

Child care plan for the autistic [AU] ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

See text below.

EXCERPTS

A national chain of child care centres for the autistic could be integrated into ABC Learning Centres under a proposal.

James Morton, who founded the AEIOU Centre, the only full-time child care program for young children with autism, has developed the plan and won support from the publicly listed ABC to roll it out nationally.

The numbers of autistic children has been rising in recent years, placing additional strain on limited facilities.

At the moment, Dr Morton runs a centre in Brisbane with annual fees of \$14,000.

Dr Morton said ABC chief executive Eddy Groves had offered to share free of charge the listed company's premises with the AEIOU.

He said under the proposal, AEIOU would run the program, pay specialist child care workers with skills in autism and collect fees from parents on a not-for-profit basis. ABC would pay for the premises and overheads.

"Parents would pay a child care fee and the federal Government would supply the extra funding so that their fees were kept low," Dr Morton said.

"ABC would provide the space and the overheads for free."

ABC Learning Centres chief executive officer for education Le Neve Groves said the benefits of providing early intervention programs for autistic children were immense and said ABC was proud to be able to provide facilities to assist.

A spokesman for Family and Community Services Minister Kay Patterson said the Government was considering the issue.

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