

Parents fight bid by childcare giant [AU] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

ABC Learning is locked in a battle with a group of furious parents who are fighting to prevent the child care giant from buying a Sydney centre.

The world's largest listed child-care company now owns a fifth of the more than 4,000 child-care centres in Australia, after significant expansion in recent years.

Parents have told Alice Voigt, the director of the independently-owned Moore Park Gardens preschool and long-day centre, in inner-city Surry Hills, that they will do anything to avoid a takeover by ABC, including making cash donations to help her take over ownership.

But with ABC recently paying up to three times more than the actual value for some of its centre acquisitions, they have a tough task ahead.

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ABC Learning spokesman Scott Emerson said the company had made no decision to make an offer for the Moore Park centre.

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Alexa Wyatt, who has a two-year-old daughter Ella at the centre, said parents were furious that staff numbers would likely be cut by ABC.

"If ABC was actually committed to child-care they would not be operating on minimum staff ratios," Ms Wyatt said.

Parents were considering putting in donations of up to \$2,000 each to launch a counter-bid and convert the centre into a co-operative, she said.

"We've got several lines of tactics & another is to withdraw our children from the centre," she said.

But ABC is unlikely to bat an eyelid.

It is believed to be targeting 25 per cent of the market share by the end of the year and it recently acquired another 100 centres after taking over Kids Campus.

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- reprinted from the Australian Associated Press

Region: Australia and New Zealand ^[2]

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