

# Federal govt 'should shape childcare' [AU]<sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

See text below.

## EXCERPTS

The collapse of ABC Learning created "instability, fear and stress" in the community which the federal government needed to urgently address, an inquiry has heard.

A Senate inquiry into childcare took evidence at a public hearing in Brisbane on Wednesday.

The Queensland Commission for Children and Young People's strategic policy manager Vicki Hall told the inquiry the federal government should take overall responsibility for planning and shaping childcare.

The federal Office of Early Childhood Education and Care should be given the key responsibility of advising the government, she said.

Ms Hall said the collapse of ABC Learning was a "timely opportunity to evaluate childcare policy".

...

"ABC Learning's collapse provides powerful evidence that government policy settings need to be significantly altered if childcare provision is to improve," the submission said.

...

But it argued the domination of for-profit providers in the childcare sector - which constituted about 73 per cent of the industry - need not inevitably lead to poor quality.

Government funding should be linked to "quality drivers" such as better qualified staff, lower staff-to-child ratios and smaller group sizes, Ms Hall said.

Instigator of the inquiry, Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young, told AAP it was becoming clear the government had been given early warning of problems with ABC Learning.

"No one is saying all childcare should be community-based or for-profit, but it's about the fact that, for example, in the rest of the education sector we would never accept a private school to float themselves on the sharemarket and let their key objective become delivering dividends," Senator Hanson-Young said.

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The Senate committee report is due next month.

- reprinted from The Age

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

International<sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** privatization<sup>[4]</sup>

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