

Who cares, wins no kidding [AU] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Long ignored by the nation's employers, the business of child care is now muscling its way to the top of the business and political agenda.

Faced with an ageing population and shrinking number of workers, government and business are being forced to address the demands of work and family life to keep people in the workforce.

But while the opportunities for corporate Australia to provide child care facilities have never been better, working parents are struggling. Long and irregular work hours, coupled with the high cost of child care and the lack of available child-minding facilities, many women are opting out of the workforce altogether.

Employer sponsored child care represents less than 5 per cent of child care places in Australia. And while private operators, such as the listed child care providers ABC Learning Centres and Peppercorn Management Group, are promising to make it easier for companies and large organisations to set up facilities, corporations continue to drag the chain.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates that 174,500 missed out on child care places in 2002, most of those in Sydney and Melbourne where there is a critical shortage.

One of the main reasons given for the rise in demand is the necessity for both parents to work to service bigger mortgages. But at the same time families are having to weigh up the high cost of child care and the difficulties associated with long and inflexible working hours and their incompatibility with non-work based child care centres.

- reprinted from The Australian

Region: Australia and New Zealand ^[2]

Tags: privatization ^[3]

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