



**Families at the Centre research project**  
**Insights into child care and early education:**  
**Orange**



**Social Policy Research Centre**

# SPRC

Social Policy Research Centre

October 2013

Bridget Jenkins

with (in alphabetical order) Elizabeth Adamson, Megan

Blaxland, Deborah Brennan, Christiane Purcal, Jennifer Skattebol

## Thank you

We are very grateful to the families who gave their time to talk to us and share their stories, and to the organisations and people who helped us get in touch with families for this research.

## Social Policy Research Centre

Level 2, John Goodsell Building

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

UNSW Australia

Sydney 2052 Australia

t +61 (2) 9385 7800

f +61 (2) 9385 7838

e [sprc@unsw.edu.au](mailto:sprc@unsw.edu.au)

w [www.sprc.unsw.edu.au](http://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au)

© Social Policy Research Centre 2013

ISSN: 1446-4179

ISBN: 978-0-7334-3425-9 (online)

SPRC Report 25/2013

Design and layout by Early Childhood Australia

Cover photographs by Andrew Sikorski

The Social Policy Research Centre is based in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at UNSW Australia. The Families at the Centre research project was funded by the ARC Linkage Grant (LP100200297).

## Suggested citation:

Jenkins, B., Adamson, E., Blaxland, M., Brennan, D., Purcal, C., & Skattebol, J. (2013). *Insights into child care and early education: Orange* (SPRC Report 25/2013). Sydney: Social Policy Research Centre, The University of New South Wales.

## What is this about?

This report is about families in Orange with young children aged up to 5 years. We were interested in what kind of education and care services these families want for their children, how they like the services they are getting, or why they are not using these services. We wanted to find out how to make services work in the best way possible.

Therefore we conducted a research project in six neighbourhoods around Australia, including Orange. We talked to families about their early education and care services: the services that they use or not, whether they like their situation, where they find information, whether they get any payments from government, what good care and education means to them and what would help them with getting the care or education they want.

This booklet details what we found out in Orange.

## Who did the research?

We are from the Social Policy Research Centre at the University of New South Wales, Sydney. The researchers are Deborah Brennan, Jennifer Skattebol, Fiona Williams, Christiane Purcal, Elizabeth Adamson, Megan Blaxland, Bridget Jenkins, Trish Hill and Saul Flaxman. We did the research together with several early childhood education and care organisations: Early Childhood Australia, Gowrie Queensland, Gowrie New South Wales, Gowrie South Australia, Mission Australia and Brotherhood of St Laurence. These organisations and the Australian Research Council (ARC Linkage Project 100200297) paid for the research.

## Why was the research done?

We wanted to find out what kinds of services families need so we can tell governments and service providers about it. Each family with young children is different. Some may want early education or care services, some not, some may want services for a few hours each week, others for several days. For some it may be difficult to find the right services or to get government child care payments.

We were particularly interested in families on a lower income, as it may be harder for them to pay for the services they want.

## Where was the research done?

The research was conducted in six neighbourhoods in different parts of Australia: Orange in NSW, Marrickville in NSW, Caboolture in Queensland, Fitzroy in Victoria, Dandenong in Victoria and Elizabeth Grove in South Australia. Some of these neighbourhoods were in the inner city, some in the outer suburbs, and some in the country. We wanted to find out what care and education services people in different kinds of neighbourhoods wanted.

## How was the research done?

In each neighbourhood we talked to around 20 families about the care and education of their young children. We talked to the mothers and fathers, grandparents and aunts. People volunteered to take part in our research, and we gave them \$50 for their costs and to say thank you. We spoke with them for about one hour each. Their information remains confidential, that is we will not tell anyone who said what.

We met people at various places in the neighbourhood and through early childhood and family services, at playgroups, libraries and neighbourhood centres. We also talked to early childhood workers and service providers in the neighbourhoods.

We talked to 10 families in Orange in June 2013.

## What does this booklet say?

This booklet details what we found out in Orange. It starts with some information about the suburb, the kinds of people who live there, and the care and education services available in Orange. It then describes what kinds of families we spoke to in Orange and, most importantly, what they told us.

## How can I find out more about the research?

You can find out more about our research by contacting:

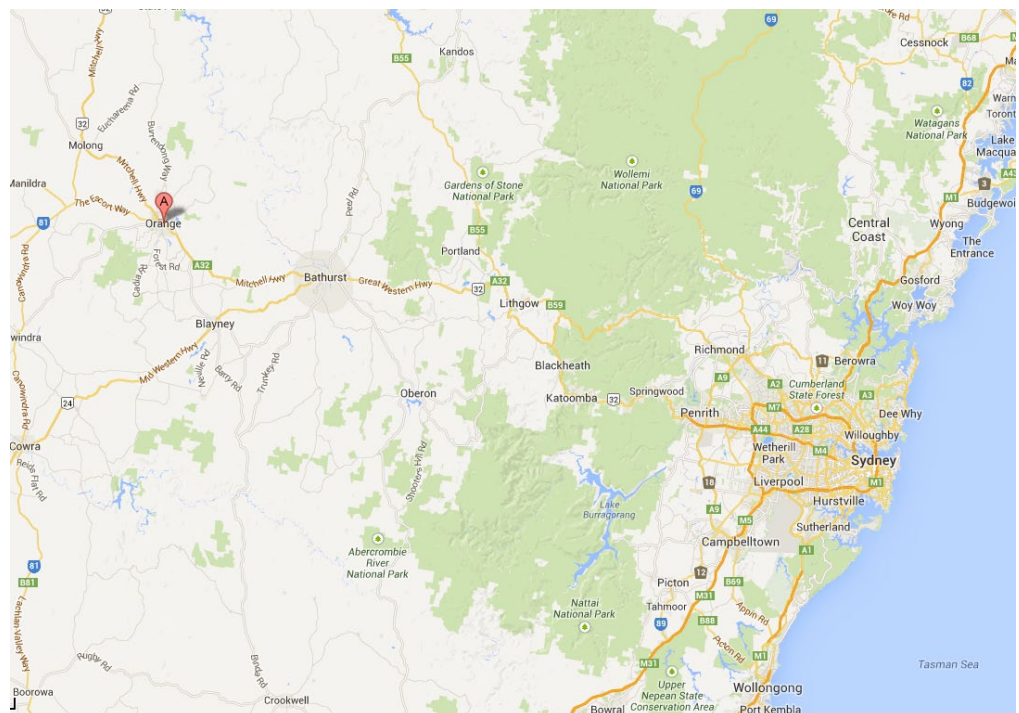
Bridget Jenkins  
Social Policy Research Centre  
University of New South Wales  
Phone: (02) 9385 2174  
E-mail: [b.jenkins@unsw.edu.au](mailto:b.jenkins@unsw.edu.au)

You are welcome to distribute this brochure to other people.  
An electronic copy is available at: [www.sprc.unsw.edu.au](http://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au).

## About Orange

Orange is a city in the Central West region of New South Wales, located approximately 254 km west of Sydney.

### MAP 1: ORANGE IN RELATION TO SYDNEY



### How Orange developed

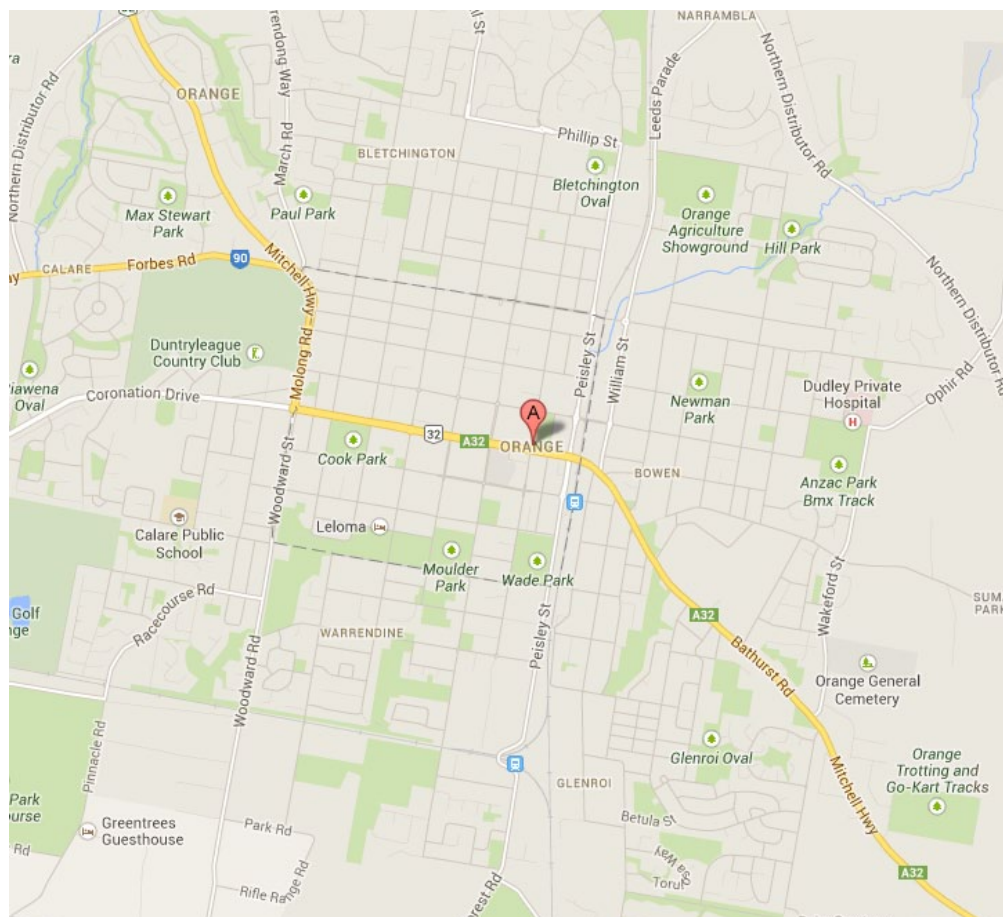
Prior to European settlement, the area was inhabited by the Wiradjuri people.

The site for Orange was established as a convict settlement in 1822 by Captain Percy Smith. Legal occupation by graziers began in the 1830s, leading to small settlements in the area. Orange was established as a village to service these settlements in 1846.

Orange has a rich mining past and grew rapidly in the 1850s and 1860s following the discovery of gold in the area. A favourable climate and rich soil also attracted many wheat and barley farmers to Orange and the surrounding district, and by the 1860s Orange was known as the 'granary of the West', due to its many flour mills. The growth of Orange as a town in the nineteenth century was also bolstered by the establishment of a railway line to Sydney in 1877. Orange continued to expand throughout the 20th century, and in 1946 Orange was proclaimed a city after its population passed 15,000 people.

Today, Orange is a well-known fruit growing district, producing apples, pears and many other stone fruits. In recent years, a number of vineyards have also been planted in the area, which has contributed to the growth of a thriving wine and gourmet food industry and led to an increase in tourism to the area over the last twenty years. Other large employers in the area include the Cadia gold mine and an Electrolux white goods factory.

## MAP 2: ORANGE STREET MAP



### The people of Orange

At the 2011 Census, the population of Orange was 41,832. This is a 9 per cent increase from a population of 38,056 people as reported in the 2006 Census.

Orange is not as multicultural as some other places in Australia. The vast majority of residents (84 per cent) were born in Australia. Other major countries of birth include England, South Africa, India, Scotland and China. Accordingly, the vast majority of residents (89 per cent) speak English at home. In 2011, 2,147 residents of Orange (5 per cent) identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, or both.

Compared to many other areas in NSW, as well as Australia more generally, Orange has a moderate level of housing mobility. In 2011, 32,097 residents (76 per cent) were living in the same address as a year ago; of these, 20,854 had been living at their place of enumeration for five years or more. On the other hand, in 2011 some 6,500 residents had moved to Orange from somewhere else in Australia within the year. Most residents of Orange live in a separate house (36,170). Much smaller numbers live in semi-detached dwellings (1,851) or a flat, unit or apartment (1,282). In the case of those who are renting, most pay under \$324 per week.

In 2011, there were 6,302 families in Orange with at least one child aged 15 years or under. Of these families, three-quarters (4,576) were couple families, while one quarter (1,726) were sole-parent families.

In 2011, a total of 19,313 Orange residents were employed. Of these, two-thirds (12,753) were employed full-time, and one-third (5,454) worked part-time. A further 866 residents were unemployed and looking for work.

In 2011, the vast majority of residents took a car to work (14,597). Smaller numbers walked or took the bus.

### **Child care and early education in Orange**

There is a different mix of child care and early education services in each state. NSW is characterised by more integrated preschool and long day care systems compared to other states and territories. In terms of centre-based long day care, a relatively large proportion of NSW services (84 per cent) are privately managed compared to other states and territories. In 2012, almost 58 per cent of NSW children aged 0 to 5 years were attending Australian Government approved and State and territory government funded and/or provided child care. This could include centre-based long day care, family day care, occasional care or vacation care.

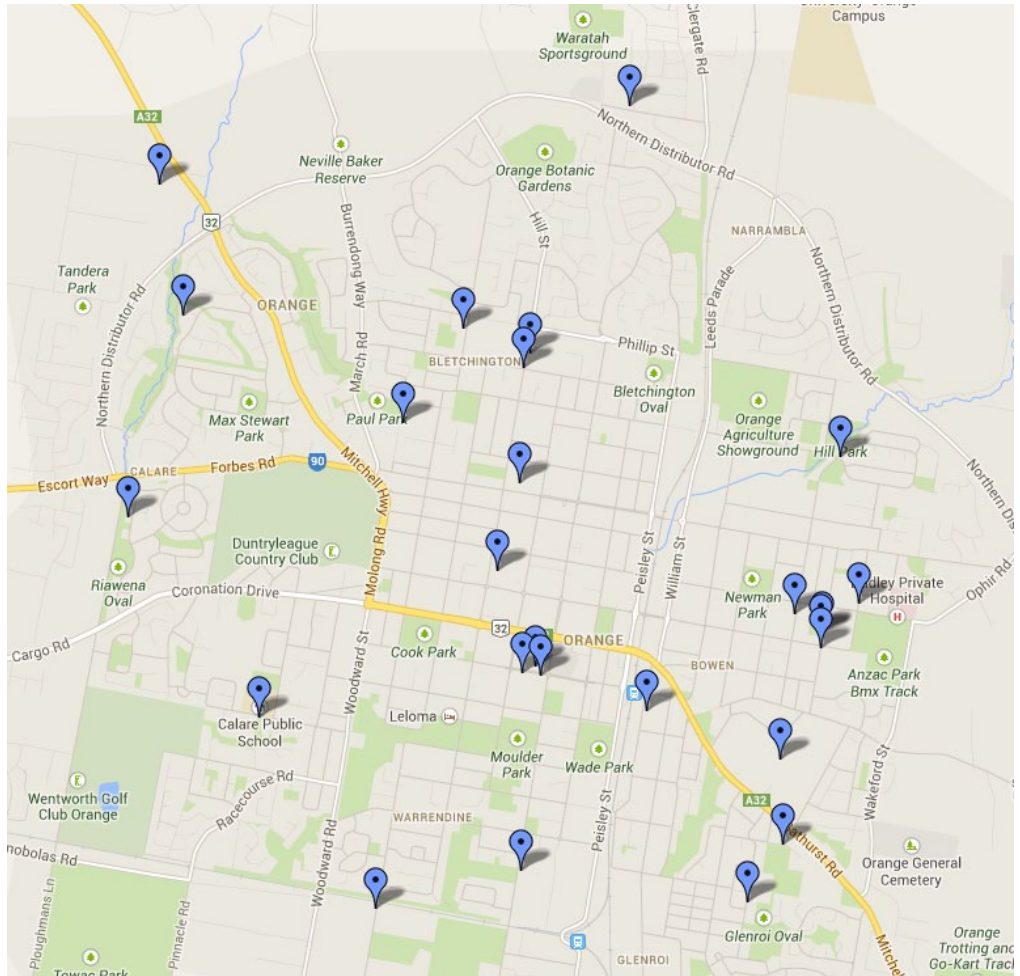
Early education programs are delivered by NSW Government operated preschools, not-for-profit preschools funded by the NSW Government, and private long day care providers not funded by the NSW Government but eligible for the Commonwealth Child Care Benefit and Child Care Rebate. In NSW preschools are open to children aged between 3 and 5 years. Preschool services are largely community managed (80 per cent); smaller numbers are government managed (11 per cent) or delivered by private providers (9 per cent). Preschool is more costly in NSW than in other states and territories, with a median weekly cost of \$58 in 2008.

We can find out about the child care and education services families in Orange use by looking at the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) 2011, which surveys children in their first year of school. Overall, teachers reported that 93.3 per cent of children in Orange had some form of regular non-parental early childhood education and/or care in the year before entering full-time school. The main types of care in the year before school were preschool (80.9 per cent), long day care (15.2 per cent) and grandparent care (9.8 per cent) (some children used a mix of care, and this is why totals do not add up to 100 per cent).

In Orange there are several child care and education services, including the Orange preschool, Bowen preschool, the Yarrowong child care centre, the Happy Feet child care centre and the Spring Street child care centre. There are also a number of playgroups operated by different community organisations like the Orange Family Support Service and Orange council.

A map of the child care and early education services in Orange is shown below.

## MAP 3: ORANGE CHILD CARE AND EARLY EDUCATION SERVICES





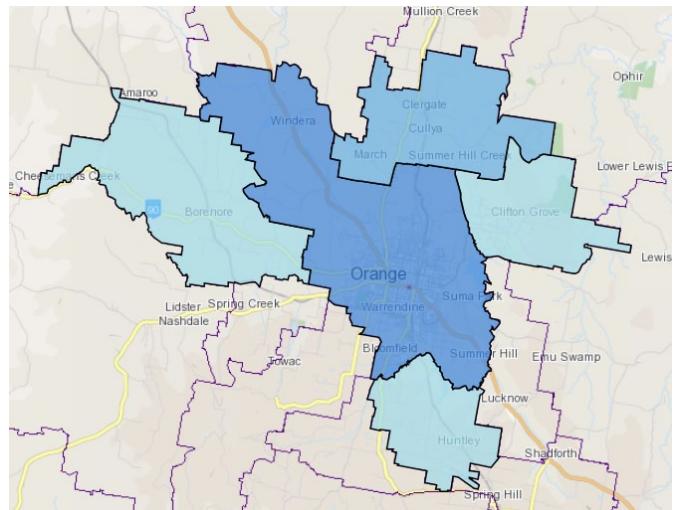
## About families with young children in Orange

In 2011, there were 3,249 children aged 0-4 years living in Orange. These children represented approximately 7.8 per cent of the population of Orange in 2011. Here are some of the things the Census tells us about children aged 0-4 in Orange:

- 390 have one or both parents born overseas
- 578 live in low income families, which earn under \$800 a week
- 490 live with a single parent
- 2,894 live in one-family households
- 128 live in multi-family households
- 1,735 live in houses that their family owns (either fully or with a mortgage)
- 1,279 live in families who are renting
- 3,196 live in a house or semi-detached terrace
- 35 live in a flat, unit or apartment

### MAP 4: LOW INCOME FAMILIES IN ORANGE

Proportion of children aged 0-4 years living in low income families (under \$800 per week) in Orange and surrounding area



## About the families who talked to us

In Orange, 10 families spoke to us about child care and early education for their children. We met parents in a range of child care and family support services around Orange, including supported playgroups, a preschool, a long day care centre and targeted family support services. Eight parents spoke to us in one-on-one interviews, and a further two spoke to us as a group. Information about the families who spoke to us appears in the table below.

**Table 1: The people who talked to us**

Their gender	9 women, 1 man	
Their age	21-25:	3 people
	26-30:	4 people
	31-35:	2 people
	36-40:	1 person
Where they were born	Australia:	10 people
Whether they live with a partner	7 do, 3 don't	
How many children they have	1 child:	3 people
	2 children:	3 people
	3 children:	2 people
	4 children:	1 person
	5 children:	1 person
How old the children are	Ages range from 0 to 13	
The highest level of education	Uni:	2 people
	TAFE/vocational:	1 person
	High school:	4 people
	Not completed high school:	3 people
The languages they speak at home	10 people speak only English at home	
Whether they are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders	2 people were of ATSI background	
What their current work is	At home:	7 people
	In paid employment:	3 people
What their net income is	\$200-\$399 per week:	1 person
	\$400-\$599 per week:	4 people
	\$600-\$799 per week:	2 people
	\$1000-\$1199 per week:	1 person
	\$1200-\$1399 per week:	1 person
	\$1400 or more:	1 person
Their type of housing	Has a mortgage:	4 people
	Private rental:	3 people
	Public housing:	3 people

## What the families told us

Each family is different. They have different stories, different lives, different opinions, different experiences with the child care and early education they use, and different ideas about what they would like. We don't have the space here to report everything the 10 families in Orange told us. Therefore we briefly describe some of the topics relating to child care and early education that they talked about, important concerns they mentioned and where they felt things were going well. Topics are explained with quotes from the people we talked with. We have left the quotes anonymous so that people cannot be identified.

### Lots of families use child care

Most of the parents we spoke to were using some form of child care. Sometimes there was a mix, with children attending different types of care on different days of the week.

The majority of children attended preschool, long day care, or family day care part-time. The main reasons for sending children to child care or preschool included parental work commitments, the educational and social benefits for children, and the chance for parents to get a break.

**"He went when he was 14 months old, just for one day a week. Just to socialise and that type of thing, and give me a break."**

### Quality is important

Parents weigh up a lot of different things when deciding where and when to enrol their children in child care or early education in Orange. Though every family is different, with their own hopes and wishes for their children, every family wanted to secure the best quality care for their children. Some of the factors which were important to parents in Orange included: continuity of carers; hygienic care environments; the provision of nutritious meals to children; an experienced, friendly and accessible workforce; a good location, preferably close to home; and staff who were able to develop close relationships with children. Most of all, though, parents stressed that they wanted their children to feel happy and secure in care or early education.

**"You've got to be able to make sure your kid's happy, to send them...if he's not happy then I'm not happy."**

### Early education is important

A lot of the parents we spoke to valued quality in early education for their children. Before sending their children to school, parents in Orange want their children to develop key social skills and mix with children their own age; to learn about things like letters and numbers; and to learn routines and take directions from an authority figure, so that they would be better prepared to go to school.

**“He’s learning his numbers. He’s learning names of kids... he’s learning how to adapt to school as well.”**

### Availability of care is an issue

Availability of child care in Orange emerged as a major issue for some of the parents in this study. Many parents spoke to us about long waiting lists, particularly at long day care centres, but also at family day care. Many parents who had secured a place at a long day care centre or in family day care felt that they would not be able to move their children if they so desired, due to the long waiting lists in Orange.

Though it wasn’t as much of an issue, waiting lists for some preschools were also a concern for some of the parents in this study. Looking ahead, some parents felt that they would not be able to access their preschool of first choice due to high demand.

**“There’s a big waiting list so now if we wanted to change him to a designated preschool for next year we wouldn’t get him in.”**

### Subsidies help parents

For some parents, and particularly low income families, affordability of care and early education was a concern. However, in Orange some parents who were not working or studying were eligible for highly subsidised preschool or child care through some local family support services. As a result, services could cost as little as \$5 per day. Parents said that they valued these services because they allowed their children to access child care when they otherwise might not have been able to.

One parent spoke about taking her children out of preschool after her circumstances changed and the family was no longer eligible for subsidised child care through a non-profit organisation.

**“When I started paying for it myself, I couldn’t afford it... So I had her at home with me all last year. I couldn’t afford preschool, it was just too dear.”**

## Playgroups

Many of the parents we spoke to in Orange attended a playgroup, or had attended a playgroup in the past. Our respondents spoke very positively about playgroups, and they were seen to benefit both parents and children. While children were able to play and socialise with other kids their age, mothers enjoyed attending playgroups, mixing with other parents and discussing any parenting challenges with them. Playgroups were also a source of emotional support for some of the mothers we spoke to.

**“Sometimes it’s not just about finding the right playgroups, it’s about finding the right time...to have that conversation with another parent...Learning lots of things off other parents.”**

## The importance of care and education for children with a disability

We spoke to some families in Orange who were raising children with cognitive and physical disabilities. All of these families had been in contact with a local child disability support service, which had helped them to access child care for their children.

For each of these families, access to care and early education was very important, as they felt that it could greatly assist children’s social, physical, emotional and cognitive development. Access to regular child care or early education could also serve as a vital source of respite for parents.

As well as the issues of quality outlined above, parents of children with a disability valued good communication with child care providers and early education teachers, where they felt free to openly discuss the child’s needs for additional support, as well as the progress of their children. They were particularly enthusiastic about services that worked in tandem with the family to help address the child’s particular needs for support, for example in one case a long day care centre continued performing physio activities with a child that were also conducted at home.

**“As far as his needs and all – they were understanding of them. If we had any issues they said feel free to come and let us know.”**

### Information about child care in Orange

Parents told us that they got information about child care and education services in Orange from a range of different sources. Many parents had used the internet to find out about long day care centres, family day carers and preschools in Orange, as well as Centrelink benefits. Others had heard about it from family support services in Orange. Lots of parents also spoke to their friends and family about their child care and early education arrangements, swapping information about their different experiences.

**“There’s a Facebook page from all mothers and I wrote on there and asked people what their recommendations were.”**

### Transport and getting around

Different parents that we spoke to in Orange had different transport arrangements. About half of the families we spoke to had a car which was used as the main form of transport. Other families, however, walked or relied on the bus to get around Orange. For this latter group of parents, the geographical closeness of a preschool or child care centre was an important consideration. Some of the parents who used public transportation on a regular basis noted that it could be unreliable. Public transport in Orange was also generally portrayed as infrequent, which meant that taking the bus could entail a significant time commitment for parents.

**“It’s just that [this child care centre] was convenient because it was right around the corner. It was a two minute walk from my place...I don’t drive.”**

## The neighbourhood

Lots of the families we spoke to enjoyed living and bringing up their children in Orange. Generally, Orange was described as very a family friendly area, with lots of activities for families to partake in, and lots of services around to assist families. Some parents, who had not grown up in Orange, spoke at length about the advantages of raising children in a country town, including a different pace of life.

However, some of the parents, particularly those in public housing, were less satisfied about their neighbourhoods, as they had concerns about drugs and violence in the area and worried about the impact this may have on their children.

**“There’s fantastic walking tracks, there’s bushwalking, we go swimming each week...the library’s really good as well. There’s plenty of activities, and free activities as well, that you can get involved with.”**

## References

The information in this booklet came from the families and service providers who talked to us and:

Orange City Council, [www.orange.nsw.gov.au](http://www.orange.nsw.gov.au)

ABS Census Community Profiles 2011,

‘AEDI Orange Community, New South Wales’, Australian Early Development Index, retrieved from [maps.aedi.org.au](http://maps.aedi.org.au), last viewed 10.07.2013