

Podcast 103 – Out of School Hours Care

Learn English while learning about daily life in Australia,
with Rob McCormack

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<http://traffic.libsyn.com/slowenglish/podcast103.mp3>

Hi,

In modern Australia, it is quite common for both partners in a marriage to have full time jobs. This is good for Australia as it means we can use the talents of as many Australians as possible to help make our economy strong. For example, in 2016, for couples with children under 18 years of age, around 61% of those couples were both working.

Work life is certainly more challenging for couples when there are children involved and often one parent will stay at home while the children are pre-school age. This stay at home parent will often return to full time work when their children start primary school. School finishes typically at around 3.30pm, but most full time workers have to be at work until at least 5.00pm or even later. The challenge for working parents is how to look after their primary school aged children after school, before their work day finishes. Some options include flexible working arrangements with your employer, part time work, working from home or job sharing. Others are lucky enough to have grandparents or other close relatives who can assist with child care. For many couples however, these options are not possible. This is where a special child care program in Australia comes to the rescue. It is called the Out of School Hours Care (OOSH) program and, in this podcast, I would like to tell you a little about this highly valued service in Australia.

<https://www.careforkids.com.au/child-care-articles/article/52/an-overview-of-out-of-school-hours-oosh-and-vacation-care>

When my wife and I had our two children, we decided that my wife would stay at home until our youngest went to school. However, once my wife went back to full time work, our problem was how to ensure the children were properly cared for in those important hours from 3.30pm when school ended, until around 6pm when either I or my wife arrived home. In addition, there is the problem of how to care for the children during the school holidays. While each worker gets 4 weeks annual leave a year, that doesn't cover the 11 weeks of holidays which primary school children get each year. Luckily, in Australia we have the Out of School Hours care program.



This program is normally associated with each primary school and all participating parents pay a modest daily fee for their children to attend. They are run and managed either by the school itself, or the school may ask a third party organisation to provide the service. Each provider, including one set up by the school, must meet strict requirements laid down by the government. The requirements cover a large list of topics including where the service will be located, what staff will be involved, what skills the staff must have, what hours will the service operate, what the activities in the

program will be, health and safety policies, and many more. While the regulations seem very detailed, this level of planning is required to ensure that all children using the program will be properly and safely cared for. Only when all these requirements have been met, will the provider be given approval by the government authorities to run the service. This means that all parents can be sure their children will be in safe hands while they attend any Out of School Hours program.

When our children attended primary school, they attended the Out of School Hours program at the Serpell Primary School in North East Melbourne. That was around 25 years ago. Today, the Serpell Primary School Out of School Hours program is run by a third party organisation, Camp Australia. Camp Australia have, of course, all the necessary government approvals. They actually operate Out of Hours programs for many schools all around Australia.

Many programs also allow parents to drop their children off before school, as well as after school. This can often be necessary if parents have a long way to travel to work or perhaps they have to be at work early. For example, at Serpell Primary School, there is a before school program that operates from 7.00am to 8.45am, as well as an after school program that operates from 3.30pm until 6.30pm.

While at the program, the children will be fully supervised. They will usually have a choice of activities which might include free play, art and craft activities, cooking, drama, dance, games, music and sport. There will also be quiet time available if they so choose, so that they can read or do some homework.

In addition, they offer a school holiday program that operates each day of the school holidays from 7.00am to 6.30pm. I can remember dropping my children off at a vacation program close to my workplace in the centre of Melbourne. They had

interesting activities such as a visit to the beach or to the zoo, or a day of drama activities and sport. My children never complained about being bored and the carers seemed to be excellent.

Many parents have the luxury of being able to use grandparents or other relatives to help out with child care when both parents are working, and this certainly avoids the cost associated with formal Out of School Hours programs. My wife and I never had that luxury, as we had moved from one side of Australia to the other, away from our extended family. We really appreciated the Out of School Hours program which we used at Serpell Primary. I think the cost was quite reasonable and certainly affordable for most working people. Today, these programs cost between \$20 and \$40 per day, with vacation programs costing around \$60 per day. When you consider the high quality of these programs, I think that is good value. Without it, one of us would have had to stay at home for many years.

<https://www.campaustralia.com.au/Schools/serpellprimaryschool/3106/B6A9>

(In Australia, parents may be eligible for a subsidy from the government on their child care fees. Please visit <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/child-care-subsidy> for further information.)

If you have a question or a comment to make, please leave it in the comments box at the bottom of this page. Or, you can send me an email at rob@slowenglish.info. I would love to hear from you. Tell me where you live, a little bit about yourself and what you think of my Slow English podcast. I will write back to you, in English of course. If you would like to take a short quiz to see if you have understood this podcast, you will also find it on my website. Goodbye until next time.

Rob

Podcast 103 Quiz - Did you understand the podcast?

You can take the quiz as many times as you like.

Start quiz

Vocabulary

activities = things to do

allow = when someone lets you do something

appreciated = when you like something a lot

approval = when it is agreed that something is good, is following the rules

arrangements = how things are organised, things that are agreed to by everyone

assist = to help

associated = when things are joined in a relationship

attend = to go to something, be at

authorities = the people (usually the government) who make decisions about what is allowed

avoids = not to do something

boring = when something or someone is not interesting

carers = people who care for others

challenging = when something is difficult to do

choice = when you can choose between two or more things

come to the rescue = (here) to assist, to help

couples = two people (usually in a marriage)

detailed = (here) when there is lots of information

economy = describes all the goods and services in a country, including the money paid for them

eligible = when you are allowed to do or to receive something

employer = someone who gives you a job (the boss)

ensure = to make sure something happens

extended family = your wider family – uncles, aunties, cousins, grandparents etc

fee = the cost

flexible = when things can be changed easily

full time jobs = jobs which are around 40 hours per week, Monday to Friday

highly valued = when something is really wanted, worth a lot

homework = school work which you must do at home

involved = when you are part of a situation, when you are taking part

job sharing = when two people share one job, each working half time for half pay

laid down = (here) written down and required, like rules

located = placed

luxury = something that not everyone else has

managed = to look after, to operate, to run

marriage = when two people live together for life (or until divorce)

modest = (here) not large

operate = (here) be open

options = the different ways that things can be done

participating = when you do something with other people

partners = two or more people who work together

pre-school = the first year of schooling, also called Prep

primary school = the school for children aged 5 to 11 years of age

properly = correctly

provider = someone who provides something, usually a service

quality = how good something is

quiet time = time when you can sit quietly

rebate = when some of the cost will be given back to you

relatives = the people in your family – parents, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunties, cousins, etc

requirements = needs, the things that must be done

run = (here) to look after, to manage, to operate,

strict = when something must be done in a certain way

subsidy = when you receive a payment (usually from the government) to help you pay for the cost of something else

supervised = when other people watch over you, to make sure it is correct

talents = abilities, skills, special things which you can do well

third party = another group who helps two people or two groups do something together

typically = normally

vacation = holiday