

Cost of child care has far outstripped inflation, say unions ^[1]

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Source: Sydney Morning Herald

Format: Article

Publication Date: 7 Sep 2004

EXCERPTS

Parents are paying 30 per cent more for child care than they were two years ago, according to the ACTU, prompting the peak union body to launch a national hotline in an attempt to make it an election campaign issue.

Waiting lists at long day care centres were "impossibly long", and those who get their children into child care have increasing trouble paying for it, the union's president, Sharan Burrow, said.

But the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Larry Anthony, challenged the Bureau of Statistics figures on child care costs which were cited by the ACTU.

The ACTU says the bureau figures show child care costs have increased more than six times the rate of inflation and outpaced the child care benefit subsidy.

Mr Anthony has said that parents should accept they may have to pay more for quality child care, with industrial wage claims pending.

Mr Anthony accused the ACTU of scaremongering, but Ms Burrow said the hotline would make it clear that "Australia's child care crisis" was hitting families hard.

Child care workers were abandoning the job because they could not afford to live on the wages, she said. The high staff turnover worried parents, along with rundown centres, waiting lists and affordability.

The Opposition spokeswoman on children and youth affairs, Jacinta Collins, said Labor had committed to "a role for the federal government in maintaining affordability" in child care, although it was unclear how it would respond to any across-the-board wage increases.

Senator Collins said the Government had done nothing to tackle the shortage of long day care places. Labor would generate more places and provide incentives to ensure they went to areas most in need.

- reprinted from the Sydney Morning Herald

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