

Private childcare whistleblowers' disturbing experiences inside a sector putting profits before kids ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

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Excerpts

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The rapid privatisation of Australia's childcare sector has unleashed a wave of neglect and exploitation.

The childcare industry, entrusted with the care of 1.4 million children in Australia, is increasingly prioritising profits over safety.

Parents are paying as much as \$220 a day, or more than \$1,000 a week, to a \$20 billion-a-year sector riddled with systemic failures, a rising number of serious incidents and a troubling culture of secrecy.

Now, in a six-month Four Corners investigation, whistleblowers, workers, parents and experts are revealing the urgent need for reform.

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Little children, big money

Australia's childcare sector is increasingly dominated by private operators, where profit often outweighs care.

This shift, Professor Gabrielle Meagher warns, comes at the expense of quality. A leading expert on privatised social services, she points to the overwhelming evidence showing that for-profit providers deliver lower-quality services on average compared with their non-profit equivalents.

Of the 300 to 400 new childcare centres opening each year, a staggering 95 per cent are for-profit, with only one of the country's 10 largest daycare operators being non-profit. The rest are controlled by private equity firms, publicly listed companies and international investment groups, all driven by profit rather than child welfare.

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Affinity is 'profit at all times'

Affinity Education, a private equity-backed childcare provider with over 250 centres nationwide, is drawing criticism from some staff and parents, who say they put profit ahead of child welfare.

Some workers and parents Four Corners spoke to said its business model prioritised profit over care, with strict financial targets driving managers to make tough choices.

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