

Geelong mayor calls for child care review [AU] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Geelong mayor John Mitchell has called for a review of the State Government's child-care system after the state's peak council body declared the service was at the crossroads.

Cr Mitchell said the Government must decide whether to intervene in market-driven child care in the wake of ABC Learning's financial collapse.

"If the industry is at the crossroads and if the child-care people say it needs to be reviewed, then maybe it does," Cr Mitchell said.

"The number one thing we need to ask is does it need to be looked at, and number two, who's job is it to provide care whether it be government or private sector.

"Child care has recently been more a product of private enterprise, so whether it goes back to State Government I don't know. The discussion has to be had."

Cr Mitchell's response follows a report prepared for the Municipal Association of Victoria which warned the future of "child care is at the crossroads".

The association's president Bill McArthur said governments must seize the opportunity to reform the core service delivery model.

He said the collapse of ABC Learning had highlighted the need to reduce the amount of private operators, with a mismatch between profit-driven services and Federal and State Government-supported vision of integrated child care.

"Given Australia's reliance on the child-care system to underpin workforce participation goals, the failure of ABC Learning has crystallised that it is no longer appropriate to allow market forces to satisfy child care needs," Mr McArthur said.

He said the "unco-ordinated ad hoc response" to selling ABC Learning had opened the door for another ABC mess.

"The reality is that community and local government child-care providers allow governments to consider value to the community alongside viability," Mr McArthur said.

"No other forms of education are allowed to operated for profit and it's time that child care is treated the same way."

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