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# NACBCS In Action!

## EDITORIAL

*Barbara Romeril, National Secretary*

Welcome to the sixth edition of our national newsletter *NACBCS In Action!* In this edition we celebrate the success of the union claim for improved wages for child care workers in Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory. We also report on the national phone in conducted by the ACTU, which reveals widespread problems with access, affordability and recruitment in child care.

Our regular column on corporate child care covers the merger of the largest chains and the reasons that the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission did not oppose it. We also report on how corporate child care in Australia is viewed from Canada, where the government is considering opening up public funding to commercial providers.

Inside is some fascinating research from Canada which shows that not-for-profit child care is demonstrably higher quality than commercial child care.

Pass on *NACBCS In Action!* to anyone you know who is interested in what is happening in children's policy at the national level and what your peak body is doing about it on your behalf.

**Visit the NACBCS website  
[www.childrenfirst.org.au](http://www.childrenfirst.org.au)**

## REPORT FROM THE NATIONAL SECRETARIAT

### Advocacy on the 30% rebate on out-of-pocket child care costs

In the last quarter NACBCS has been heavily involved in public debate about the Australian Government's new 30% rebate on out-of-pocket child care costs. In last edition we published our press release, with calculations of the hugely inequitable benefit flowing to high income families – since this has been out there the Government has decided to set a cap of \$4,000 per year, which reduces the inequity slightly, but does not make this a fair policy initiative.

NACBCS continues to criticise the policy in radio and print media nationwide. We are meeting with the Minister for Family and Community Services soon to present our concerns in person.

### Supporting Improved Wages and Conditions

NACBCS continues to highlight the staffing crisis in child care and actively supports industrial campaigns for improved wages and conditions. In the last quarter we have provided media comment in support of wage rises in general, and in particular in support of the Liquor Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union (LHMU) claim in the Industrial Relations Commission for improvements to the Children's Services Award in Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory.

We are also providing advice to the LHMU on proposed changes to classifications in the Children's Services award and on policy proposals for government funding for the wage rises.

We will continue to lobby for improvements to CCB to enable parents to afford the increased fees that will be needed to pay the improved wages.

## KEEPING AN EYE ON CORPORATE CHILD CARE

### ACCC inspects kindy merger

*Herald Sun, 3 December 2004*  
*Susie O'Brien, Social Affairs Reporter*

The threat of huge child care fee rises and a kindergarten corporate monopoly has forced the intervention of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission in a major merger.

The competition watchdog will determine whether the merger of ABC Learning Centres, Peppercorn Management Group and Child Care Centres is anti-competitive and in breach of the Trade Practices Act.

Concerned stakeholders have told the ACCC the merger could lead to 30 per cent price rises and further takeovers of vulnerable smaller centres.

The investigation could derail the merger of more than 200 centres in Victoria, including 67 ABC Learning Centres and 82 Peppercorn Management Group centres.

The National Association of Community Based Children's Services has told the ACCC the merger could allow ABC Learning Centres to "charge the highest fee that parents might tolerate".

In addition, the merger would leave some communities such as Traralgon with only ABC Learning-owned long day care centres.

The merger would give ABC Learning Centres control of more than 800 owned and managed centres – a national market share of 20 per cent.

The move comes as cash-strapped councils battle to keep open some community-run centres.

An ABC Learning spokeswoman said they had asked the ACCC to provide an informal merger clearance.



NewsRelease

### ACCC not to oppose ABC and Peppercorn Childcare merger

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has advised ABC Learning Centres that it will not oppose its acquisition of Peppercorn Management Group Limited and Child Care Centres Australia Limited.

The ACCC has made this decision after receiving a court-enforceable undertaking from ABC. The undertaking has two main elements:

- the divestiture of a number of childcare centres in regional NSW, Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia, and
- ABC not acquiring any further childcare centre licences in certain regional areas in NSW, Victoria and Queensland.

"The ACCC considers that this undertaking is necessary to ensure that the childcare prices do not rise as a result of the merger and that, in particular, parents in regional areas continue to have a choice of childcare centres for their children", ACCC Chairman, Mr Graeme Samuel, said today.

ABC proposes to acquire all of the shares in Peppercorn Management Group Limited and Child Care Centres Australia Limited. After the proposed merger, ABC would own or manage 771 centres, making it the largest child care provider in Australia.

ABC currently owns over 300 childcare centres in Australia in all States and Territories. Peppercorn Management Group manages around 450 centres across Australia, including over 100 owned by CCCA.

ABC's undertaking will appear on the ACCC's public register in due course.

A statement of reasons will be published in the ACCC website (see below).

#### **Media inquiries**

- Mr Graeme Samuel, Pager/Mobile, Chairman, 0408 335 555
- Dr Stephen King, Commissioner, (02) 6243 1178
- Ms Lin Enright, Director, Public Relations, (02) 6243 1108, (0414) 613 520

#### **General inquiries**

- Infocentre 1300-302-502

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#### **Links**

- A statement of reasons will be available from the Mergers page shortly - <http://www.accc.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/6204>

## **For-profit school sparks outrage**

**Sunday Age, 5 December 2004**

**William Birnbauer, Jason Dowling**

Multi-millionaire Eddy Groves will consider establishing a for-profit primary school in Victoria – a move that has sparked immediate outrage by unions and education groups.

Mr Groves recently applied for accreditation for the first such school in Australia, planned to begin in Springfield, Queensland, in 2006. He confirmed he would be interested in establishing a similar venture in Victoria.

Australian Education Union state president Mary Bluett said she would have problems with government funding being used towards private profit. "There would be concerns about it in the education profession, people who work in the profession see it not about profit making but about the good of the kids."

Former premier and Education Minister Joan Kirner said: "Over my dead body ... schools are not for profit, not should child care be. Schools and childcare centres should be run in the interests of children."

...Tim Mitchell, a spokesman for Education Minister Lynne Kosky, said: "Any non-government school that does wish to set up in Victoria must go through a stringent registration process." He refused to comment further.

Mr Groves told *The Sunday Age* that under his model, the primary school would be run by a non-profit company, Independent Colleges of Australia, which had its own board and would collect the fees.

Mr Groves' company, ABC Learning – Australia's biggest private child-care provider – would channel children from its centres to the school. ABC Learning would be contracted to provide all the school's services such as marketing, maintenance and information technology.

"It's not us, the ABC, a big publicly listed company, that runs the school per se," he said.

To be eligible for Federal Government funding, schools have to be registered by state governments and must operate on a not-for-profit basis. Mr Groves confirmed that ABC Learning had established Independent Colleges of Australia as an unlisted non-profit company.

A company search shows that Mr Groves' wife Le Neve Ann Groves is a director of Independent Colleges of Australia (ICA). Mrs Groves is also a director and key shareholder in ABC Learning. Another ABC Learning director, Martin Kemp, also sits on the ICA board.

... He said many primary schools were trying to incorporate child-care centres on their properties so that children could move from one level to the next. "We already have that market that everybody wants," he said. "For us, it's a natural progression of education...."

## **Corporatised child care to face scrutiny**

**Sunday Age, 5 December 2004**

**Jason Dowling, William Birnbauer**

The nation's child-care centres are being swallowed up by big business, who are reaping the benefit of billions of taxpayers' dollars. But has the drive for profits gone too far?

Child-care centres could face spot checks and have their performance graded as part of a tougher approach to regulating Australia's increasingly corporate child-care industry.

Family and Community Services Minister Kay Patterson has pledged to give parents more detail about the performance of their child's centre and has urges state ministers to adopt uniform standards on safety and quality at child-care centres.

Senator Patterson told ministers at a meeting she was concerned that some states did not regulate after-school care or family day centres, and that there were different staff-to-children ratios. She urges greater consistency.

The move comes amid growing concern among educators, parents, unions and community child-care operators at the rapid growth of aggressive for-profit companies like publicly listed ABC Learning, which is expected soon to control 20 percent of Australia's 4400 child-care centres.

ABC Learning, which will be worth about \$1.2 billion following a merger with the Peppercorn group, plans to capture up to 25 per cent of the market.

In an investigation by *The Sunday Age* child-care centre owners and staff accuse corporate owners of cutting staff and cleaning services, axing programs and slashing food bills in half in the quest for profits.

The investigation also found:

- About 180 child-care centres in Australia are operating without accreditation
- ABC Learning has taken a small, independent owner to court to stop it from opening 700 metres from its own centre
- ABC Learning has sued a union for defamation.
- A number of centres have been, or are being, prosecuted and one in Victoria has been shut down by authorities...

Victorian regulations cover health and safety, staffing and space requirements at child-care centres, but there are no state regulations for after-school and family day care.

State Community Services Minister Sherryl Garbutt said the Government was considering recommendations about regulating family and after-school care and accused Senator Patterson of ducking the real issue – the severe shortage of child-care places....

Community Child-care staff and education experts are highly critical of the fact that child-care centres are visited only every 2½ years by inspectors from the Federal Government's National Childcare Accreditation Council and that centres get warnings of visits.

Parents can access full accreditation reports only by asking for them at child-care centres. Senator Patterson said she would consider introducing spot checks and establishing benchmarks or standards grading each centre so parents could have more information when deciding which child-care centre to send their children to.

In Victoria, the Department of Human Services has laid charges against three child-care centres in the past 12 months and has issued 15 formal cautions in the past two years...

Child care has recently been promoted to the Howard Government's cabinet for the first time and Senator Patterson said it would be a priority for the fourth-term Government.

"The Prime Minister wants to focus on child-care policy in much more detail ... we want to assist parents to balance work and family and if they choose to go back to work then we want to assist them in doing that," she said. "If you increase the number of people in the workforce 2 per cent it has a 9 per cent impact on GDP, or about a \$68 billion impact on the budget."

Ms Garbutt estimated there was a shortage of 8000 long-day child-care places and up to 5000 out-of-school hours places in Victoria. "People can't find child-care, and when they do, it costs a fortune," she said. "I think Kay Patterson's arguments are just a diversion from the real issues."

She said the Federal Government's market-driven approach meant that private owners established centres in locations

where they could make a profit, while whole suburbs and regional centres did not have enough places...

Child-care centres are regulated by state governments and accredited by the Federal Government's National Childcare Accreditation Council. Critics say the system is a farce because if a centre fails accreditation, it can still operate and parents can continue to receive the Federal Government's child-care benefit...

She has also been monitoring the growth of corporate child-care providers in Australia but said she was more concerned with the quality of care than who provided it.

## \$3.6bn child's game where it's play for keeps

*Sunday Age, 5 December 2004*  
*William Birnbauer, Jason Dowling*

When Tara Roberts decided to build a child-care centre in a suburb called Hope Valley, she never expected it would lead to tears, let alone the prospect of financial ruin.

The outlook was bright at first. Hope Valley is an established suburb on the edge of the Adelaide Hills, and demand for child care from surrounding suburbs is high, with waiting lists of up to two years.

Ms Roberts and co-owner Nicole Manning had spent \$50,000 on building upgrades and had bookings for more than 30 children in their centre, Li'l Sprouts. That's when Australia's child-care colossus, ABC Learning, struck, leaving them and 12 staff in limbo.

ABC appealed against the local council's approval of the centre, arguing Li'l Sprouts was too close to its own child-care centre, 700 metres up the road.

A legal challenge from ABC is no small thing. In the past few years, the Brisbane-based company has revolutionised the child-care industry, creating a McDonald's-style, acquisition-hungry, shareholder-driven behemoth...

"There is widespread fear of being sued, fuelled by regular threats to do so by the largest of the corporate chains," says Barbara Romeril, of the National Association of Community Based Children's Services.

Most in the industry are aware that Mr Groves sued the Liquor Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union for defamation, accusing it of suggesting he was mean and greedy.

Ms Roberts, however, is happy to talk. The legal challenge has dragged her into court four times, cost her \$8000 and se is upset at ABC's behaviour.

"They are huge, they know that, they have the money, they have the intimidation tactics and the power to drag people through the courts for months and months until you wear down. I am at the point where I am worn down. I cry. I am so distressed. I am going to lose my house if I don't win this because I have put in everything I saved to get this up."

Ironically, she adds, "ABC are saying if we open our centre we will affect their financial viability".

Mr Groves is not sympathetic. "It won't be an isolated incident," he says of the legal challenge. "I mean, that's what ABC does. It's a standard practice for us to look at competition, and we are going to do whatever we can to make sure we have a particular area. The other side of it is, anybody can object against us, too, and they do. It's open for everyone." ...

Like Tara Roberts and Nicole Manning, individual owner-operators, as well as community child workers are concerned that the profit-driven values of the corporates are at odds with giving children the best start in life.

"Shirley" did not want to sell her northern suburbs centre to one of the big operators. But in the end, the money was just too good. "It was a toss-up between ethics and them offering us the money we were asking. It made it very difficult," she says.

Shirley admits her centre spent too much on food, but believes that "full kids are happy kids". She paid above award rates and had a cleaner come in to scrub the place down each night. She was under the impressions that the new owners would not be changing things. But after selling, it became clear she was wrong.

"Their whole philosophy was different," she says. "We were very personal, we got very close to the parents and staff. These people are more professional – no relationship, no give or take, 'this is the way it's done', no flexibility."

"Lucy" worked for Shirley, and says things changed for the worse almost from day one. The new director was inexperienced and clashed with the centre's team leaders, who eventually left. Money became a preoccupation.

The centre previously spent between \$500 and \$700 a week feeding 70 children. The new owners slashed this to \$350 a week, before increasing it to \$400 after realising it was not enough for a nutritional diet.

Lucy says all but two of the original 30 staff have left. Four group leaders went in the first two month. Child-care staff are now expected to do the cleaning themselves, and because there is no overtime, it has to be done while the children are there. Detergents are watered down by directors who get bonuses for keeping budgets down.

Shirley and Lucy's experience is not unique...

They found that children were being put at risk in centres that did not comply with State Government mandated staff-to-children ratios, centres where qualified staff were used as cleaners, centres that were dirty and those where food was insufficient. Staff at many places consisted of young, inexperienced trainees, and turnover was extremely high....

Staffing is an issue at many centres and was once at the heart of the debate about whether child care is simply babysitting or it plays a more educational role. Today, with the understanding that the first three years are crucial to future development, there is no longer any argument about this.

Despite this, workers in "pink ghetto" child-care jobs are among the lowest-paid in the country, starting at \$5.99 an hour for 16-year-old staff, to \$14.14 an hour for qualified staff, and up to \$16 for directors...

Union officials say groups like ABC use cheaper trainees and stick to the line on staff ratios. To the union, it's a vicious circle.

The corporates would argue the qualified workers are not out there, says Joanne Schofield, of the Liquor Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union. "That's right, but that comes back to the fact the wages are so low." She says that while for-profit centres stick to minimum staff requirements, the community sector often uses more workers than required because of the emphasis on quality...

Mr Groves, who also owns the Brisbane Bullets basketball team, is not surprised at the criticism he attracts, but is frustrated by it. "There's fear out there, and controversy out there and it's never been something new to me. I mean, it's surrounded me all the time. I push the envelope," he says.

"But I've had a gutful of people making these comments but not backing them up with facts. I have responsibilities to the children, to the families, to the staff, shareholders. I take it very seriously.

"When all of a sudden the union or one of these community-based centres or a government department can just stand there and blurt stuff out with no consequence, then I'm going to take them on every single time. Sometimes people say I'm crazy because it takes a lot out of your life. But is someone doesn't stand up, then it just continues, it never finishes..."

There is no doubt the corporates will continue to rake up more and more centres. Figures compiled by Dr Elliot show that between 1991 and 2002, the number of Australian for-profit centres jumped by 161 per cent while not-for-profits increased by only 31 per cent. About 72 per cent of Australia's 4350 child-care centres are private-for-profit concerns.

Dr Elliot says no other educational sector has commercialised its operations in the way early childhood care has. "This concept of a 'child-care industry' and celebrations of 'bumper profits' ... sit uncomfortably with most educators."

## Who is holding the babies in child care?

*Sunday Age, 5 December 2004*

After its election in 1996, the Coalition made a change to child-care subsidies that ushered in a quiet revolution. Direct subsidies to publicly run community child-care centres were dropped; instead, the Government resolved to pay the subsidy almost exclusively to parents. This meant the subsidy was attached to the child, with parents using Government money to offset their bills regardless of whether the care was provided by a privately run business or a publicly funded community centre. Demand for child-care places has boomed since then, but, according to the labour, average Commonwealth spending one

Each child-care place has dropped over the past eight years – from \$3700 in 1996 to about \$3300 in January of this year.

The change in arrangements has also led to the rise of privately run child-care centres, such as ABC Learning... The rise of conglomerates, which have a responsibility to their shareholders as well as to the children, raises uncomfortable questions about who the centres exist to serve...

That some young children in care may not be receiving adequate amounts of nutritious food is disturbing, but equally alarming is the possibility that they are not receiving the attention and stimulation that research into early childhood development says is vital to their development. And, while waiting lists are long, some parents may feel they have little choice but to accept whatever places they can find.

What we need to do as a community is to have a more vigorous debate about what we want child care to be – a holding pen for toddlers, or a place that encourages them to learn and grow. Last year, leading paediatrician Frank Oberklaid, the head of the Centre for Community Child Health at the Royal Children's Hospital, said the divide between child care and pre-school should be removed, and that greater attention should be paid to a child's learning and development from birth.

Dr Oberklaid's suggestion was a response to the increasing prevalence of depression, anxiety and behavioural problems among children, which he and other childhood authorities believe is reaching crisis proportions. It is curious, however, that while there has been a greater awareness, on both sides of federal policies, of the importance of early childhood development, this has yet to translate into better quality control provisions in child-care centres...

Working parents are under pressure too. They want affordable child care but, unfortunately, this demand has, so far at least, inevitably compromised the quality of care their children receive. Child-care workers, even those who have undergone tertiary training, are among the lowest paid of all workers...

But in the election campaign, the Coalition rejected calls to pay them more, saying it was a matter for negotiation between employers and workers. At the very least, what is needed are rougher, more frequent inspections of child-care centres, spot checks, and the streamlining of a confusion regulatory system where both state and federal authorities have partial responsibilities. These measures would not tackle the wider question of the role of paid care in a child's development, but they would be a start.

## ABC centre in court over stray toddler

*Sunday Age, 12 December 2004*  
**Jason Dowling**

A toddler managed to scale the fence of a child-care centre on a busy road in Melbourne's western suburbs and wander off without staff noticing, it will be alleged in a Melbourne court tomorrow.

Sunshine Magistrates Court will hear allegations that the boy, then aged two years and 11 months, escaped from the ABC Learning and Development Centre on Barber Road, Hoppers Crossing, for more than half an hour and was returned to the centre by a neighbour. The Department of Human Services has charges ABC Learning and Development with the inadequate supervision of a child and not protecting a child from hazards. Each charge carries a maximum fine of \$5115.

ABC Learning and Development has pleaded not guilty...

A source told *The Sunday Age*, the child who escaped from the Hoppers Crossing centre had a history of climbing but casual staff working that day were unaware of the risk. ABC Learning refused to comment on the case as it was before the courts.

The case comes almost a week after the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission gave conditional permission to ABC Learning Centres to merge with two other child-care businesses, Peppercorn Management Group and Child Care Centres Australia. ABC is expected to control 20 per cent of Australia's 4400 child-care centres and to have an estimated market value of about \$1.2 billion following the mergers.

ACCC chairman Graeme Samuel said the decision to allow the merger was made after the commission received a court-enforceable undertaking from ABC Learning to sell several centres in NSW, Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia, and to not acquire more centres in certain regional areas in NSW, Victoria and Queensland for the next 18 months.

The company will own 771 centres after the merger.

Big corporate players are not alone in showing an interest in child care, with churches also beginning to enter the market.

The Anglican Church has leased church land in Broadmeadows and Glen Huntly to private child-care providers, and another three sites in Melbourne have been approved. Ally Petty, property manager with the church, said it was an appropriate use for under-used land.

At this stage, Ms Petty said, the church was not directly involved in the running of child-care centres, leaving it to private companies. But owning and operating child-care centres was an option the church was considering, she said.

The church was planning to build a new church and child-care centre on land it owned in the centre of Caroline Springs. But it has yet to decide if it would allow ABC Learning to run the centre or whether it would do so itself.

"I went and visited one that opened in Queensland in an Anglican parish, and there is a great relationship between the parish priest and the children," Ms Petty said.

"He is there on site and they can see him, and that is a great synergy".

Ms Petty said there was an "excellent possibility" the church would soon decide to own and operate child-care centres in Victoria.

She said corporate child care providers had enjoyed working with the church because "the church can traditionally provide a lot of support, it can provide marriage guidance, family guidance, instruction, so it has that sort of social welfare element that can assist".

Alun Davies, state president of the Assemblies of God in Victoria, said a letter had been sent by a large private child care provider to every Assemblies of God church in Victoria, asking if they would be interested in leasing land for child-care centres.

Mr Davies said each of the churches was considering the offer.

### **Canadian mines 'big-box' daycare - Made fortune in Aussie child care - Ottawa deal may spur for-profits**

*Toronto Star, Sun December 13, 2005*  
*Laurie Monsebraaten, Feature Writer*

#### **Meet Eddy Groves.**

The 38-year-old Canadian citizen who drives a Ferrari and owns the Brisbane Bullets basketball team is one of Australia's richest people under 40.

He made his fortune in day-care.

Groves was spurred on by the Australian government's decision in 1991 to invest heavily in child care and give commercial operators access to public cash. As a result, Australian child care is no longer a folksy field of community-based centres and mom-and-pop operations. It's big business.

Today, more than 70 per cent of centres are owned by commercial interests. And Groves, whose ABC Learning Centres merged with its biggest corporate competitor last fall, is the undisputed king of the hill.

He controls about 20 per cent of Australia's 4,400 child-care centres. His private fortune is reportedly worth \$175 million and his publicly traded company is valued at about \$1.2 billion.

Could Eddy Groves be coming to a daycare near you?

"It sounds like a great opportunity," said Groves in an interview from Brisbane yesterday.

"What a great excuse to go back to that beautiful country that I love so much," he added.

"There's something about Canada that Australia doesn't have. It would be great. A great opportunity."

Those are terrifying words for Canadian child-care experts who have been urging Ottawa to protect this country from so-called "big-box" daycare by restricting funding for new centres and daycare spots to non-profit operators only.

If Ottawa signs a \$5 billion national child-care agreement with the provinces next week that allows new federal money to flow

to commercial daycares, they say Groves or someone like him will start making millions here too.

"I don't think Canadians want public money for child care lining the pockets of big corporate child-care operators," said Martha Friendly of the University of Toronto Child Care Resource and Research Unit. "But that's a very real risk if we don't get this right from the outset."

In Ontario, less than 20 per cent of centres are run by private companies. About 30 per cent of child-care centres in Toronto are commercially operated. The vast majority of them are individually owned.

Groves, who grew up in Australia, but lived in Victoria, B.C. as a baby while his father served in the Canadian Army, says only large publicly traded companies like his can access the kind of money needed to provide high-quality child care.

"I don't doubt that (Canadians) have their reservations about corporations getting into child care," he said. "If people gave it the chance — and people need to broaden their horizons — and if it's run by the right people, it is the greatest thing for lifting standards in early childhood education."

Next Friday in Vancouver, Canada's Social Development Minister Ken Dryden is hoping to forge a long-awaited national child-care agreement with his provincial and territorial counterparts. The deal is to be based on the principles of quality, universality, accessibility and developmental enrichment.

Dryden has said he views child care as Canada's next national social program in the spirit of Medicare and public education. But he is reluctant to exclude commercial daycare from expansion plans and argues the system must be allowed to evolve into a public one over time.

Most commercial child-care centres in Canada are small, family operations that are not much different than the non-profits, he told reporters at a national child-care conference in Winnipeg last fall. And in many parts of the country, there is no non-profit child care sector ready to take on this role, he said.

But Friendly and others say Dryden is naive to think Canadian child care will be immune to the market pressures and entrepreneurial opportunism of people like Groves.

Since Groves holds a Canadian passport it would be relatively easy for him to expand here, they note.

Australian child-care activists also urge caution.

"It would be good if Canada could learn from what's happening here," said Jo-Anne Schofield, Assistant National Secretary for the Liquor Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union of Australia, which represents child-care workers in both non-profit and commercial centres.

"The growth in corporation (child-care) services really did take everyone by surprise. We're dealing with a very different sector than we were even five years ago. And it's unlikely to change."

From a single child-care centre in 1988, Groves and his ABC Learning Centres now control almost 900 centres in Australia and New Zealand. And he shows no sign of slowing down.

He has gobbled up non-profit, municipal, and commercial centres in almost every corner of the country. And in addition to building new centres in profitable areas, he is partnering with large corporate employers who want to offer workplace child care as a company benefit.

Each of his centres, which sport a cuddly mauve teddy bear with outstretched arms, makes an annual profit of about \$100,000. Almost half of his revenue comes from government child-care benefits, paid to parents or directly to centres to help cover the cost of care.

An innovative and aggressive young entrepreneur who got his start in the milk distribution business, Groves' company was the first of three child-care corporations to list on the Australian Stock Exchange in 2001. Since then, ABC stock has increased more than tenfold.

And with the Australian government pumping \$1.7 billion a year into child-care benefits — and corporate daycare profits — the diaper dividends Down Under aren't expected to dry up anytime soon.

"There's no question Eddy Groves is a very smart businessman," said Collette Tayler, head of the School of Early Childhood at Queensland University of Technology in Brisbane. "But the corporatization of child care in Australia is very troubling for many of us."

Groves makes no apologies for the money he has made on child care and credits his success to happy parents who flock to his meticulously maintained centres full of dedicated, well-trained staff. About 100,000 families with children from six-weeks-old to age 5 use his centres.

"When we buy a centre, we spend a huge amount of money to bring them up to standard, so that the people have an excellent environment to work in," he said, adding that his company has spent \$35 million in the past three years refurbishing centres.

"You can only do that if you are publicly listed. Otherwise, you just don't have access to the funds," he said.

Going public has also allowed Groves to offer staff company shares to boost wages.

As a result, while the average staff turnover in child care is almost 50 per cent, ABC Centres boast a turnover of just 7.5 per cent, he said.

But Tayler at Queensland University and other Australian academics who study child care are troubled by the large profits being made on kids.

"I don't think anybody would have imagined that in Australia such massive fortunes would be made in child care," said University of Sydney business professor Deborah Brennan, who has written a political history of Australian child care. "I would really urge Canada to be very, very careful about opening up your system to such profit-making."

Brennan and others concede that many commercial centres in Australia provide good programs and parents are happy with the care their children receive. But they argue that non-profit centres, when well run, offer more benefits to children, families and communities.

"Child care needs to be neighbourhood-based. It's about so much more than where you put your kids when you work. It's about relationship building, networking, community building," she said.

"The philosophy of corporate centres is entirely different. Owners have obligations to shareholders."

As in Canada, child-care worker salaries in Australia have been notoriously low while corporate profits have grown. And despite a national accreditation process that centres must pass every 2 1/2 years to qualify for government child-care benefits, academics say regulations are lax and quality is elusive.

But with no recent Australian research on quality, academics have nothing but anecdotal evidence of trouble to back up their uneasiness about corporate child care.

In the absence of definitive research, anecdotal evidence shows that corporate centres in Australia are more likely to stick to the bare minimum when it comes to staff qualifications and child-staff ratios, while community-based centres run by parents tend to use any profits to improve quality, academics say.

Stock-market research on the Australian child care sector has found that 80 per cent of budgets in non-profit centres go to staff salaries while less than 60 per cent of budgets are spent on salaries in corporate centres. However this could be due to the fact that non-profits have little access to cash for capital improvements while commercial centres like ABC have been spending large sums in this area.

A financial analysis of the child-care industry by Australian business research giant IBISWorld noted that stiff competition was causing child-care centres to keep prices down by reducing operating costs.

"There are concerns that large for-profit operators will be more likely to cut costs to an absolute minimum by, among other things, operating at minimum staff-child ratios," the 2003 report said.

Meanwhile, the corporate child-care sector is a strong political lobby that has opposed increased staff wages, stiffer regulations and higher child-staff ratios.

In an investigation of corporate child care last fall, Melbourne's *Sunday Age* newspaper reported that several independent centres bought by corporate chains saw their food budgets slashed and cleaning staff let go. Child-care workers had to assume cleaning jobs during the hours they were supposed to be looking after the children.

Groves has been in the Australian news for suing a union for defamation, fighting to reduce qualified staff during children's lunch and nap times and for going to court to stop a small independent owner from opening near an ABC centre.

Groves has defended his actions as prudent protection of his company brand.

But at least one Australian child-care activist said designing a system based on who provides the service is starting at the wrong end.

"Focus on quality," said Pam Cahir, of Early Childhood Australia, one of the country's largest advocacy groups for children.

"Qualified child-care workers are costly. Low teacher-child ratios are costly, good environments are costly."

"I think what's happening here is very worrying," she said. "But there would have been no interest on the part of people like Eddy Groves ... if we had really strong regulations and quality assurance. They couldn't have made the money."

So far, advocates in Canada have been told that provinces and territories will be free to decide who should get federal cash to start new child care services.

Some provinces, like Saskatchewan and Manitoba, where more than 90 per cent of existing child-care services are in the non-profit sector, won't likely give money to new commercial centres. But others, like Alberta where more than half of the centres are commercially owned, will likely fund both for-profit and non-profit child care.

Ontario Children and Youth Minister Maria Bountrogianni has said she will leave it up to regional municipalities responsible for delivering child care services to decide.

Kerry McCuaig of the Better Child Care Education Foundation says quality must be the starting point for a Canadian child-care system.

But she thinks Canadian values should also be part of the equation.

"Dryden is right when he says this is as significant as the building of medicare and public education," she said. "Those two programs not only provide us with a service, they provide us with community cohesion, they define who we think we are as Canadians and what we owe each other as Canadians."

"Child care is the next step. How we build it will say a lot about what we, as Canadians, feel we owe our youngest members."

[www.thestar.com](http://www.thestar.com)

## NACBCS STATE AND TERRITORY BRANCH REPORTS

### NACBCS Queensland

At the January meeting branch members discussed the involvement we hope to have in the Child Care wage case to be heard in Queensland later this year. A sub-committee has been elected to meet with LHMU Organiser, Michael de Brenni in the next few weeks to ensure effective links are maintained and the voice of NACBCS members are heard in the push for improved wages and conditions for workers.

Over the past few months NACBCS Queensland has continued our efforts to influence the State Department of Communities as they relax the Regulations relating to outdoor environments in long day care. It is our view that now more than ever, the Department needs to seek and heed the advice of those with expertise in environments, education, behaviour and health when assessing applications for alternate solutions to outdoor space for children.

NACBCS Queensland is currently undertaking our annual membership drive in the lead up to the AGM on March 17<sup>th</sup>. It is hoped that new members will be attracted through highlighting the work and achievements of both the Queensland Branch and the National body. We look forward to Barbara Romeril from National NACBCS Office joining us as a guest speaker at the AGM.

### NACBCS Victoria

Community Child Care congratulates the communities that have won Children First Capital Funding in the second round to establish integrated children's centres. We are supporting communities in preparing for round 3 capital funding later this year and looking forward to a commitment in the upcoming State Budget to an extension of the capital funding program.

CCC welcomes the long awaited report of the Premier's Children's Advisory Committee *Joining the Dots – a new vision for Victoria's children*. The Government has made a public commitment to implement the action recommendations in the report. Community Child Care is particularly pleased to see the Government's agreement to actions which are consistent with the policy proposals we have put to the Government in recent years, including:

- mechanisms to co-ordinate a whole-of-government response to children (a new Minister for Children, Victorian Children's Council and Office for Children)
- funding of integrated early childhood services
- immediate regulation of Outside School Hours Care
- promotion of integrated services and funding for programs in the year before school entry
- renaming child care and kindergarten as Early Learning Centres staffed by Early Learning Professionals
- equal state funding for programs in child care centres and stand alone sessional services
- further capital funding for integrated services
- stronger role for local government

CCC's State Budget submission proposed further aspects of infrastructure support which Government should also consider funding in the 2005/06 Budget:

- Funding the statewide infrastructure to provide the skill and expertise to support and resource local government in its resource role and to support services with their management and complex service delivery roles
- Creating regional co-ordinating committees to facilitate the sharing of ideas and experience, to ensure the creation of a knowledge base about successful approaches and to bring local knowledge and experience to the process of funding local initiatives.

## NACBCS Tasmania

A whole of government initiative is currently being overseen by Department of Premier and Cabinet, Department Health and Human Services, Department of Education.

Dr Sue Jenkins is developing a whole of government early years policy framework. This will have two components:

A research document which identifies

- the best evidenced based models from interstate and overseas
- the target age range for the framework
- relevant programs, projects and initiatives currently operating in Tasmania

A whole of government policy framework which

- provides a clear rationale of intervention in the early years to enable informed government decision making about investment priorities
- identifies the vision, goals and broad strategic direction for government involvement in the early years
- discusses the requirements and responsibilities for implementation
- contains key messages, summary of findings, broad priorities for implementations and an analysis of what that might mean for the Tasmanian Government

It is anticipated that this document will be completed mid April 2005.

OSHC services will all be licensed by February against the 5 core standards.

Remaining standards are to be finalised over the next few months.

ABC opened a Centre in the South in February and have employed contractors for a further 2 services in the South.

## NACBCS Western Australia

Here in the West we had a very uneventful summertime holiday period, but not for long. At our last meeting of Carewest, Cora-Anne Wilson, Manager Child Care Dept for Community Development briefed us on our Regulations review. Carewest is currently putting together our response to a Regulation Survey. We have been advised that the regulation review will be huge. Some areas that are being looked at are reduced child staff ratios for under 12mths. Currently WA has a 1:4 for under twos. Sounds promising. Where areas are monitored by other bodies/Departments such as building codes, food, Australian Safety Standards it may go those Departments to monitor compliance. Also being considered is that a dedicated 'supervisor' or approved deputy is on the premises of a child care service during all operating hours. The review is also looking at increased qualifications for staff, that is, that any group/room leader must have Early Childhood qualifications and assistants a certificate in Child Care. Another area, long day care Centres could be required to employ commercial cleaners. We anticipate that some sectors will not welcome these changes.

A great deal of discussion was around the lack of professionalism of staff and the difficulties finding any staff.

Recent wage case decisions in the Eastern States have prompted much discussion over here. The Miscellaneous Workers Union WA is presenting it's response to Community Based Child Care early March.

Carewest is currently revising our constitution and with it exploring a name change.

WAACBCS was mentioned!!

## MEDIA

### Government's Child Care Rebate Is A Waste Of Money

*Opinion piece, 21 December 2004*

*Barbara Romeril, National Secretary, NACBCS*

There are much better ways to use taxpayers money than on a 30% rebate on out-of-pocket costs for child care.

The proposed rebate will grant some relief to the family budget, but a flat rate subsidy is intrinsically inequitable – it will benefit high income families the most, even with the announcement this week of a cap of \$4,000. Once again low income families will benefit the least. And families who don't pay tax, like student parents and sole parent pensioners will miss out completely.

It doesn't matter how many stern warnings the Treasurer gives to child care operators – fees will go up.

This policy will not create more child care places in areas where they are most needed. It will not help communities build the infrastructure they need 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.

This proposed 30% rebate undoes all of the good work of Child Care Benefit (CCB), which is a progressive system of support for families, offering the highest assistance where it is most needed. A much better use of taxpayer funds would be to improve the CCB system to provide even more support to low and middle income families so that services can afford to pay decent wages to attract and retain skilled and qualified staff to provide high quality care to our children.

The Government has allocated over \$1B to this child care rebate policy. This money should be used to invest in sustainable community infrastructure by expanding community owned child care services, which are known to be world class in quality and in community engagement.

We are deeply concerned about the hike in fees that many families will face in the New Year.

Our research shows that fees will increase by an average of 15% to 20% in some states January – well above inflation.

The main reasons that child care services cite for fee increases are:

- the award wage increases that are expected in ACT and Victoria any day
- the elimination of weekly fees as more and more families use part time care.

But we know that the availability of a fee rebate to parents will encourage commercial services to increase fees above what is needed.

Fees in community owned not-for-profit long day care centres vary across the country from \$40 to \$65 per day and from \$170 to \$270 per week. And some commercial services charge more than this, especially in the central business districts of capital cities.

The wide range in fee levels in not-for-profit services is due to many factors including the size of the service, the level of utilisation and the ratio of staff to children. The higher the ratio of staff, especially skilled and qualified staff, the better the quality of the care for the children. Parents are often happy to pay more to be sure their children are well cared for.

But no-one wants to pay more just so that shareholders can pocket a higher return on their investments.

The National Association of Community Based Children's Services (NACBCS) believes that government should focus on funding community child care, improving wages and conditions for child carers and preventing destructive competition.

## DEMOCRATS DENOUNCE CRISIS OF CHOICE FOR WOMEN

*Senator Lyn Allison*

*Parliamentary Leader and Democrats Senator for Victoria - Portfolio: Status of Women*

*Press Release Number: 05/056, 09 February 2005*

The Howard Government policies have created a crisis in childcare places, robbing women of choice to work outside the home, the Australian Democrats said today.

The Senate today passed a motion moved by Senator Lyn Allison, Democrats Leader, highlighting the critical shortage of childcare places and calling on the Howard Government to properly fund high quality accessible and affordable childcare.

"It is utterly inconsistent that at the same time that moves are being touted by male Government members to remove Medicare funding for abortions and attempting to demonise and shame women who have had abortions, that women who have children are then denied opportunities to participate in the workforce because there is no childcare," Senator Allison said.

Senator Allison said there is growing evidence of a chronic shortage in childcare, particularly for infants and toddlers in Australia's biggest cities. The city of Port Phillip for example

has up to 1600 children under-5 years of age on its childcare waiting lists.

"Women in inner cities and in rural and regional centres who want to work are reduced to being just a number on a waiting list," Senator Allison said.

The Government cannot just respond that long day care centres are free to set up anywhere. This ignores the reality that in many parts of Australia there are prohibitive start-up costs and centres in many areas cannot compete with high real estate values."

"Even where there are childcare centres, accessing childcare is still impossible because many centres are simply not interested in babies under-2 years of age because of the resource implications.

"We call on the Government to give women a choice the choice whether or not to have a child and the choice to participate in society with access to quality and affordable early childhood development for their child, Senator Allison concluded.

### NACBCS Response To Senator Lyn Allison

Senator Lynne Allison  
Parliamentary Leader and Democrats Senator for Victoria  
Eastbourne House  
62 Wellington Parade  
East Melbourne, Victoria 3002

[Senator.Allison@democrats.org.au](mailto:Senator.Allison@democrats.org.au)

14.2.05

Dear Senator Allison

NACBCS commends you for passing a formal motion in the Senate on 9 February 2005 regarding the critical shortage of child care places.

We are pleased to see that the Democrats are calling on the Howard Government to properly fund high quality, affordable and accessible child care. However, we believe there is a need to strengthen and further develop the non profit community child care sector to ensure that services are responsive to parents and remain of high quality. We are concerned that, while there is no control on how additional government funds are used shareholders may be the only one's who benefit from additional revenue. The community non profit sector should be supported to grow in areas of high need so that additional child care is provided and community infrastructure, that helps build community, is created. Provision of capital funding for the non-profit sector is a better investment of public funds.

Attached is our policy paper on community ownership for your information.

We would be pleased to meet with you to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely  
Lynne Wannan, National Convenor

## CANADIAN RESEARCH SUGGESTS THAT QUALITY HIGHEST IN NON-PROFIT CHILD CARE

### Press release

Non-profit child care centres outscore their commercial counterparts in all aspects of early learning and care, says a new Canada-wide study released today. The study, by two University of Toronto economists, is the first to statistically analyse ratings for observed quality in child care centres, finding that non-profit centres do better on every measure. Gordon Cleveland and Michael Krashinsky of U of T's Division of Management authored 'The quality gap: A study of non-profit and commercial child care centres in Canada'. . . . The study's findings are particularly relevant at a time when the federal government is negotiating the framework for a national child care program with the provinces and territories. "From our study, it appears that non-profit child care would make good public policy," said Professor Cleveland. . . . The quality gap: A study of non-profit and commercial child care centres in Canada is available at [www.childcarepolicy.net](http://www.childcarepolicy.net).

### Research Summary

*The Quality Gap: A Study of Non-profit and Commercial Child Care Centres in Canada (Gordon Cleveland and Michael Krashinsky)*

#### Research Purpose

The purpose of this research is to explore the hypotheses about the nature of quality differences in child care. This research details the levels of classroom quality in non-profit and commercial child care centres and aims to explore the nature of these quality differences between these modes of service provision. It was hoped that the results from the research would influence the Canadian government's policy making processes.

#### Research Methodology

The methodology that was utilised for this research involved the statistical analysis of the data set from the 1998 Canadian 'You Bet I Care!' study, which collected quality data across 224 child care centres. The two main measures of quality from the 'You Bet I Care!' that this Quality Gap research draws from are the ITERS (Infant-Toddler Environment Rating Scale) and the ECERS-R (Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Revised), which measure seven quality subscales: furnishings; personal care; language-reasoning; play-learning activities; interaction; program structure and parents and staff.

#### Research Outcomes

Overall, the research found that non-profit child care centres outscored their commercial counterparts in all aspects of early childhood care and learning (subscales). **On average the**

**overall quality of non-profit child care classrooms is 10% higher than commercial child care centres.**

Non-profit centres provide higher quality in relation to every subscale. The difference in quality between non-profit and commercial providers was greater in the following subscales:

- Personal care provided to children – **6.9% higher in non-profit**
- Language-Reasoning – **6.5% higher in non-profit**
- Interaction between staff and children – **8.3% higher in non-profit**
- Parents and staff issues – **18.6% higher in non-profit**

In relation to differences in quality performance of different subtypes of non-profit (independent non-profit, parent cooperative, other non-profit) and commercial (single proprietorship, partnership, corporation, other commercial) services, commercial service provision quality is related to the sub-type of care, with sole proprietorships providing the best care, whereas incorporated businesses (such as chains) provide lower quality care. Non-profit centres provided a more uniform and higher quality care.

In relation to the situation in Canada, it has been suggested that non-profit centres may be of a higher quality due to their ability to attract government funding (In Canada the government still fund non-profit child care centres through grants, donations and operational and fee subsidies). Non profit services also hire better educated staff, pay higher wages and have better ratios. This research was able to however extrapolate these differences, and regardless of these other factors non-profit status alone improves quality by 3.94%.

The higher quality in non-profit centres comes down to their strong mission to provide high quality care; a commitment to serve social needs; better trained staff; and improved ratios.

It also important to note that this research highlights that quality is not high enough in both types of service provision and that improvement is required across the board.

This research concludes that '**non-profit status makes an important independent contribution to quality in child care centre**'.

#### In an Australian Context

It is important to recognise that the child care system in Canada is different to Australia. There appears to be Government financial and program support given to non-profit centres. It is also relevant to note that there are more non-profit than commercial centres in Canada.

**Visit our updated website  
[www.childrenfirst.org.au](http://www.childrenfirst.org.au)**

## NATIONAL CHILDCARE PHONE-IN REPORT

### Background

The ACTU and childcare unions LHMU and ASU launched a national Phone-In to highlight Australia's childcare crisis on Monday 6 September.

The unions were acting in response to reports from childcare workers as well as working parents that there are significant and growing problems with childcare in Australia:

The Phone In is also aimed to help put more affordable, accessible, quality childcare on the election agenda.

### Profile of callers - nationally

1. Most callers are mothers, however a large number of callers are fathers. We are also receiving calls from grandparents who are caring for their grandchildren because parents cannot find or afford suitable formal childcare elsewhere.
2. A lot of parents are well aware that childcare staff are poorly paid and are very supportive of a pay rise.
3. Many childcare workers calling have been in the industry more than five years and include people who are past or present directors of childcare centres.
4. Most of the Child Care workers calling are extremely distressed as they are unable to offer the level of quality care needed due to staffing levels, it is difficult to attract new staff due to low wages.
5. Many childcare workers are also expressing concern over the direction that the industry has taken in recent years . with the large growth in private child care centres and the closure of many non-profit centres.

### Summary of issues raised

#### Childcare workers and centre directors

- High turn over in staff
- Many childcare workers are tired, stressed and are working high levels of unpaid overtime
- Many felt that they lacked recognition for their jobs despite the fact they are caring for a majority of children who are experiencing their most important developmental years.
- Majority of childcare workers felt that it was impossible to deliver the quality of care needed for children due to:
  - the high numbers of children they were responsible for. inadequate staffing levels
  - a lack in the number of staff with adequate qualifications,
  - an increase in the numbers of children with special needs with which they don't have the facilities or the staff to cope with
  - Childcare centre's facilities are run down and aren't being replaced in some cases facilities are a danger to the workers and the children

- Many directors have reported that it is difficult to find qualified staff due to the conditions they work under in many cases this has led to a sacrifice in the quality of care.
- Majority of the childcare workers thought privatisation of the system was bad as these centres worked under a system of making profits and cut corners on offering quality childcare.

### Parents/users

- Long waiting lists and lack of places that prevent parents from returning to work or taking on a job
- Many parents have had to put their names on waiting lists before their children are born
- Lack of support and places for children with special needs
- Rising fees and high cost in comparison to salary- one parent cited losing 75% of her weekly income on childcare fees
- Inflexibility of childcare centres - parents are charged fees even when centres are closed for public holidays. This makes it very hard for casual workers who do not receive any pay for public holidays.
- Poor quality of facilities with a number of parents being unhappy that the lack of available places forced them to put their children into second rate centres.
- Some positive stories where people are very happy with their childcare arrangements.

Calls Received			
Childcare Users	518	67%	
Childcare Workers	253	33%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>771</b>	<b>100%</b>	
Calls Received by State			
State	CC Users	CC Workers	Total
ACT	34	13	47
NSW	158	37	195
NT	4	1	5
QLD	60	28	88
SA	46	39	85
TAS	8	5	13
VIC	127	70	197
WA	53	50	103
Not Specified	28	10	38
<b>Total</b>	<b>518</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>771</b>

## LOW-PAID CHILDCARE WORKERS IN HISTORIC PAY WIN

14 January 2005

Low-paid workers in the childcare sector have had a tremendous victory after a long and arduous community campaign, the LHMU Child Care Union said today.

For the 18,000 childcare workers in Victoria and the ACT this is long overdue, LHMU Childcare Union National Secretary, Jeff Lawrence, said.

### First step in a national campaign

There are more than 80,000 people working in childcare across Australia - this decision will be a first step in winning pay justice for all workers in this important industry, the LHMU Childcare Union said.

Jeff Lawrence said the LHMU Childcare union has similar pay claims in other states. "We will be pursuing organising campaigns with our union members in these states," Jeff Lawrence said.

### Two year long campaign brings historic result

LHMU Childcare Union members in Victoria and the ACT have been waiting for more than two years for this historic announcement.

"This is a credit to the childcare union members who have organised centre-by-centre, worker-by-worker, parent-by-parent, to get widespread community support for this pay increase," Jeff Lawrence said.

"We know the community recognizes the professional standards, high skills and dedication our members bring to their work - now they will be rewarded appropriately for their commitment."

### Howard Govt must ensure parents don't pay out of their own pockets

The LHMU Child Care Union said parents should not have to shoulder the burden of paying these historic child care wage increases announced by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission.

"We don't believe childcare centres should be priced out of the reach of hard-working Australian families. John Howard can ensure that childcare places are accessible by putting in the funding for these wage increases.

### Regulate how childcare corporates use new monies

"However any new funding should be tightly regulated to ensure that the spreading corporate sector does not misuse these funds," Jeff Lawrence said.

"The community does not believe that funds for childcare workers should end up in the "profits" column of the childcare

corporates annual accounts, rather than the accountants column reading "childcare workers wages".

A lot of that debate is about how it will change the affordability of child care centres for Australian families.

### Write to papers and ring the radio

Childcare workers should get actively involved in the debate by writing to newspapers and ringing radio programs.

Tell the papers and radio hosts about how hard you work and how little you earn. Tell them about the huge profits being reported by the growing private sector in our industry.

Remember letters to the editor are one of the most widely read sections of any newspaper - often better read than Page One!

And the power of your expert voice on radio - cannot be matched by any politician.

LHMU Website [www.lhmu.org.au](http://www.lhmu.org.au)

## The Contribution of Child Care to the Australian Economy

### Quick Facts:

Child care **pays for itself nearly two times over** – the government gets \$1.86 back directly (from increased taxation & reduced government outlays) for every \$1 it spends on child care.

Society in general gets approximately **eight times** the value of government spending. Every \$1 spent on child care returns total economic benefits of \$8.11.

Every dollar spent on child care directly and indirectly supports earnings (child care workers and parents returning to the workforce) of \$5.63.

Source: Martin, J. *'More than just play dough' a preliminary assessment of the contribution of child care to the Australian economy*, Child Care Benefits Branch, Department of Family and Community Services. Australian Social Policy 2004, Australian Government.

## **WHICH NATIONAL PEAK BODY DO YOU BELONG TO?**

NACBCS has recently received a letter from the new national peak body for the commercial child care sector, Childcare Associations Australia Inc (CAA). In the letter they report 'a growing membership of community long day care centres'. Are you one of them?

Their letter acknowledges that their members 'are primarily private long day care providers'. CAA represents commercial long day care centres at the National Children's Services Forum. It formed recently out of the amalgamation of the two main national peak bodies for the commercial sector (Australian Federation of Child Care Associations and Australian Child Care Confederation).

All community based, not-for-profit children's services need to understand that NACBCS is the national peak body that directly represents your interests – you need to be very clear that membership of CAA is supporting the voice of commercial child care.

**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)

**NEW SOUTH WALES**

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**QUEENSLAND**

- Ro Anderson [wnccc@bigpond.net.au](mailto:wnccc@bigpond.net.au)

**WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

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**AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

- Donna Palmer: [calcare1@goldweb.com.au](mailto:calcare1@goldweb.com.au)

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