

Move to outlaw schools-for-profit [AU] ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

See text below.

EXCERPTS

The Queensland Government will legislate to thwart plans by Australia's largest child care provider to set up for-profit "primary colleges".

ABC Learning Centres wants to channel children from its child care centres into the schools in a move it expects to generate returns of more than 20 per cent.

But Queensland Education Minister Anna Bligh has introduced legislation to deny state funds to for-profit schools even if they receive official accreditation. Ms Bligh yesterday expressed concern for-profit school bosses might deliberately reduce investment in their schools to maximise returns to shareholders.

She will use a meeting in Canberra today to demand federal Education Minister Brendan Nelson give a similar commitment over commonwealth funds.

ABC - which has recruited former Howard Government family and children services minister Larry Anthony as a director -- plans to establish a 750-student preparatory-to-Year 7 school in the burgeoning Brisbane suburb of Springfield next year as the first of a number of such colleges.

It would be the first for-profit school in Australia for domestic fee-paying students.

ABC told the Australian Stock Exchange last year it intended to invest up to \$2million in its new schools division by 2007, with initial returns of 20per cent set to rise with the introduction of more "primary colleges".

Ms Bligh told parliament she was concerned governing bodies might pay exorbitant fees to companies with links to for-profit schools, or charge unreasonable tuition fees.

- reprinted from The Australian

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