

## Pamper time for the lucky ones at high-end kindy

Erik Jensen  
April 16, 2009



THERE is a chalkboard in front of the child-care centre on the edge of the North Shore, where Mosman runs down into the harbour. "Pamper Day in the pre-school room today," it reads. "Book in for a foot spa, hairdressing, nails, massage ..."

Inside, a four-year-old girl lies in a daybed having moisturiser worked into her calves. There's another girl at a table, holding her hand still, watching as someone paints her nails.

A relaxation track hums in the background.

"There are critics and knockers out there," Kelly Kirkham, the director at Sally's Place child care, said of the pamper day she had organised.

"I don't know if I'd even have an argument for them. I just don't think you can say a child doesn't need to be pampered. With everything that's going on right now, everyone needs a little bit of love."

Sally's Place is one of a small breed of high-end child-care centres in Sydney: a place with more carers than the law requires, with Monday yoga and French on Thursdays, and a full-time chef all week.

"We're more expensive but it's a boutique centre - it's more exclusive," the centre's owner, Sally Lock, said yesterday. "Anyone would be lying if they said they weren't affected by the economic downturn, but at the same time there's still demand for a centre like this because there are only a few of them."

Paddy Ferguson is four. He wants to do back-flips when he grows up. Maybe front-flips. His hair is matted with the gel he has been pouring into it all day.

"I used the hairdryer all by myself and I put my feet in the thing - it was bubbly and cold and warm," he said of the foot spa, stopping to sniff some moisturiser, then wiping it on a friend.

"My parents snore at night. They eat healthy things, my Mum and Dad. And take me to everything I want. I put my feet in the spa."

A few people have wound back their use of the centre since the downturn. Where they booked three days a week, they may now do two - though still at \$110 for each, with \$2.20 a minute overtime. Some of the castouts from the ABC collapse have found places there. Others are on the waiting list.

"You're never out to overindulge a child," Mrs Kirkham said of

yesterday's excess. "But can you? Some people would say yes. I would say no."