

SEPTEMBER 2016



# SYDNEY MATTERS CHILD CARE PLAN FOR CITY OF SYDNEY

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### CHILDCARE GOALS

1	Putting the needs of families and their children's education and care first.
2	Increasing the number of premises for not-for-profit providers of Early Education and Childcare Centres in the City of Sydney.
3	Working with providers to improve access to childcare as well as flexibility, affordability and availability.
4	Working together with the State and Federal Government to promote the development of Education and Child Care Centres in high-rise buildings and the establishment of appropriate safety controls at both a local and state level for these premises.
5	Improving the quality and standard of Early Education and Childcare Services.

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### THE CURRENT SITUATION

Early Education and Childcare Services in The City of Sydney, and indeed the rest of Australia is a growing concern for families. As the situation currently stands there are large disparities in the supply and demand for these services and for many families finding affordable childcare when and where they want it is becoming an increasingly difficult, limiting and stressful experience.

Certainly, Australia lags behind the rest of the Western world in terms of Participation rates in Formal Care and Pre-school for children under the age of 6. According to the OECD Family database (2014), only 37.6 per cent of 3 year olds in Australia were in formal child care or pre-school, well below the OECD average of 63 per cent and when compared to France (100%), Belgium (99%), Germany (88%) and the UK (83%) it is clear that we need innovation and change.<sup>i</sup>

In turn, The City of Sydney must act with a sense of urgency and with innovative measures to ensure that more Australian families and their children have access to and are provided with timely world class Early Education & Childcare services now and in the future.

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### CHALLENGES

The City of Sydney and its families, parents and children face numerous challenges in relation to the delivery of Early Education and Childcare Services, in particular:

- A shortage of Early Education and Childcare Services combined with a rise in demand for these services.
- The rising cost of childcare in Sydney which has made the service less affordable to Australian families and their children.
- Early Education and Childcare Services that don't provide flexible hours for families and parents who work out of regular office hours.

- Within metropolitan and inner city areas limited space and the need to adhere to national government guidelines of 3.25sqm of indoor and 7sqpm of outdoor space per child has significantly restrained growth.
- A childcare system which does not provide a comprehensive early education system for its constituents.

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## OPPORTUNITIES

The Sydney Matters Independent Team has identified a number of opportunities which the City of Sydney can take advantage of to alleviate and fix issues in the short and long term. In particular:

- Leasing underused public spaces to afterschool childcare operators to solve service shortages in the short term.
- The development of new innovative spaces for childcare providers and their establishments, especially in the CBD via the use of High-rise buildings and other 'non-traditional' spaces typically not associated with Childcare centres to increase supply and ease demand in the present and accommodate future growth.
- Providing specialised services that cater to parents and children who require Early Education and Childcare Services outside of regular office hours i.e. 8 – 6pm.

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## OUR INNOVATIVE CHILDCARE PLAN

The Sydney Matters Independent Team has an innovative plan to deliver its residents, families and their children the Early Education and Childcare Services they desperately need. To achieve our goals we have developed an action plan based on five key principles:

### 1. Availability

- Work with State and Federal governments to come to a suitable safety/regulatory framework which will allow for the development of early education and childcare services in high-rise buildings and other 'non-traditional' spaces.
- Utilising and leasing under used and un-used public spaces to afterschool childcare operators to open up spaces in the short to medium term.

### 2. Affordability

- Increasing the number of premises available and fast tracking for not-for-profit providers of early education and childcare services.

### 3. Accessibility

- Allocating funding/spaces for families and parents who face extraordinary challenges in providing satisfactory childcare for their children.

#### 4. Quality

- Develop and create innovative funding and grants which promote and reward service providers who put the needs of children and their education at the forefront of their operations.

#### 5. Community Engagement

- Working with the community and operators from the bottom up to better understand how to provide a quality and world class service to parents and children.

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm>