

Education researcher says babies benefit in child care [AU] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

A visiting European expert has entered the debate over early childhood education, arguing there is nothing wrong with sending six-month-old babies to child care.

In Australia to present research at a conference, Belgian Professor Ferre Laevers said children who attend good childcare centres reap social and employment benefits later in life.

The director of an educational research centre at Belgium's University of Leuven also threw his support behind the recent Productivity Commission recommendation for 18 weeks' paid leave for Australian working mothers.

In late August, children's author Mem Fox caused controversy when she stated very young babies should not be put in child care.

Speaking to The Advertiser from Canberra yesterday, Professor Laevers said there was "no doubt whatsoever that quality child care really makes a difference and should be a right for all children at an early age".

"Maternity leave in very early stages of development is a very important measure . . . especially in the first half year and maybe the first year," he said. "Once they (babies) get to six months and older quality child care really is a worthwhile investment. If you really want to throw away money, just neglect the early years and the costs will come later."

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- reprinted from Adelaide Now

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[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/08/10/education-researcher-says-babies-benefit-child-care-au> [2]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/region/australia-and-new-zealand> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/region/europe> [4]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/quality> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/8165>