



National Association of Community Based Children's Services

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How Child Care Election Promises Stack Up

The 2004 Federal Election is fast approaching. Attached is our examination of the election policies of the four major parties and how they compare with our key demands. **Please distribute this material widely to assist voters in understanding what each party is offering community-owned children's services on October 9th.**

Coalition

The Coalition's 30% rebate on out-of-pocket costs for child care will grant some relief to the family budget. But a flat rate subsidy is intrinsically inequitable – it will benefit high income families the most. Once again low income families will benefit the least. The Coalition's policy will not create more child care places or improve wages for child care workers; and it will not help communities build the infrastructure needed for the long term. Its only impact will be to increase cash flow to the corporate giants who are gobbling up profits at the tax payer's expense.

Australian Labor Party

Labor's policy is a small but positive step towards building a strong community infrastructure. NACBCS welcomes Labor's commitment of \$43 million in capital funding for 80 new not-for-profit community owned child care centres. In all, Labor's policy equates to 128 new Long Day Care centres; up to 6500 Long Day Care places; and 8000 Out of School Hours Care places. However, this falls well short of the community need of 700 new centres costing by NACBCS at \$1.05 billion. NACBCS also welcomes the reintroduction of planning controls to ensure demand matches supply, the strengthening of quality assurance, and the increase in Indigenous children's services.

Greens

NACBCS is impressed with the Australian Green's commitment to community-owned children's services. Many of NACBCS demands are directly reflected in the Green's child care platform.

Democrats

The Democrats have gone some way towards improving the child care sector, particularly in their commitment to improving wages. However, they lack commitment to community ownership and neglect to address issues of destructive competition.

Barbara Romeril
NACBCS National Secretary

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How Child Care Election Promises Meet NACBCS Demands

NACBCS DEMANDS	Australian Labor Party	Liberal / National Coalition Party	Australian Greens	Australian Democrats
<p>Fund community child care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide capital funding to make sure there is at least one community owned and managed early childhood service for every 800 children up to the age of 5 years (estimate need for approximately 700 additional long day care centres) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Provision of funding for 80 new Long Day Care services (6,500 more places) in priority areas • Community based organisations which build or renovate a child care facility to create new places in areas of high demand will be eligible for grants up to \$500,000 (dependent on inclusion of preschool program) • Total \$43 million commitment to capital funding • \$57 million to fund child care benefit for the additional places 	<p>Coalition election promises do not address this demand.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Public funding to assist in the construction of new community-based and not-for-profit child care facilities (esp. in areas of high growth, unmet demand and outer regions) • Restore operational grants of community-based and not-for-profit child care centres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide capital grants and tax incentives to encourage business to provide on-site child care. Parents utilising work related child care would not receive Government-funded child care
<p>Stop Destructive Competition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring back planning controls by setting a cap on the number of Child Care Benefit (CCB) places for long day care in each community to stop uncontrolled growth in areas that already have enough services • Retain and strengthen the planning controls for Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) to ensure that the number of not-for-profit community owned OSHC services does not drop as commercial operators move in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Labor will introduce planning mechanisms for child care to ensure that services are available in communities in high demand areas • Labor will ensure that the number of child care places matches the demand 	<p>Coalition election promises do not address this demand.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Exploration of funding and regulatory mechanisms to stop the growth of corporate and for-profit providers of childcare, including increased funding of not-for-profit and community childcare • Early childhood education should be provided by government and community organisations, not for-profit providers. • End the incursion of corporate profit driven providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Restore planning & operational subsidies to ensure that child care facilities are available in rural & regional areas

<p>Increase Wages for Child Carers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> By increasing CCB so that services can pay decent wages to attract and retain skilled and qualified staff, while charging fees that parents can afford 	<p>Funding for a national workforce plan to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the retention and recruitment of qualified children's services workers Improve wages and conditions Deliver more qualified workers for rural & remote areas Address occupational health & safety issues relevant to the sector (\$550,000 over 2 years) 	<p>Coalition election promises do not address this demand.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All teachers and workers in early childhood education have the right to appropriate recognition, remuneration, career paths and status and proper industrial rights. Increase in the award rate for childcare workers Provision of additional funding to community based & not-for-profit child care centres to pay for increased wages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Allocate \$350 million for a \$3-4/hour pay rise for child care workers Concerned by low rates of pay Increase funding to create valid career paths for child care workers
<p>What are the major parties doing to achieve the following?</p>	<p>Initiatives proposed by the parties</p>			
<p>Integrated Multi-function Children's Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Labor is committed to the integration and coordination of all children's services – as a first step will invest \$8.75 million for the establishment of 35 new multi-function children's resource centres offering long day care, playgroups, preschool and parenting services 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of multi-purpose children's centres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support Multi-function Services
<p>Affordability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One free day of approved child care per week for 3 and 4 year olds (\$1 billion) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30% child care rebate for out-of-pocket childcare costs (\$1.04 billion) increased access by grandparents to Child Care Benefit (relaxed eligibility and increased affordability) (\$70 million) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve affordability of child care for low & middle income families including reforming CCB ✓ Increase spending for childcare to a % of GDP that is equivalent to the OECD average to increase places & affordability 	<p>Free Child Care and Kindergarten for non-school aged children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30 hours free for single parents and parents in less than 15 hours work or education 10 hours free for families with one non-working parent in less than 15 hours work or education support the existing system after free hours are used

Accommodating diversity of needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ \$13.5 million to support Indigenous children in care including 13 new Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services • \$35 million to protect homeless children 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase indigenous and Non English Speaking Background, & special needs funding • National plan that is culturally affirming & accommodates children with special needs • Removing barriers of access for disadvantaged groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$150M to create new places for 0-2's & children with specific needs • \$12 million to develop a National Indigenous Child Care Strategy
Quality Assurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour will work with State & Territory Governments to ensure a consistent national framework for the regulation of child care providers • Labor will improve standards monitoring and ensure a more effective system of inspections 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring staff:child ratios to internationally acceptable levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support national agreed quality assurance and regulation system as recommended by the Commonwealth Child Care Reference group
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Aloud Australia (\$80M) • The National Centre for Excellence in Childhood Development (\$12M) • \$1,000 bonus for child care trainees • \$252 million investment in the State based preschool system • \$2.2 million to support Family Day Care services • \$10 million additional investment in community play groups • \$50 million for parenting education & home visits 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve professional development opportunities & professional standards for child care workers 	

Policy comparisons, the NACBCS Policy, and additional information and resources are available online at www.childrenfirst.org.au

Sources: Coalition - *Extra Assistance for Families Policy*; ALP - *HeadStart for Children*; Democrats - *Work & Family Election Package*; Greens - *Early Childhood Education & Child Care Policy*