



Comparing the different ECEC options

CENTRE BASED CARE <i>Childcare Centre or Long Day Care</i>	PRESCHOOL	FAMILY DAY CARE	IN HOME CARE
Provides early learning and care for children from birth to school age in a structured environment, operating for extended hours to support working families.	Designed for children aged 3 to 5 years, preschools offer play-based learning programs to prepare children for the transition to primary school.	Offers education and care in a registered educator's home for small groups of children, catering from birth to 12 years in a homelike environment.	Provided by an educator in the child's home for families who cannot access regular childcare, such as those with children with complex disabilities or medical needs.
Ages: Birth to school age Hours: Typically open for at least 8 hours a day, Monday to Friday. Class sizes: Children are grouped by age, with educator-to-child ratios varying based on age to ensure appropriate supervision and support. Environment: Centres often have purpose-built indoor and outdoor play areas. Other considerations: Many centres provide nutritious meals and snacks. Some offer integrated therapy or additional support for children with disability.	Ages: From 3 – 5 years Hours: Typically operates school hours (9am – 3pm) during the school term. Class size: Typically accommodates up to 20 children, with two educators. Environment: Preschools provide indoor and outdoor learning spaces designed to support play-based education. Some are stand-alone, while others operate within schools or as programs within childcare centres. Other considerations: Often more affordable than long day care, with some government preschools offering free or low-cost programs. Some providers may also offer early intervention programs for children with disability.	Ages: Children of different ages 0-12 may be cared for together, promoting diverse social interactions. Hours: Some educators offer flexible hours, including evenings and weekends Class sizes: No more than 4 children under school age, allowing for personalised attention. Environment: Home-based setting may better at accommodating individual routines and children with sensory sensitives. Other considerations: Can be a cost-effective option, with fees varying by educator and location	Ages: Birth – 12 years Hours: Flexible, tailored to the family's schedule, including evenings and weekends. Class sizes: One-on-one care or care with siblings. Environment: Provides highly personalised care in a child's home. Other Considerations: Eligibility criteria applies to families - who are unable to access mainstream child care due to a child's complex needs - who work non-standard hours, or - live in rural or remote areas where other child care options are not available.