

# It's raining cash for child care [AU]<sup>[1]</sup>

**Author:** Marriner, Cosima

**Source:** Sydney Morning Herald

**Format:** Article

**Publication Date:** 28 Sep 2004

## AVAILABILITY

See text below.

## EXCERPTS

The Opposition Leader, Mark Latham, fired a \$1.6 billion bid into the election child care auction yesterday, promising a day's free care a week and extra funding for preschools in a policy pitched as early childhood development, rather than simply child minding.

Unveiled just a day after the Prime Minister, John Howard, promised \$2.2 billion for families to cut the cost of caring for children, Labor's policy also includes 14,500 extra child care places, incentives for state preschools to cut their fees, a new network of children's resource centres and parenting education.

Rather than match Mr Howard in dollar terms, Mr Latham tried to outmanoeuvre him by emphasising the educational aspect of Labor's policy.

"It's not just about child care as child minding. We want child care to be early childhood development," Mr Latham said, announcing the policy in Perth.

"It's not only financial relief but it's also helping children develop their full potential in life," Mr Latham said.

As flagged in the Herald in January, a Latham Labor government would spend \$1 billion providing 10 hours free child care a week for every three- and four-year-old in the country.

Labor says the cost of child care has risen by half since the Howard Government came to office in 1996.

The free day of care would be available to all families who are eligible for the child care benefit and Labor says it would save a typical middle-income family \$20 a week after allowing for the benefit.

Labor would only fund care at centres that also provide an early-learning program.

Mr Latham conceded parents with children in care five days a week would be better off under the Coalition's 30 per cent rebate Mr Howard unveiled on Sunday.

But he said a middle-income family with children in care 2 days a week - the norm - would be \$7 a week better off under Labor's policy, compared to the Coalition's plan.

Mr Latham said the Coalition's 30 per cent tax rebate for out-of-pocket child care fees was no use to parents if they could not find a place for their child.

To ensure all children have access to a preschool year, a Labor government would invest \$252 million in the state preschool system, paying an average of \$350 a child per year to the states to encourage them to cut their fees, extend their hours, or improve their preschool programs.

Just 60 per cent of NSW children attend some form of preschool at present, compared with almost all children in Victoria and Queensland. Preschool is also much more expensive, costing \$30 a day in NSW, compared to \$16 a week in other states.

To fix the shortage of places for children under two, Labor would spend \$100 million on an extra 6500 long day care places.

It would pay incentives to community child care centres in areas of high demand to upgrade their facilities to create more places - including a minimum of 15 places for babies - and provide a preschool program.

Labor has also promised an extra 8000 outside school hours places, at a cost of \$12.3 million.

- reprinted from the Sydney Morning Herald

**Region:** Australia and New Zealand<sup>[2]</sup>

**Tags:** child development<sup>[3]</sup>

election<sup>[4]</sup>

funding<sup>[5]</sup>

---

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/04/10/its-raining-cash-child-care-au>  
Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/04/10/its-raining-cash-child-care-au> [2] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/region/australia-and-new-zealand> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/child-development> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/election> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/funding>