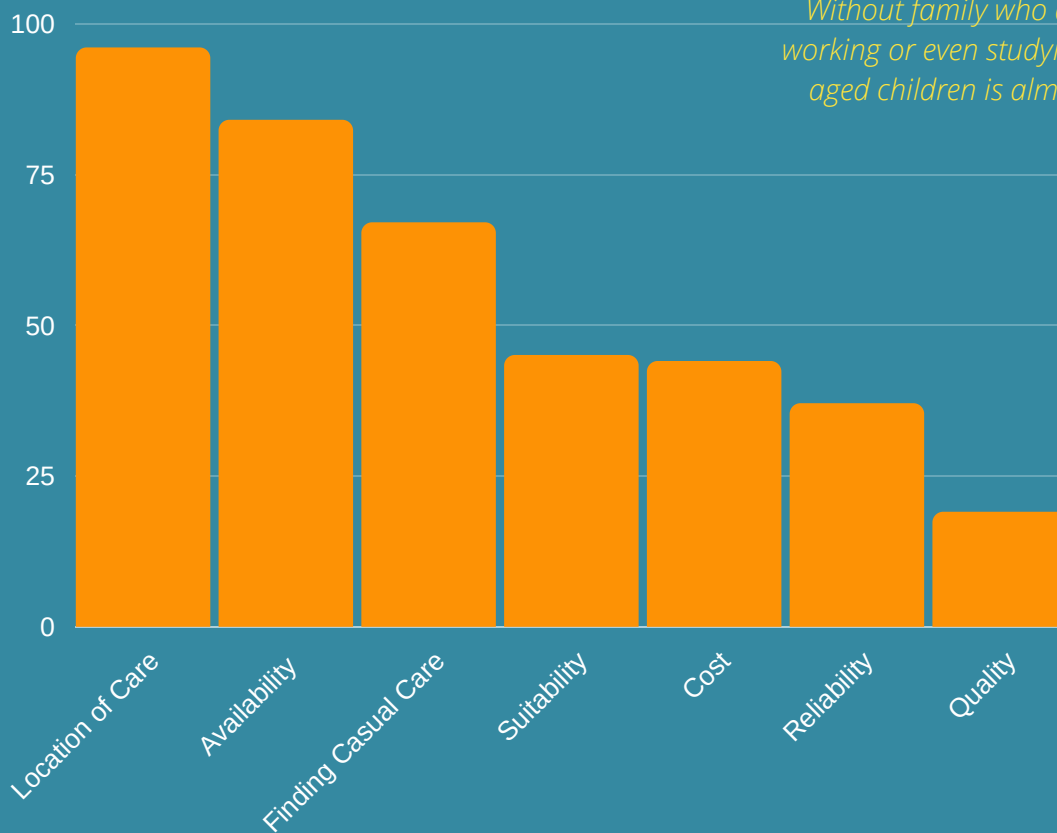
For those able to access long day care (including Rural Care and Family Day Care), 60 families were able to access **some** level of care, whereas 102 families reported needing the service. Of those able to access long day care, a large majority reported that they were unable to obtain the amount of days/hours they would ideally like.

Many SYP families (52) would appreciate access to occasional care services. Minlaton Kindergarten offers two short occasional care services each Friday, but the reported need for this service far outweighs current accessibility. Yorketown Community Children's Centre also offers casual spaces when possible.

There is a severe lack of OSHC and School holiday care options, with 57 families requiring these services. Currently there is very limited availability at Yorketown Community Children's Centre, as well as a privately run service at Stansbury. None of the families who responded to our survey reported currently accessing OSHC or School holiday care.

# Barriers Facing Families

Fig. 3: Issues with current care options



*"There is no care in Minlaton that can be accessed reliably on an ongoing basis. Without family who are able to help, working or even studying with preschool aged children is almost impossible."*

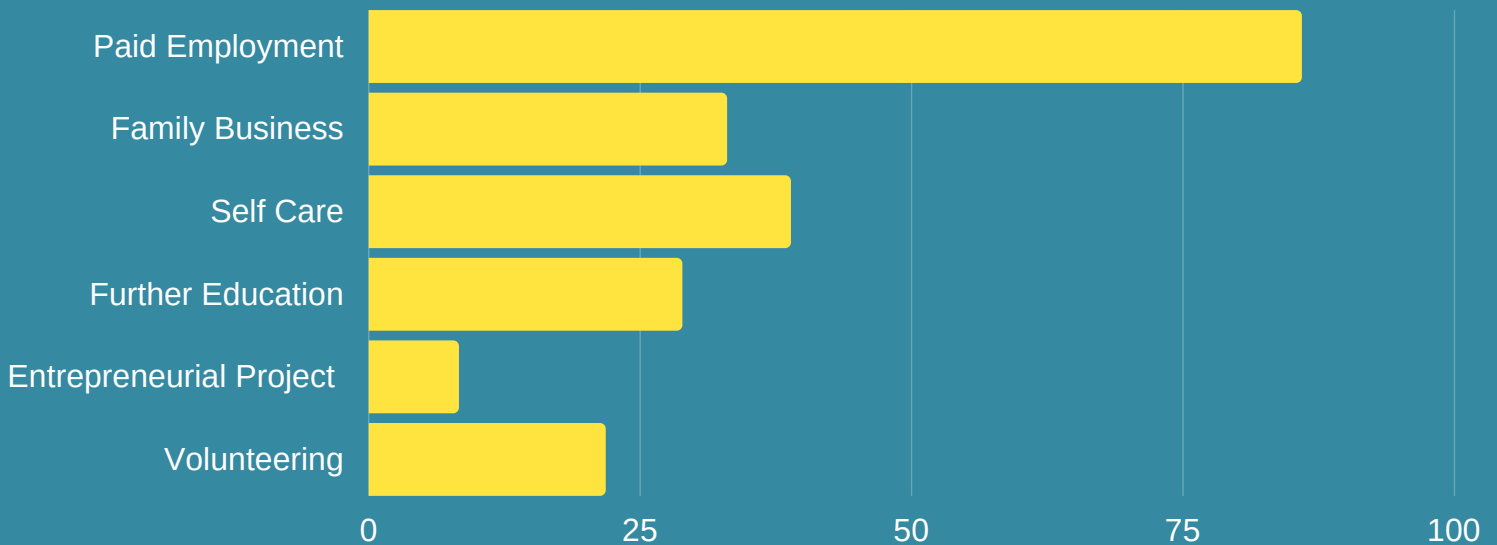
Location and availability of care are by far the biggest barriers facing families of the SYP (see Fig. 3). Many families are unable to access care on the days that they are required to work. Families are travelling long distances to access care, up to 50km each way, often having to double back to then attend work.

Extensive waiting lists and Rural Care working at full capacity means there is very limited availability for parents to access casual care when required (for example, to partake in seasonal work, medical appointments, etc).

According to our survey responses, when given the choice between Minlaton and Yorketown for the potential location of a new child care centre, 86 families would prefer Minlaton, with 43 families preferring Yorketown.

# Benefits

Fig. 4: Benefits of accessing child care



The benefits of accessible child care are many and varied. At an individual level, 146 respondents (85.88%) stated that access to child care would allow them to engage in paid employment, or increase the hours that they are working. A further 56 (32.94%) stated that child care would allow them to contribute to the family business. In a region where farming and small business is so crucial - the financial impact of a lack of appropriate child care cannot be underestimated.

Self care (66 - 38.82%) is imperative for good mental health. For those without a support network, particularly in the current COVID-19 climate, a lack of available child care makes it incredibly hard to shop for groceries, or attend a medical appointment - particularly if the medical appointment involves a 6-hour day trip to Adelaide.

Many services within rural communities operate only due to the commitment of volunteers. 37 families (21.51% of respondents) reported that access to care would allow them to volunteer within their community.

Comments from those responding to our survey highlighted the financial strain their family was facing, frustration that their qualifications, skills and experience were not being utilised, lack of opportunity for their child to socialise with peers, and impacts of these stressors on relationships. From a child protection and wellbeing perspective, access to quality care is imperative for the safety, care and protection of our most vulnerable children.

Creating opportunities to further education, and supporting those who wish to develop an entrepreneurial passion project must be a priority for our SYP community. With the shift to online learning, working remotely and a focus on domestic tourism we must embrace the opportunities that present to our community, and creating accessible child care is a crucial consideration.

*"Being able to go back to helping on the farm more, especially days I'm needed but don't have an option to leave my child for a few hours."*



# Looking to the Future

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We have the data to support that there is a significant lack of care options available to families of the SYP area. Our focus now turns to increasing accessibility to child care so that:

- Parents are able to return to work.
- Children are able to access environments that enhance their education.
- Vulnerable children and families that are at increased risk, can access safe and supportive care.
- Young families and professionals can relocate to the area, not only to work but to stay and build a life on the SYP.
- Economic and social opportunities for the SYP community increase through the establishment of accessible care.

If the SYP is going to have quality professionals across health, education, farming, small business etc, then providing child care is a key component to attracting and retaining these professionals. The results of our survey conclude that the strongest need for child care is in the township of Minlaton, and that child care availability will increase in Yorketown if a centre were to be built in Minlaton.

As a group we are now approaching interested private providers that may consider establishing quality child care in the township of Minlaton, however we encourage the exploration of all options that may help to fill the need for child care in our wider region. Gaps in care not only exist in long day care, but in the provision of occasional care, OSHC and school holiday care also. Rural and remote communities are well known for their resilience and resourcefulness. We hope that the sharing of the above information will inspire further discussion regarding this important issue, lay the foundations for creative solutions, and turn our vision of accessible child care on the SYP into a reality.

# Comments from families

As part of the survey, participants were given the opportunity to comment on their experiences of accessing child care on the SYP, and whether their preference would be Yorketown or Minlaton. As previously stated, 86 families would prefer Minlaton, with 43 families preferring Yorketown.

Can't get full day care anywhere, as there are waiting lists.

I am aware that young families choose not to come to Minlaton due to the lack of opportunities for childcare and being able to follow job opportunities

I travel over 1 hour to send and collect my child from childcare. It is an expectation here that you will have to travel to be able to get any sort of care so I will take it wherever I can!

There was none available so I was unable to work until my children were school age and even then I had to find work within school hours as no after school care available.

I know lots of working Mums in Minlaton who are screaming out for care. These women are fantastic in their professions and it's a great loss to not have them working due to care issues.

Yes, I have a Bachelor degree with Honours. Living in Minlaton I did not work because the logistics of arranging childcare prevented me from doing so. We did not have family locally to rely on for care and there was no OSHC available.

I am afraid this is one of the reasons we are moving back to Adelaide...

Simply getting a space in any form of care.

One of the reasons (among many) that we are moving back to Adelaide is the total lack of suitable, regular child care. I have no family here and it is extremely hard to run a business and be a FIFO partner with a small child.

We are so restricted with our child care options on SYP - besides looking at how this affects us as parents, it is disappointing that our children have limited access to early childhood education prior to Kindy.

I am an Occupational Therapist. I could be working more days but have no access to child care. May have to give up work if I can't find child care.

I am a permanent teacher on maternity leave, currently unable to return to work as I can only get 1 day of child care.

There are no options, I would take anything.

My employer is Adelaide based and supportive of me working remotely but I am unable to work from home as no access to long day care.

Minlaton would be a great central spot for a lot of families. I know a lot of Mums are very stressed as they have to go back and fill their contract after maternity leave and have no one to watch their kids... very stressful for mums!

Minlaton would benefit immensely from a childcare centre. It is a central location and a major employment centre in the district.

Minlaton needs childcare. I have been commuting to Yorketown rural care with my three children over the last eight years. They are a fantastic centre, but the southern Yorke peninsula needs another centre to accommodate those who can't get a spot.

# Contact details

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Our small group of concerned parents are steadfast in our vision to see child care availability increase on the SYP. We are more than happy to respond to emails, answer phone calls or arrange to meet in person if you would like any further information.

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