

# State set to spell out child care woe [AU] <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

See text below.

## EXCERPTS

A Tasmanian delegation left for Canberra yesterday to seek Federal Government help to overcome a severe shortage of childcare places. It wants to secure Federal Government capital funding to establish more child care.

The delegation, led by state Education Minister Paula Wriedt, will meet federal Community Services Minister Larry Anthony today.

It comprises Ms Wriedt, state Liberal childcare spokesman Will Hodgman, Greens spokesman Tim Morris, Susan Nolan of the Australian Early Childhood Association and Ros Cornish of the Tasmanian Association of Children's Services.

Ms Wriedt said Tasmania had an identified shortage of 1700 childcare places, with probably more than 2000 children unable to get care.

She said the Tasmanian crisis developed when the Federal Government in 1997-98 stopped funding for building and operating childcare centres and instead starting paying a childcare benefit to parents.

Since then no new childcare centres had been built in Tasmania and eight to 10 long day care centres had closed, worsening the shortage.

With the state's growing economy and more people, particularly women, wanting to re-enter the workforce, it had caused long waiting lists.

Ms Wriedt said the shortage seemed to be unique to Tasmania with its lack of private providers.

More than 80 per cent of the childcare providers in Tasmania were not for profit and community-based.

The delegation was prompted by the number of operators who wanted to establish child care but lacked sufficient capital.

Ms Wriedt said child care had been, and always would be, a Federal Government responsibility.

But, despite this, the State Government planned to inject money into it.

Last Friday the Government announced it would sell three businesses to provide money for child care, public housing and health.

A spokesman for Mr Anthony said the Commonwealth was not in the business of providing operational subsidies to childcare centres.

Its focus had been making child care affordable for families.

Under policies introduced in 1997-98, more childcare assistance was given to families and in response the number of places in Australia had reached record levels.

This year the Commonwealth would spend \$1.7 billion on child care and a record \$8 billion over the next four years, with most of the money going to parents.

-Reprinted from The Mercury

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

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

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