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**NACBCS  
 In  
 Action!**

**EDITORIAL**

*Barbara Romeril, National Secretary*

Welcome to the winter 2005 edition of our national newsletter *NACBCS In Action!* In this edition we continue our celebration of the success of the union claim for improved wages for child care workers in Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory – after several interim and partial decisions, the Industrial Relations Commission has at last published its final decision, awarding significant and well deserved wage rises.

Our regular column on corporate child care covers the surprising and worrying appearance of the former Minister for Children as a member of the Board of the largest corporate child care chain.

Inside is a detailed examination of the child care initiatives in the Federal Budget. There is little to celebrate in this misguided attempt to expand child care provision so that sole parents can be pushed into the labour force as soon as their children reach school age.

***NACBCS In Action***  
 is the quarterly publication of the National Association of Community Based Children's Services. If you would like to contribute an article to this publication, please email [recept@cccinc.org.au](mailto:recept@cccinc.org.au).

## REPORT FROM THE NATIONAL SECRETARIAT

NACBCS met with the Minister for Family and Community Services in April to present our concerns about the hugely inequitable benefit flowing to high income families from the Australian Government's new 30% rebate on out-of-pocket child care costs. We also presented our arguments for improvements to CCB as a better form of Government support for affordability of child care.

We had a long discussion about the challenges facing the Government in considering reintroducing planning controls on allocation of CCB places to centre based child care, especially how to plan effectively across diverse communities. We also discussed the need for public investment in community owned children's services, the similarities with the Minister's previous portfolio of aged care and the potential for the community child care sector to develop services collocated with schools or aged care facilities.

In the last quarter NACBCS has made contact with not-for-profit child care advocates in Canada and is now researching opportunities to advise the Canadian Government and the community child care sector on the risks of funding commercial operators.

We addressed a professional development session for Centrelink staff and found a high level of interest in the issues facing the not-for-profit child care sector.

NACBCS continues to highlight the staffing crisis in child care and actively supports industrial campaigns for improved wages and conditions. We are celebrating along with the union and local services the historic win in the Industrial Relations Commission for ACT and Victorian child care workers. We will continue to actively support the union in pursuing similar award improvements in other states.

And of course we will also continue to lobby for improvements to CCB to enable parents to afford the increased fees that will be needed to pay the improved wages.

## National Children's Services Forum

NACBCS Executive attended the Forum in Canberra in March. We raised our concerns about the 30% rebate on out-of-pocket child care expenses plus the usual concerns about the staffing crisis, the growth of corporate child care and the need for capital funding to expand not-for-profit community owned children's services.

The Forum decided to expand its membership to include a new national peak body – the National In Home Care Association. A reduction of funding to Peaks for their participation in the Forum will occur to include this group.

The Forum decided to hold a lobbying day on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2005. It was agreed that the issues that will be raised with federal politicians are:

- 1) Workforce concerns
- 2) Investment in children re literacy, obesity, protection
- 3) Planning and viability of services
- 4) Impact of the Broadband funding review on professional support and resources.

Case studies will be sought to demonstrate the reality of the issues. Thank you to NACBCS members who have already submitted case studies for use on the lobby day. We will also publish these case studies in future editions of this newsletter.

## NACBCS Annual General Meeting

The National Council held its annual general meeting by teleconference in March – the executive was reappointed:

- Convenor – Lynne Wannan, Vic Branch
- Deputy Convenor – Prue Warrilow, NSW Branch
- Secretary – Barbara Romeril, Vic Branch
- Treasurer – Judith Whittle, WA Branch

The meeting also discussed our critique of the 30% rebate policy and strategies to maintain the public education campaign we built up in our federal election campaign.

**Thank you to the services who have already submitted a case study to NACBCS for the National Children's Services Forum Lobby Day – we have a great cross-section of services from across Australia.**

## FEDERAL BUDGET

### Federal Budget 2005-2006

*Extract from 'Welfare to Work' Budget Documents*

#### A boost to child care places

The Government is boosting child care through a \$266 million package to assist parents in the transition from welfare to employment, education or training.

This package includes:

- 84,300 extra Outside School Hours Care places
- 2,500 extra Family Day Care places
- 1,000 extra In-Home Care places
- Help for 52,000 families through Jobs, Education and Training Child Care fee assistance.

Jobs Education and Training Child Care assists low income families meet any 'gap' in child care fees. The additional funding will help ensure that child care costs are not a barrier for parents making the transition from welfare to work.

This substantial package builds on earlier Government commitments to child care including:

- The Child Care Tax Rebate, a 30 per cent rebate on out-of-pocket child care expenses costing \$1 billion over four years
- 40,000 additional Outside School Hours Care places and 4,000 additional Family Day Care places in the 2004-05 Budget.

#### NACBCS Media Release

10 May 2005

#### Government's Child Care Spending Misses The Mark

The National Association of Community Based Children's Services (NACBCS) congratulates the Australian Government for recognising that more child care is needed if the economy is to benefit from the skills and experience of parents. But the Budget child care initiatives will not solve the key problems preventing parents from accessing the care they need.

- 84,000 new subsidised child care places is a great idea – but only if the child care sector has the capacity to deliver these places
- Relying on the private market to deliver essential infrastructure like child care is wrong
- Informed parents want not-for-profit community based child care, not commercial services focussed on returning a profit to distant shareholders – the Budget fails to deliver Government investment in capital to ensure growth in community based child care

- New outside school hours care (OSHC) places are welcome - most OSHC services are still community owned so this public money will mostly go where it is intended rather than into private pockets:
  - But many local communities don't have the facilities to provide this care – existing OSHC services are full and capital works are needed to expand the space;
  - In Victoria and NSW there are no state regulations setting minimum standards so this new care could be of poor quality;
  - There is a critical shortage of skilled OSHC workers due to poor wages and conditions
- The Budget incentives to encourage parents and older people to work in child care show a basic lack of understanding of the sector
- \$1,500 cash grants to encourage sole parents to set up a family day care service is woeful policy
  - Just because you have children doesn't mean you can provide a high quality child care service
  - It is lonely, isolating work – a sole parent of young children often lacks the adult supports within the household that a family day carer needs so they can stay in the job
- Communication strategies and increased training places will do nothing to overcome the biggest disincentive to working in child care – the appalling wages and conditions
- The 30% tax rebate on out-of-pocket child care costs is very poor policy
  - it is a disaster for fairness and equity for families
  - Families who don't pay tax, like student parents and sole parent pensioners will miss out completely
  - Child Care Benefit is a progressive system of support for families, offering the highest assistance where it is most needed - this 30% rebate undoes all of the good work of CCB.
  - Fees will inevitably go up - and the unfairness gets much worse as fees increase.

How can the government justify this kind of inequitable use of public funds?

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website  
[www.childrenfirst.org.a](http://www.childrenfirst.org.a)



Senator the Hon Kay Patterson

Minister for Family & Community Services

Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women's Issues

Minister for Family and Community Services

## Media Release

### Massive increase in child care places

10/05/2005

Thousands of extra child care places have been announced in a package of Budget measures totalling over \$260 million as part of the Howard Government's Welfare to Work package.

The Minister for Family and Community Services, Senator Kay Patterson today said that over the next four years over 84,300 Outside School Hours Care places, 2,500 Family Day Care places and a further 1,000 In-Home Care places would be made available.

"The measures will support the *work first* approach of the innovative welfare reform package and show the Howard Government's continued commitment to Australia's parents and children. They will also meet projected unmet demand over the next four years," Senator Patterson said.

"The additional places costing \$210 million, will be available over four years beginning in 2005-06, in the areas of Australia where there is demonstrated need.

"The Howard Government will also provide \$55 million over four years to support 52,000 low income families to meet the 'gap' in child care fees, ensuring that child care costs are not a barrier for parents in making the transition from income support to employment. To further support that, we will improve the efficiency of the Jobs Education Training (JET) Child Care programme.

"The package includes practical support to help some parents return to the workforce as Family Day Care workers. This will include grants to Family Day Care workers, more Vocational Education and Training places for parents and older workers and a communication package to address the shortage of child care workers.

"We will also alter the base level of participation required to satisfy the Child Care Benefit work, training, study test. To be eligible for more than 24 hours of Child Care Benefit a week, both members of a couple will need to demonstrate they have ongoing work, or work related activity, equivalent to an average of around 15 hours a week each.

"This package will provide the additional child care necessary to reduce barriers parents face in moving from welfare to work, as well as address current demand," Senator Patterson said.

## NCSMC

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## Media Release

### Work First Approach Leaves Children Last

May 10 2005

New workfare rules and punishments for single parents will create more hardship and stress for many families with little or no sustainable improvement in their circumstances if Australia follows the experience of workfare policies in North America

The Convenor of the National Council of Single Mothers and their Children, Dr Elspeth McInnes said the evidence from the United States and Canada was that children received less parental care, experienced more family stress and minimal or temporary gains in income.

'The sad irony is that single and married mums go back to work as their children get older anyway', Said Dr McInnes. 'We have a problem when punishment becomes the principal policy response to social disadvantage while the supports to actually help parents realise their career aspirations are limited.'

Dr McInnes said parents seeking to return to the paid workforce need the support of family-friendly workplace reforms, appropriate childcare, and access to skills education, adequate housing and transport if their barriers to paid work are to be properly addressed.

'Forcing parents of primary school age children to undertake paid-work clearly signals that the well-being of children is of less priority than the national labour-force participation rate. Children of separated parents face the biggest government cuts to their access to parental care and, consequently, the highest risks of inadequate care and supervision.'

Dr McInnes said plans to reduce the rate of Parenting Payment when the youngest child turns six would necessarily plunge the most vulnerable families into deeper poverty. 'Creating increased poverty actually hampers family functioning and the capacity to look for work. Sole parent families are already facing the highest risks of poverty, with outcomes such as families going without electricity, being evicted for not paying rent and children missing out on school because there is no money for a bus ticket,' said Dr McInnes.

Punishing the poorest families will undoubtedly increase the demands on charities for food parcels, emergency relief, emergency housing and child protection orders, Dr McInnes said.

**ENDS Dr Elspeth McInnes 0421787080 Executive Officer Jac Taylor 0409697343**

## Life Matters – Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> May - How the budget affects people's lives.

*Interview by Julie McCrossin with Lynne Wannan, NACBCS and Robyn Munro-Miller, NOSHS*

JM – I'd like to welcome to the program now Robyn Munro Miller, National Outside School Hours Services Association Convenor. Basically, you're involved in the care, often in schools that is available. Before and after care. Tell us about what this budget is bringing to your services.

RM – Ok well this budget is effectively releasing more places to meet some of the demands that are currently being placed on outside school hours for additional places and for care. But effectively it is not 80,000 places for children it is more like around 26,000 places.

JM – Why do you say that?

RM – Well because what they're actually counting is every component of care, before school care, after school care and vacation care, so one child, such as the mum who was just speaking, her child might have to occupy three of those places if they were using before, after and vacation care.

JM – Can I ask you, in your work you must, and those and the people that work with you, you must have a lot of contact with people like Ann who we just heard. Single mothers battling with children and juggling work and so on. How do you think they are going to respond to this requirement once the youngest child is six to get back to some kind of work, 15 hours minimum?

RM – I work with a large number of families in this situation and I think that what is going to happen is that they are not necessarily going to be able to access that service and it is also removing choice from their lives. Because as that mother said, she doesn't want her child in care 10 hours a day and family choice is very important in how we raise our children but I think, more importantly from an outside school hours care perspective, we've got services that are prepared to provide supports for families but its families who want that choice and that choice is the important part of any program. That families actually feel that they are engaged with the service by choice not because a government has forced them to do so.

JM – Peter Saunders, from the Centre of Independent Studies, choice, what do you say to that? Better to have incentives rather than sticks?

PS – We need both, and I'm all in favour of choice so long as it is not exercised at the expense of other people. I mean sure with choice comes responsibility. You can't expect everything to be provided, you have to, we all have to make some sacrifices ... I think though what I would say, and I agree with the thrust of what has been said over the last five minutes, that there is still an issue remaining here about making it pay better for people to come off these welfare payments and into work. I think there has been a slight move on that in this budget with the reduction in that tax rate, the initial tax rate from 17 to 15 cents, with the changes on the table with Newstart and so on, but I don't think it has cracked the problem. I mean I've been on record for a long time now having argued that the only way that you are going to crack this problem is to raise the tax free threshold and to do something about the means testing of

certain core benefits. And I think that the Treasurer is still ducking that. I think it is a very positive budget in terms of the welfare reforms but I've always argued that three things have to go along together. We need reform of welfare, we could start from that, we need tax reform at the bottom end to do something about these incentives and something needs to be done on that. And we need labour market reform to generate more of the kind of jobs we want. And we will just have to wait and see what happens about that in the next 12 months.

JM – If you have just joined us here on life matters this is ABC Radio National and I am Julie McCrossin. And in this first hour we are looking at some of the most significant elements of the budget and how they affect the daily lives of people.....

JM – Let's go back to our discussion and what assists people to work. The Treasurer has said that getting people into work is the primary focus of this budget and I would like to welcome Lynne Wannan, the Chair of the National Association of Community Based Children's Services, which of course are just one proportion of the overall child care provision. Good Morning Lynne.

LW – Good Morning Julie

JM – Was there any good news for your sector in this budget?

LW – No, nothing. There was no growth in the long day care sector which is that sector which is for young children. Nothing at all. A few additional bits and pieces around family day care, which is a home based service. Which is having difficulty recruiting carers anyway, so I don't think that the notion that they are going to expand that will be any more helpful but I think for us, the big failure of this government generally and certainly it is reinforced by this budget, is that there is no investment in child care. The government has simply said not our business, even though everyone now is now saying it is core to parents' capacity to work. There is no investment, they are just handing it to the free market so we are running out of the high quality community-owned children's services. There is no growth, and we know that there are thousands of families who are trying to get into child care and they can't. And we also know that child care is in fact the biggest expense for most families after housing. Affordability is a major problem. The way in which these tax benefits roll out if you applied those cuts to child care, high income families will now be paying less for child care than low income. I know you can't apply the whole of the tax cut, given that for families child care is their biggest expense. It is the high income families that will be paying even less for child care than low income families.

JM – Lynne, if I could just come back to that question of the family day care, this is mainly women caring for children within the home. Do you think that some of the sole parent women who are now going to be required, when their youngest child turns six to get 15 hours of work, could in fact be encouraged to become family day carers?

LW – I imagine that is what the Treasurer is proposing and I'd have to say that I think that is really woeful. First of all just because you have children doesn't mean that you can provide high quality child care for a group of children, other people's children. It is not an easy job. And secondly it is a very lonely, isolating job to be at home caring for four children or more on your own and for a single parent you don't even then have the other adult who might come in at the end of the day to talk it over or support you in some way. I think that it's really treating

child care as something that really doesn't matter, that anyone can do it under any conditions. It is a real failure to acknowledge that these early years are fundamental to the way in which we as grown up people have developed and that we need really good investment to make sure that that child care is good quality.

JM – Lynne Wannan thank you. Lynne Wannan from the National Association of Community Based Children's Services. Coming back now to Robyn Munro Miller from the outside school hours care, the before and after school care that has had well 80,000 places. Robyn analysed that earlier so that is more likely 26,000. Just before I let you go Robyn, what do you see as the practical challenges your sector is going to face in implementing those positions? Because there must be issues around staffing and training and so on?

RM – There certainly is because with those places we are going to require an extra 178,000 skilled professionals in child care. The sector has at the moment an incredible shortage in skilled child care workers. And I agree wholeheartedly with Lynne when we say that it is not everybody's job to be able to immediately, once you've got a child, you can work with children. It is a highly skilled profession and it requires a particular type of person and so we've got that shortage to deal with but also we have the problems that the government doesn't seem to have provided anything for infrastructure. Those 26,000 places may sit on the shelf if no one is prepared to take them up and run with them and implement them. The resourcing and development of services is a critical issue to get these services up and running and at the moment there doesn't seem to be any infrastructure planning for them.

JM – Thank you very much, we might leave child care there.

### Post Budget Interview with John Faine – 11 May 2005

JF – But Barbara Romeril has been waiting a long time to speak. She is the Executive Director of Community Child Care. We wanted someone to explain to us exactly how the budget announcements on child care would work. Barbara, good morning.

BR – Good morning John and happy birthday to Jan.

JF – Fabulous, unprompted. I'm impressed Barbara. There is a rubbish truck on fire on the Hume freeway near Craigieburn bypass outbound lanes affected. Watch out if you are in that area. Barbara, how does the budget announcement of a massive increase in child care places impact on the sector?

BR – Well, it's terrific that the government has recognised that if the economy is going to benefit from the skills of parents, then they need to increase the availability of child care. But the way that the budget is attempting to do that shows a really fundamental misunderstanding of how the child care sector works. Just to throw out more subsidised places and expect the market to provide the care is quite naïve.

JF – Why?

BR – Well especially in the outside school hours care area where most of the demand will come from single parents who are now to be expected to look for work once their children start school. There are all sorts of impediments to a school or a community organisation either setting up an OSHC service or if they have already got one, expanding the number of places, and the physical building to provide the care in is one major impediment. There are problems with attracting and retaining staff because the wages are so poor and the conditions are bad with often split shifts.

JF – Oh but you can employ some of these people who are being forced off disability pensions

BR – Yes, and that is another flaw in the thinking in the budget. The plan to retrain single parents and people with disabilities to be child care workers really misunderstands the nature of child care today. It is not just watching somebody else's children. Child care is about providing a developmentally appropriate program to maximise children's development during those early years when there is the best opportunity to shape what kind of adults they will be.

JF – But early child care were in fact parent coops. Isn't this an opportunity to get back to what it started out as being?

BR – Only if the Commonwealth recognises its responsibility to put some money into capital. Those early parent coops, which we championed and our organisation grew out of that movement, were reliant on government funding for the physical building to offer the service in, and then the community was up and away with assistance from local government and community organisations and the voluntary effort of parents. We know there are parent groups out there in the community right now ready to set up and operate services but they need the capital injection to establish the facilities for those services. We've been tapping on the door of this Federal Government for quite some time saying that a relatively modest injection from the budget into capital would have a massive impact on the capacity of the sector to meet the needs for child care and they're deaf to it.

JF – Well, you wouldn't want to sound ungrateful though would you? You've been calling for an increase in child care funding for years and you've finally got it and all you can do is say it is not good enough.

BR – The problem is the free market approach of this government. They believe that all they have to do is offer a fee subsidy to the parents and the parents will go and shop around and the market will provide and clearly, that's not working. There are families right throughout the country, screaming out for child care and it is not being provided in the communities where they need it and at the price that they can afford. The government must recognise that the market is failing and that the provision of child care is a fundamental social infrastructure and government must take responsibility for it.

JF – Thank you Barbara

BR – My pleasure.

## Caring more for children in child care

*The Age – Editorial - May 13, 2005*

**The budget promised more child-care places. But are there enough, and are they what children need?**

... What is missing (*from the Federal Budget*) is a vision for how to provide the best possible care for all those who want and need it. The Government's policy of paying child-care subsidies to parents rather than direct subsidies to community child-care centres has seen a huge rise in privately run facilities and concerns that the quality of care is being sacrificed in those centres that exist to make a profit.

The virtual privatisation of the sector has also led to uneven service provision: inner-city dwellers are more likely to face child-care shortages than those in outlying areas because it is cheaper to build centres in the suburbs. ... Persistent complaints about the lack of child-care places suggest that its present strategy of leaving supply to market forces is flawed.

... (T)he divide between child care and preschool should be removed and greater attention paid to a child's learning from birth. ... (*This*) suggestion requires a willingness by both government and the community to invest more in the child-care sector. This week, child-care workers in Victoria and the ACT received pay increases after two years of negotiation; salaries for workers with degrees will jump from about \$25,000 to \$33,000 a year. This increase will mean higher fees, and some child-care centre employers have warned parents will be hard-pressed to afford them. Yet it is reasonable for trained child-care workers to expect to be adequately rewarded for an important, if underrated job. We cannot demand quality care if we are not prepared to pay for it.

### An interesting perspective on the Federal Budget ...

*Taken from the article 'Interrupt the coitus, there's too much work to be done' – Christine Jackman – The Australian 11 May*

... Last night's budget injected a much-needed \$266 million into the childcare sector over four years to pay for an extra 84,300 outside-school-hours places, 2500 more family day care places and 1000 additional in-home places. But is it enough? It is interesting to note that this budget generously provides almost as much (\$216 million) to fund "organisational, logistical and security measures" for the Prime Minister's much-vaunted "farewell party", the 2007 APEC meeting in Sydney. ...

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## KEEPING AN EYE ON CORPORATE CHILD CARE

### Larry Anthony's New Position at ABC

#### Yes, ex-minister, you're hired

*Andrew Fraser – The Australian March 17 2005*

Larry Anthony, the Howard government minister who presided over the rapid expansion of private child care providers, yesterday joined the board of the industry's biggest operator.

ABC Learning Centres, which now controls more than 20 per cent of Australia's child care market, announced the appointment of the former children and youth affairs minister who lost his seat in the October election.

While Mr Anthony's appointment was announced only yesterday, he has already been active in his new role.

The expansion of the private childcare sector under the Coalition government has provided a windfall for private operators with childcare payments increasing from about \$1 billion at the start of the decade to \$1.4 billion last year and an estimated \$1.53 billion this year.

During that time, ABC has emerged as the largest operator and, following its takeover of Peppercorn Management last year, it now operates more than 53,000 of the 229,000 long-day care places in Australia, giving it 23 per cent of the market.

In the child care industry, the government subsidy is paid directly to the operator, meaning that ABC received about \$150 million directly in subsidies last year, but this year should receive about \$350 million.

Anthony follows at least four former ministers who have found work in areas related to their portfolios.

Former health minister Michael Wooldridge worked for the Royal College of General Practitioners, former defence minister Peter Reith took up a short-term contract with defence company Tenix, ex-finance minister John Fahey went to work for stockbrokers JP Morgan and former communications minister Richard Alston was a consultant for one of the country's dominant radio groups, Austereo.

Mr Alston has since been appointed high commissioner to Britain.

Mr Anthony lost his seat of Richmond in northern NSW at the election last October, and in November he appeared at the annual general meeting of ABC Learning Centres in Brisbane where Chairwoman Sallyanne Atkinson, a former Liberal politician, said he was "a friend of the company".

At that stage, Mr Anthony denied he was seeking a role with the company, but yesterday said he had been approached last month about a board position.

Mr Anthony denied that there was a conflict of interest in joining the ABC Learning Centres board so soon after being the minister in charge of regulating the child care industry.

"Unlike some others who've left politics and gone straight into business, I didn't volunteer to leave politics", he said.

"I was expecting a parliamentary career, but that didn't happen. So I'm pursuing a business career."

Last year's annual report of ABC showed that non-executive directors were paid at an annual rate of \$40,000. Mr Anthony last week also joined the board of Credit-Link, a Brisbane-based rural credit union.

Ms Atkinson said the company had been looking for another non-executive director to comply with ASX rules, which require that a company have a majority of non-executive directors, and that Mr Anthony was well-known to other board members.

"It's one of the things we look for in board members – we all need to get on," she said.

"It's not as if we don't get access to politicians when we need it. Larry doesn't so much bring us access as an understanding of how government works."

But the Opposition said Mr Anthony's actions amounted to another case of a minister leaving parliament and then working for the industry the previously regulated.

### A choice in childcare

*By Barbara Romeril, Community Child Care*

Larry Anthony's appointment as a director of ABC Learning Centres Ltd so soon after losing his post as Minister for Children and Youth Affairs is a matter of deep concern to Community Child Care.

CCC, the peak body for non-profit children's services in Victoria, has been overwhelmed with phone calls from parents and community-based services worried about what this means for Australia's childcare services.

We are especially concerned about the possibility that ABC will have preferential access to government and policy makers.

Millions of dollars of public money already support commercial childcare companies. This once diverse sector is increasing dominated by corporate chains. Since the merger of ABC and Peppercorn, choice has been further eroded.

CCC calls on the current minister to ensure that every community has choice of quality community-owned childcare services. We need policies that protect choice rather than encourage a monopoly.

*This was published in the Herald-Sun on March 25 2005*

### Centre blamed for tot's escape

*Mariza Fiamengo – Herald Sun April 5 2005*

A toddler who climbed the fence of a child care centre on a busy road was missing for up to 20 minutes, a court was told yesterday.

Zachary Varga was two years and ten months old when he escaped from the outdoor play area at ABC Development Learning Centre in Barber Drive, Hoppers Crossing.

He had placed a toy foam cube beside the fence, enabling him to scale it, the Sunshine Magistrates' Court heard.

Two women who lived nearby returned the boy to the centre about 20 minutes after it was noticed he was missing.

He was unharmed, but his escape on April 17 2003, led to ABC Developmental Learning, owners of the childcare centre, facing charges by the Human Services Department of inadequately supervising the child and failing to protect him.

The company, which runs several child care centres in Victoria, has pleaded not guilty to the two charges, which each carry a maximum fine of more than \$5,000.

ABC Learning Developmental Learning Centre's barrister, Ross Ray, QC, said the evidence presented did not demonstrate a failure to supervise.

He said if there was a failure it was "very much a low level of failure" that could not be attributed to the company.

The court heard the fence exceeded the regulation height and was designed to prevent children from climbing it.

But prosecutor Phillip Priest, for the Human Services Department, told the court the toddler escaped because of inadequate supervision.

He said it was the court's responsibility to determine whether the employees' actions could be shifted on to the company.

The court heard Zachary disappeared after one of three child care workers supervising 12 children went to the toilet.

One of the childcare workers supervising Zachary, Tanya Goodwin, told the court she noticed him missing just after 4.45pm, less than a minute after her colleague went to the toilet.

She said she performed a head count of the children and discovered one of them was missing.

Ms Goodwin was sacked about a week after incident for misconduct relating to Zachary's disappearance.



### First day is Childs' play

*Emma Chalmers – Herald Sun 5 April 2005*

Sydney-based Childs Family Kindergartens shrugged off any fears about a glut in the number of listed childcare companies when it celebrated a successful debut on the share market yesterday.

Traders snapped up stock in the childcare company and its shares soared to 65c at the opening of the market from a 50c issuing price.

The stock later dropped to 53c before eventually closing at 56.5c, defying the broader trend of the market, which has been down overall for six of the last eight trading days.

Of the 60 million shares on issue, more than 3.7 million were traded yesterday. CFK launched its float in February this year to raise \$15 million and establish itself as a "serious player" in the industry.

Yesterday, CFK announced it had settled 34 of the 37 New South Wales centres it had announced it had options over in its prospectus and managing director Barry Childs said there was room in the industry for further expansion.

"We are very encouraged by the many kindergarten owners who have contacted us during the IPO process who are interested in being part of Childs Family Kindergartens," he said.

Most recently CFK secured Beesmart Kidz Kindy, which it bought for \$782,207 on April 1.

The company is yet to acquire three remaining centres and Mr Childs said it was hoped CFK could secure at least one of the centres during the week of its listing and the balance by the end of the month.

The company also announced it is contracted to progressively acquire another 11 new childcare centre developments, 10 from the Acre Woods group, and it is in negotiations with a further 15 existing businesses.

### Child care numbers disappoint

*Herald Sun March 31 2005*

Queensland company Hutchison's Child Care Services has reported it is suffering lower than expected numbers of children at its centres.

Greater competition and even Queensland's extra year of prep school were blamed for occupancy shortfalls at Hutchison's, which has 81 centres.

Hutchison's also said anecdotal evidence suggested the sluggish take-up after the New Year holiday period had affected other smaller operators.

Company secretary Geoff Boynton said yester: "People come back to school and they (occupancy rates) usually bounce up. They haven't bounced as high as expected."

Hutchison's also issued a shock profit warning, saying net profit before amortisation of goodwill would fall below analyst expectations of about \$5.8 million for 2005, to about \$4 million. That carved 21 per cent of its shares, which fell 31c to \$1.18.

ABC Learning Centres, which dominates the sector with 644 centres, said its enrolments were up to expectations.

### Centre's future in doubt

*Susie O'Brien – Herald Sun 16 April 2005*

A corporate takeover has thrown the future of an eastern suburbs childcare centre into doubt.

East Ivanhoe Childcare Centre was formally owned by Scott Thompson, who has been sentenced for possessing child pornography.

It was bought by ABC Development Learning, which was to take possession yesterday.

But staff have refused to sign contracts and desperate parents are concerned a mass walkout could leave their children in the lurch.

It is understood that more than half of the staff have job interviews with other centres.

Staff were given copies of contracts on Wednesday and told they had to sign by yesterday or they would not have a job on Monday.

The deadline has since been extended for a week.

Parent Kylie Bell, mother of three-year-old Mitchell, said it was devastating that staff might want to leave the centre.

"We would lose a very special relationship," she said. "I don't want to send my child to a stranger from an agency and would have to rethink whether I would work."

The centre's twenty staff are concern about contract provisions stipulating: THEY can be sent anywhere the company needs them to work.

STAFF with up to seven years' experience may be subject to a three-month probation period during which they could be sacked.

ABC Developmental Learning Centre spokeswoman Margot McKay said the company was optimistic many staff would sign next week.

### Move to outlaw schools-for-profit

*Sean Parnell - The Australian, 12 May 2005*

THE Queensland Government will legislate to thwart plans by Australia's largest childcare provider to set up for-profit "primary colleges".

ABC Learning Centres wants to channel children from its

childcare centres into the schools in a move it expects to generate returns of more than 20 per cent.

But Queensland Education Minister Anna Bligh has introduced legislation to state parliament to deny state funds to for-profit schools even if they receive official accreditation. Ms Bligh yesterday expressed concern for-profit school bosses might deliberately reduce investment in their schools to maximise returns to shareholders.

She will use a meeting in Canberra today to demand federal Education Minister Brendan Nelson give a similar commitment over commonwealth funds. But Dr Nelson said last night that the commonwealth already denied funding to for-profit schools.

"I would be very concerned if the move by the Queensland Government had the deliberate, or even unintended consequence, of restricting the establishment of new Catholic and independent schools," he said.

ABC - which has recruited former Howard Government family and children services minister Larry Anthony as a director -- plans to establish a 750-student preparatory-to-Year 7 school in the burgeoning Brisbane suburb of Springfield next year as the first of a number of such colleges.

It would be the first for-profit school in Australia for domestic fee-paying students.

The Brisbane-based company is expected to lease the property from Springfield Land Corporation and allow a specially formed organisation, Independent Colleges Australia (ICA), to run the school.

ICA will appoint a governing body, which will include ABC representatives, and is expected to pay a management fee back to ABC.

ABC is tight-lipped about its planned funding structure for the new venture, and a company spokeswoman said yesterday that ICA would not be commenting on the action by Ms Bligh.

Ms Bligh confirmed the new laws were prompted by ABC's move, adding they were "designed to cover a range of corporate structures that their moves have brought to our attention".

"Our laws will make it clear that any organisation that has a corporate structure that doesn't comply with the basic principle that public funding should be applied for the benefit of students and schools, not as a benefit for shareholders, will be denied public funding," she said.

"It's not unusual for schools to generate a surplus, schools in the state and non-state sectors, through fundraising and fees, but currently those funds are reinvested in the school."

ABC told the Australian Stock Exchange last year it intended to invest up to \$2million in its new schools division by 2007, with initial returns of 20per cent set to rise with the introduction of more "primary colleges".

Ms Bligh told parliament she was concerned governing bodies might pay exorbitant fees to companies with links to for-profit schools, or charge unreasonable tuition fees.

### **A.B.C. Learning Centres Limited**

*21 April 2005*

#### **ASX Release**

#### **A.B.C. Learning Centres to provide child care services for Defence families**

ABC Corporate Care Pty Ltd, a subsidiary of ABC Learning Centres Limited (ASX: ABS), announced today it had signed a contract with the Department of Defence to provide child care services to Defence families throughout Australia.

ABC Learning Centres CEO (Operations), Eddy Groves, said ABC Corporate Care was proud to have been selected to provide Australia's Defence families with quality child care services.

"Our Defence personnel provide an invaluable service to our country and it is important that they are confident that no matter where they are posted in Australia they will have access to exciting and challenging early learning environments for their children," Mr Groves said.

Defence data indicated that there were approximately 15,000 Defence children in the child care age group and that a significant proportion of mobile Defence families were not able to access enough quality, affordable care in their posting locations.

Under the contract with ABC Corporate Care, Defence families will have access to more than 650 centres in addition to the 19 child care centres that Defence currently operates. Through the National Enrolment Call Centre (1800 222 543) they will be able to book child care in advance of relocating to an area.

In addition, there will also be new Defence Corporate Child Care Centres developed under the contract at no cost to the Government.

Mr Groves said that the tender process over the past nine months has been extensive and during this time, and from providing services to Defence families over the past 17 years in our centres, ABC has come to understand the special needs and requirements of Defence families.

Other benefits to Defence families include the offer of employment opportunities for Defence partners working in the child care industry and the provision of training.

ABC Corporate Care will offer continuing employment on the same terms and conditions that are currently received by existing staff.



## DEFENCE MEDIA RELEASE

CPA 129/05

**Defence Childcare Contract Signed**

Thursday, April 21, 2005

The Department of Defence today signed a contract with ABC Corporate Care Pty Ltd for the delivery of child care service for Defence families and follows an open tender process under Commonwealth procurement guidelines. The new contract will come into effect on 1 July 2005 and has been negotiated for an initial period of five years.

As part of the tender process, Defence sought quality, cost-effective and innovative solutions throughout Australia to meet the range of child care needs of its highly mobile workforce.

Defence currently owns 19 Child Care Centres across Australia providing care for approximately 1,000 Defence children. However, for some time Defence has been examining ways it can meet the needs of families and significantly increase the number of child care places they have access to throughout Australia that is of high quality and at competitive market rates.

Through this child care contract the new service delivery model negotiated with ABC Corporate Care will provide:

- A national free-of-charge "1800" booking and information service for Defence families where they will be able to :
  - access vacancies in ABC's existing 650 Child Care Centres, as well as the 19 Defence Child Care Centres
  - book their child care in advance of posting to a new area
  - receive information on other centres in a general line of travel between work and home should child care not be available in the family's preferred centre
- New Corporate Centres in locations such as Newcastle, Adelaide, Laverton, Far North Queensland, Darwin, Wagga Wagga and Wodonga, amongst others
- Mobile employment opportunities for Defence partners working in the child care industry. This includes transferring Defence partners employed by ABC Corporate Care between their centres when posted, where vacancies exist, as well as providing training for Defence partners at discounted rates
- The option for salary sacrificing in all existing Defence Child Care Centres. ABC will also seek an Australian Taxation Office ruling for salary sacrificing for Defence families using the newly established Corporate Centres.

Additionally, ABC Corporate Care has agreed to offer continuing employment – with at least their same remuneration and conditions – to all of the current provider's staff employed at Defence Child Care Centres.

The new approach to Defence child care services will maintain access to high quality and affordable care, while providing greater opportunities for child care placements nationally.

The contract represents a positive outcome for children, staff and parents in the current Defence Centres.

**Media contact:** Defence Media Liaison (02) 6265 3343 or 0408 498 664.

**Defence Child Care Contract – Comment from KU Children's Services**

*Michelle Underwood, KU Children's Services*

KU Children's Services have recently been advised that they were not successful in the recent tender by the Department of Defence to manage the Defence Child Care program into the next contract period.

KU is a community based not for profit organisation with over 100 years experience in managing children's services and currently KU manages 157 services primarily in NSW.

KU had worked with the Department of Defence since the inception of the Defence Child Care Program in the early 1990's and has been responsible for the management of the Defence Child Care Program since 19<sup>th</sup> October 1998. At this time the centres were operated on a community management model which proved problematic with posting and deployment which can be part of Defence family life.

Since 1998 KU has opened 4 brand new centres and expanded and relocated one centre and the contract has been an outstanding success for Defence and Defence families.

Regrettably these 21 centres will no longer be managed by a community based, not for profit organisation which place children and their development and welfare at the centre of all activities. Instead they will be managed by ABC Learning which is a listed company and represents the recent aggressive shift in child care towards seeing children as commodities and profit and return to shareholders as the motive.

**Visit our updated  
website**

**[www.childrenfirst.org.au](http://www.childrenfirst.org.au)**

## NACBCS STATE AND TERRITORY BRANCH REPORTS

### NACBCS Queensland

Following a relatively quiet December/January period the Qld Branch has commenced its activities within the state. We commenced the year with a membership drive and the AGM in March and are currently working with the LHMU to present an Industrial Forum planned for the end of this month. The latter being initiated due to very poor support for the union from workers at recent meetings concerning the pending wage case and associated hearings in Queensland. Members have also represented our organisation at a State Government (Department of Communities) review of the Building Standards for Child Care and Department of Employment & Training and Department of Communities Childcare Workforce Planning stakeholders meeting.

### NACBCS Victoria

Community Child Care welcomes the final decision in the LHMU Professional Wage Case which was handed down by the Industrial Relations Commission on the 10<sup>th</sup> of May.

These improvements to the Children's Services Award in Victoria and the ACT will finally see child care workers paid what they are worth – professional wages for a professional job.

Community Child Care members and staff have been instrumental in this win – we are proud to have contributed to a sensible outcome for children, families and services. We believe that many not-for-profit community owned child care services are already paying above the award and charging higher fees to cover this wage rise so the immediate impact will be minimal. In those services which are still on the old award we estimate the cost of moving to the new award pay rates will be about \$2 per day per place this year and another \$2 per day next year.

The next big challenge is to get appropriate action to improve wages and conditions for Outside School Hours Care workers.

The State Budget contained an increase in kindergarten subsidies in long day care services, something Community Child Care has advocated for a long time. The increase will be phased in over 4 years so the long day care sector will continue to face challenges in providing kindergarten programs – but at least the State Government has recognised that the best way to support disadvantaged families and children is to strengthen the universal early childhood system.

The joint report on the role of local government in supporting not-for-profit child care has been produced by Community Child Care and the Municipal Association of

Victoria – it represents an important partnership between the community owned child care sector and local government as a key player in ensuring all communities have access to high quality, not-for-profit community owned children's services. The report will be available at: [www.cccinc.org.au](http://www.cccinc.org.au)

Community Child Care Victoria is investigating how it can get involved in expanding the not-for-profit community owned child care sector; we are actively considering setting up a new organisation to raise capital for child care building projects and/or to take on management of services which are at risk of privatisation.

### NACBCS Tasmania

Community based services are pleased with the decision to allow them to become members of CCC/NACBCS Victoria.

Corporate providers continue to develop new services within the state and we anticipate this will lead to oversupply of places, particularly in city areas.

The State funded initiative "Child Care in Schools" has resulted in the establishment of new services:

- Bowen Road (Hobart)
- Burnie
- Miandetta (Devonport)
- Norwood (Launceston)
- Waimea (Sandy Bay)

These services will alleviate demand in these areas.

With the increase in services, the issue of lack of qualified staff is reaching a critical level.

All services are experiencing difficulty in recruiting qualified staff and of great concern is the increasing number of staff "deemed" qualified – prior to Easter 60 unqualified staff were acting in qualified positions.

Both Government, training organisations and Unions are aware of these issues and the following initiatives have been introduced:

- Ongoing scholarships funds from the State Government
- TAFE Tas providing a bridging program for Graduates with a Bachelor in Early Childhood or Primary Education, which will enable graduates to work in qualified positions in children's services.
- The LHMU are campaigning on a range of issues. A forum is planned for July including the State Minister for Education Paula Wriedt and Judy Radich (ECA) as guest speaker.

The State Government recently announced a new initiative "Playground Blitz" that aims to improve the health and well being of our community. \$5 million will be distributed to schools and community based child care centres for sports equipment and safe playground equipment.

## NACBCS South Australia

**Chief Executive's Strategic Leadership Forum** – Dr Fraser Mustard was guest speaker – Early Childhood Development and Human Competence. In 1982 he was the founder of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research. The brain is important for health and ongoing learning and development. Fraser Mustard stated that there is an unacceptable gap between what we know and what we do.

The biggest determinant of health is the social environment. Experience based brain development in the early years of life sets neurological pathways that affect :

- Health
- Learning
- Behaviour

Governments don't invest in the earlier years. In Canada Fraser Mustard has been involved in the development of Early Childhood Development and Parenting Centres (part of the school structure). Centre based programmes have the strongest impact on the early years if they involve parents. Parents in Canada receive one year paid maternity leave and one day per week paid leave to attend and be involved in a Parenting Centre.

- ECD and Parenting Centres
- Offer from conception to school entry
- Provide support for parents
- Allow parents to learn parenting skills by doing
- Provide non-parental care and link to children's services as needed

Canada has a strong public policy and the Government invest \$7,500 per year for each 0 – 6 year old.

It was agreed that the child care and schools leaders forums would meet again as a combined group to discuss further some of the ideas that Fraser Mustard raised.

**DECS Consultative Committee** - The group are looking at the implications of Fraser Mustard's visit, research and ideas.

### Child Care Reference Group Meeting

- Takeover of license – families need to receive 28 days notice. The ad in the newspaper has a different intent – current licensee doesn't have to re-apply.
- Looking at National Standards across different sectors.
- OSHC Regulations are currently ready to go to Cabinet to receive approval of draft. OSHC Licensing period not exceeding 2 years. DECS – Crimtrac Agency for OSHC (once Regs are in place). This will be transportable. \$20 for employee, \$5 Volunteer.
- Early Years Literacy Programme in pre-schools and junior primary schools is the priority for 2005 for the

EC Initiatives Co-Ordinator's positions. This will be different in different locations. They will also be connecting with child care centres and OSHC programmes.

- Child Care Ready – 2 week course being held in the north to offer some training for prospective relief workers in child care. 23 participants. Course involves mandated notification training, first aid training, workshops on play and field placements.
- DFEEST came to discuss Traineeships. Job Network would be involved in the screening process. They do not fund Traineeships for existing workers. There is an employer incentive plus training subsidy for the 1<sup>st</sup> year, not the 2<sup>nd</sup> year. The group expressed interest in the possibility of funding the 2<sup>nd</sup> year.

**Unified (Early Years) Professional Association** – A planning day was held. We looked at the history of the development of the UPA. 2 years have passed since the initial workshop. 21 participants attended in the morning, 24 in the afternoon. Issues and questions were raised and discussed. A lot of discussion occurred re the development of Position Statements of the UPA. There will be no initial subscription to join but professional associations will now be asked to join the UPA as Founding Members. Robyn felt the planning day was very positive and would be willing to be on the UPA as the NACBCS rep. The Committee agreed to this.

**Case studies** The NCSF want some case studies of problems which exist in "special services" by June. NACBCS to contact a cross section of 5 services. eg. low socio-economic area, rural and remote, metropolitan and centres with exceptions.

**Occasional Care** – Operational support changes – "Sustainability" Support for occasional child care has been cut back by about 50% for all services. In SA this will save the Federal Government approximately \$38,000. The new formula will only subsidise for the amount of time the child is in the Centre e.g. 1 hour. This will force occasional child care services to charge on a sessional basis and this would lose the identity of occasional care.

## NACBCS Western Australia

On May 6<sup>th</sup> Carewest held a regional meeting, the first one in several years. 17 members travelled from the Perth metro area and met with 10 country members at the Busselton Family Centre. It was a fabulous day of networking and exchange of information. Key areas on our agenda were the current review of Child Care regulations (WA), our constitution review, strategic planning and logo changes. One of our Busselton members has designed a fresh new logo which is likely to be accepted at our next meeting. Professional development was also included; we freshened up on Protective Behaviours and Occupational Safety & Health (New legislation).

Barbara Wood with her team provided some comedy entertainment.

Many of us stayed overnight to enjoy the countryside, and those who went for the day spent 3 hours each way in deep discussion with our travelling companions. We cover every area imaginable related to child care in those six hours.

Our Union has had several information sessions with members over the past 6 weeks. Recent wage cases in ACT and Victoria have West Australian members keen to see a wage case lodged here. Union is trying to gather strength in readiness. Unfortunately it is not likely to happen for a while.

Report from recent minutes by our Chairperson Barbara Wood –

The ABC organisation has purchased Judius Toys.

- Marissa Williams from the "West Australian" has been in contact regarding Dr. Margaret Sims' research. An article will appear in the paper in the near future.
- The Children's Services Industry Forum met on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> March and discussed the 30% childcare rebate which is a logistical nightmare for administration. Simon Ball is looking into the possibility of the quarterly statements becoming a method of approval rather than the Centres having to provide receipts in hindsight to each family.
- WACOSS meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> April, facilitated by Erin Gauntlett, Senior Policy Officer, WACOSS. A letter has been sent to Minister Sheila McHale. The letter was urging the Government to progress legislation for a Commissioner for children and young people. It also stated that WACOSS and members had identified that the sector, professionals and the community would benefit from moving beyond a focus on mandatory reporting to having an informed view about how the current child protection system works. WACOSS plan to convene some form of public seminar to develop a shared understanding about how the current system works. Cathy Blitz Cokis from DCD presented "The Interagency Collaboration for the Safety and Well being of Children" and questions followed. The meeting voiced concerns there may be some doubling up of resources.

## STAFFING ISSUES IN CHILD CARE

NACBCS continues to actively support industrial campaigns around the country as the best way of resolving the ongoing staffing crisis in child care. We are delighted with the outcome of the Victorian and ACT claims for improvements to the Children's Services Award.

## Wage Case Decision

The long awaited decision in the LHMU Professional Wage Case was handed down by the Industrial Relations Commission on the 10th of May.

Childcare workers paid under the Children's Services Award will start receiving wage increases as from July 1 2005, for \$6 per week at the entry level; \$64.50 per week at Certificate 3 level; \$82.20 per week to Diploma childcare workers and \$140.00 per week at the directors' level.

NACBCS welcomes the improvements to the Children's Services Award - we have actively supported the union and our members in this campaign for four years, and we are pleased that child care workers will now receive wages that reflect the importance of the work they do.

We will continue to lobby the Australian Government to improve CCB especially for low income families so that child care remains affordable now that the staff are paid appropriately.

The wage increases are to be phased in over 18 months. Full details of the classification structure and wage rates, the translation table and the new clauses will be available as soon as the Signed Orders of the Commission are received.

The final decision can be viewed at [www.airc.gov.au](http://www.airc.gov.au)

## Childcare workers wages in Victoria and ACT to rise from July 1

*(downloaded from [www.lhmu.org.au](http://www.lhmu.org.au) on 16 May 2005)  
11 May 2005*

More than 15,000 child care workers in Victoria and the ACT can expect a wage increase of between \$6 and \$148 per week, following a final AIRC handed down on Tuesday.

"The pay increases, starting with up to \$20 per week increase on July 1, 2005, will be phased in over the next 18 months," Joanne Schofield, LHMU Child Care Union Assistant National Secretary, said today.

## Stop profit-taking from unscrupulous operators

"In its decision the full bench noted that phasing in was: *'intended to ensure that any fee increases resulting from our decision are introduced in a staged way'*."

"The LHMU Child Care Union will work with parents and community groups to stop any profit-taking by unscrupulous child care operators as a result of this pay win," Joanne Schofield said.

"At this stage, we do not believe families will need to pay any more than \$2.00 per day per child, which would include

the cost of the living wage increase this year, and the first \$20 pay increase instalment.

"We will provide information for parents in the coming week as further in-depth calculations are available.

"Finally child care workers have achieved professional recognition of their important work. The LHMU Child Care Union will be assisting union members in making the translation to the new rates," Ms Schofield said.

"LHMU members in ACT and Victoria have been behind the claim all the way - many providing the expert evidence that was required to convince the industrial tribunal of the importance of child care professionals to our community"

"The LHMU appreciates the support of NACBCS, and looks forward to consolidating this important win in partnership with community child care organisations".

### Other Union Campaigns:

A childcare pay equity case was lodged with the NSW Industrial Relations Commission in February 2005 by the LHMU Child Care Union.

" The union is trying to build a new classification structure based on the needs of a 21st century profession which could see pay increases of more than \$100 a week," NSW LHMU Child Care Union President, Jim Lloyd said.

"It is unfortunate that we have not been able to win over the NSW employers to work in a partnership with our members, their employees, to deliver quality standards based on community expectations," Jim Lloyd said.

Apart from the new classification structure the LHMU Child Care Union is also arguing for:

- improved First Aid training;
- non-contact time for planning activities;
- reimbursement for necessary vaccinations such as flu, Hepatitis A and B; and
- extended sick leave for infectious diseases.

LHMU Tasmania Child Care Union is holding an all day forum on childcare issues in July.

"We want members and supporters to take an active voice in the campaign to promote quality child care standards in this State," David O'Byrne, LHMU Tasmania Child Care Union Secretary said.

The all-day conference at the University of Tasmania will discuss issues such as funding, retention rates and the importance of the Victorian and ACT child care pay decision for Tasmanian LHMU Child Care Union members.

The conference will be held on Saturday July 2, 2005, starting at 9am with the Tasmanian Minister for Education

and Minister for Women, The Hon Paula Wreidt, giving a major speech.

The LHMU's work value claim in SA was made in Dec 2003, and has been ajourned pending the federal outcome. That application will now be taken forward by LHMU.

LHMU has also made it application in Queensland for pay equity. It should proceed mid year.

## RESEARCH

### NATSEM Research Summary

#### The Ineffectiveness of CCB in Improving Women's Ability to Return to Work

The National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (NATSEM), at the University of Canberra, has undertaken research looking into the effectiveness of Child Care Benefit (CCB) at improving returns to work for women. This research has provided some startling information into just how high of a percentage of women's income is spent on child care costs, confirming what many of us already know or have personally experienced. Women, whether they are part of a couple or a sole-parent, are spending a large proportion of their income on child care, and women who are worse hit are those on a minimum wage.

The case is particularly serious for women who are sole-parents, especially those who have two or more children. A lone mother who earns minimum wage is worse off when she works full-time, rather than part-time. For example, a lone mother, with three children in care, spends 60% of her income on child care costs. These figures are related to women's actual earnings from employment and don't take into account their entire income, which may include Family Tax Benefit and other allowances. Alarmingly though, this analysis doesn't include rent or mortgage repayments, private hospital insurance and other medical costs, or a HECS debt. Once rental, bills, health care, etc. are factored in, you can imagine what the lone mother who works full time is left with at the end of the week, even if they are receiving rent assistance, family tax benefit or other allowances.

This NATSEM research is also timely considering the Howard Government's welfare announcement detailing single parents returning to the workforce. Not only will single parents be placed in a position to take any job that comes their way, up to 60% of their income will be spent on child care costs (including outside school hours care). Couple the huge costs of child care, with an absence of government commitment to funding child care and increasing waiting lists, parents are facing uncertain times. This NATSEM research certainly highlights the financial disadvantages that mothers experience once they return to the workforce.

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY BASED CHILDREN'S SERVICES****ABOUT NACBCS**

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The objective of NACBCS is to advocate and assist the development of community owned children's services providing good quality care, to initiate public action to promote and defend community owned children's services throughout Australia and to act on behalf of community owned children's services in relation to governments and other bodies.

NACBCS is the peak representative body for all Australian community owned children's services including Long Day Care and Out of School Hours Care services. NACBCS is an unincorporated association, which operates as a non-profit organisation. The Association is democratic in structure and relies on participatory and inclusive processes to achieve our goals.

Each state and territory has a NACBCS Branch, which brings together individuals and organisations at a regional level to work toward achieving our goals. Each Branch nominates delegates to the National Executive, which in turn nominates Office Bearers.

Community Child Care Victoria manages the National Secretariat function for the Association from its offices in Melbourne. To facilitate the maintenance of strong working relationships NACBCS holds two national meetings a year for the executive and interested members. Other discussion and communication occurs through electronic processes.

For information about our national activities contact the NACBCS Secretariat on e-mail: [recept@cccinc.org.au](mailto:recept@cccinc.org.au)

There is no individual membership of NACBCS at the national level. To join NACBCS, contact the branch in your state or territory.

**How to contact NACBCS****State and Territory Branches:****VICTORIA**

- Barbara Romeril: [bromeril@cccinc.org.au](mailto:bromeril@cccinc.org.au)

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**AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

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