

Wild goose chase turns child care into a game of hide and seek [AU] ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

See text below.

EXCERPTS

When Cheryl Swart was told by ABC Learning that her three-year-old son's child-care centre was closing, she thought she would have to find a new place for him.

But she was later to discover the centre was not closing at all, but under new management.

The child-care giant ABC Learning Centres has now been accused of misleading parents in an effort to monopolise the industry.

In a counterclaim, however, ABC Learning is alleging its former landlord engaged in a secret deal with a new tenant.

The corporate stoush began when a new chain child-care provider, Ramsay Bourne, took over the lease on nine child-care centres previously occupied by ABC Learning Centres. Seven of the centres are in Queensland, one in South Australia and one in Kings Langley in Sydney.

ABC reacted by sending parents letters last week informing them that the centres were to close and offering them spaces at the nearest ABC-managed sites. The letters did not mention that the centres were to remain open under new management, and the parents were panicked.

Ms Swart, whose son Ethan attended the ABC Learning Centre at Kings Langley, said the suggested alternative was a 20-minute drive away. When a friend's investigations revealed the children could stay at the centre, she "thought it was disgraceful".

Ramsay Bourne thought the snaring of its future clients was disgraceful too, and this week joined the sites' leaseholder, DDH Graham, in slapping its rival with an injunction in the Supreme Court of Queensland.

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- reprinted from the Sydney Morning Herald

Region: Australia and New Zealand ^[2]

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[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/06/06/wild-goose-chase-turns-child-care-game-hide-and-seek-au> [2]

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