

Minister meets parents over child care [AU] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Federal Community Services Minister Kay Patterson has told a Melbourne mother not to be "so emotional" about Australia's shortage of child care places.

During a 90-minute meeting yesterday with a delegation from the City of Port Phillip's child care advocacy group, Senator Patterson heard stories from parents frustrated that the child care drought has blocked their return to work.

Rebecca Bartel, the driving force behind the grassroots parental push for more child care, told the minister that while the Federal Government was planning to force sole parent pensioners to look for jobs, there were 1000 parents in her council area desperate to work but unable to find child care.

"Her response was 'you don't have to be so emotional about it'," Ms Bartel told The Age yesterday. "She was very condescending and rude ...

"I just said, 'but this is about my son'," she recalled.

Senator Patterson's office last night confirmed she had made the comment - but said she had been misunderstood.

"The minister wasn't referring to Ms Bartel taking the emotion out in relation to her child. She understands that when parents are talking about the care of their children, they will always be attached to it," her spokeswoman said.

"But she was referring to the other issues which were not related to the discussion at that point in time. Ms Bartel may have misunderstood the minister's context."

Senator Patterson ruled out proposals put to her yesterday for a national summit on child care and for federal money to build more child care centres. But she expressed interest in the idea of a national register to monitor supply and demand of child care places.

- reprinted from the Age

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