

# Privatised child care offer [AU] <sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS

An offer to privatise Warrnambool City Council's child care centres could reduce spiralling waiting lists.

The council yesterday revealed national child care giant ABC Learning had offered to buy out its child care operations in Warrnambool or run the services in partnership with the city.

WCC chief executive officer Lindsay Merritt said discussions were in a "very premature" stage and any move to privatise the service would be investigated thoroughly.

He warned of a rise in child care fees this year to cover an increase in staff wages, regardless of whether the system was deregulated.

Mr Merritt said there was a shift towards privatising child care across Australia after the Federal Government scrapped capital grants to child care services in the mid 1990s.

The council has three child care facilities under its wing: Matron Swinton, Florence Collins (in partnership with South West TAFE) and Sherwood Park (in partnership with Deakin University).

Mr Merritt said the council had identified a potential shift towards deregulation two years ago to combat federal funding shortfalls.

He said privatising child care could lead to an expansion of services in Warrnambool but it was too early to comment on whether the council would support the move.

Making a decision in the community's best interests would be the top priority, he said.

Demand for child care in Warrnambool will be eased by a new private development in Whites Road, which is tipped to create as many as 80 child care placements in the city this year.

In October last year, the council indicated parents would have to juggle a hike in child care fees to cover a \$140,000 increase in staff wages.

- reprinted from the Standard

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

**Tags:** privatization <sup>[3]</sup>

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