



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

Consideration in Detail

SPEECH

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Questioner
Speaker Plibersek, Tanya, MP

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Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney) (4.09 pm)—Thank you, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker. I will just ask my questions in a much more longwinded fashion than, shall I? I asked the parliamentary secretary about the data collected by the Department of Family and Community Services that was used to determine the number of places allocated to out of school hours care and to family day care in the most recent budget. The data collected by the Department of Family and Community Services that I hope the parliamentary secretary will get back to us with is mostly not made public by the Department of Family and Community Services. Every two years there is what is called the Census of Child Care Services, and we are still waiting on the results of the 2004 child-care census. I hope those figures will be released some time in 2005, although at this stage it looks as though it is more likely to be 2006, which is when the next census data will be collected.

The data collected by the Department of Family and Community Services would be incredibly useful to private child-care operators who are considering setting up child care in areas where they are not sure of what the Department of Family and Community Services estimates will be in relation to the demand into the future. What I would like to hear from the parliamentary secretary is when the information that the Department of Family and Community Services uses, presumably to have an input on the number of out of school hours care places or the number of family day care places that are required, will be made public. How can we be certain that private sector child-care operators who are risking a great deal of money to set up child-care centres—between \$1 million and \$2 million for a centre—can have access to that information on an equal basis?

Child-care operators, in the long day care sector in particular, tell me they are concerned that some child-care operators do have access to this information. They believe that it is an unfair competitive advantage if people do have information about likely demand into the future. I would like the parliamentary secretary to tell us: is any of the information collected about undersupply and oversupply made public? Is it likely to be made public in the near future? Can she give us a guarantee that there is no unequal access, by some operators compared with other operators, to information that the Department of Family and Community Services collects in order to make its own assessments about need in this area?