

Child care workers protest [AU] ^[1]

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See text below.

EXCERPTS

Child care workers have taken their long-running industrial campaign to the steps of parliament house.

About 80 protesters gathered on Tuesday to voice their anger after waiting more than two years for an outcome to their Industrial Relations Commission application for a better classification structure.

Liquor Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union (LHMU) Child care Union organiser Lynda Stubbs said about 250 workers had contacted its recent national hotline.

"Asked why they would be leaving the child care workforce, 95 per cent said the number one issue was low pay, far ahead of concerns about working conditions or even lack of recognition."

Ms Stubbs said political parties were now jockeying to get the votes of parents with young children by throwing more and more dollars at the sector, but little or nothing had been done for the workforce. Labor announced its \$1.6 billion child care policy on Monday, with the key element of a free day of care each week for all three and four-year-olds eligible for the child care benefit.

A re-elected coalition government, on the other hand, would introduce a new 30 per cent child care rebate on out-of-pocket expenses that would not apply to nannies.

Women's Electoral Lobby spokeswoman Eva Cox said the important thing to consider in the current political debate was the availability of child care.

"Market forces don't work if there's no choice," she said.

"It is actually very clear that the owners of the two thirds of day care centres that are now in private hands - some of them in very large chains - will see this as an invitation to rip people off."

Ms Cox said while Labor had ignored the fact that parents might have children aged outside the age bracket covered by its new policy, they appeared to be on the right track.

"It ain't great, but at least it recognises there are problems with the system," she said.

- reprinted from National Nine News (Australia)

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