

MEDIA RELEASE



The Hon **David Hawker** MP
Federal Member for Wannon



18 August 2009

LABOR BREAKS PROMISE TO LOCAL FAMILIES

Reports that the cost of childcare per child may rise by up to \$1500 makes a joke of the Rudd Government's promise that they would make childcare more affordable, Federal Member for Wannon David Hawker said today.

If all of the Government's changes are implemented, industry sources are saying that costs for families in Western Victoria could soar into the thousands.

"The Government is forcing enormous changes on the early childhood education and childcare sectors, which will add to the cost of childcare – but not deliver what parents want," Mr Hawker said.

"In their haste to impose the heavy hand of Government in our children's lives they are breaking a fundamental promise they made to local parents."

Mr Hawker said the Government is pushing through changes that include new child-staff ratios and staff qualifications which will impact on the cost of childcare instead of looking at local parents' concerns to ensure that we have a childcare system that delivers what local parents want.

"In feedback received through the Education Department's first wave of consultations last year, parents were particularly keen to ensure that the National Quality Standards included reference to the health and safety of their children yet this issue seems to be constantly ignored in the Government's discussions. Parents also placed more emphasis on nurturing and loving staff, rather than qualifications," he said.

"The Government's own survey on the Department website fails to even list health and safety as an option when asking parents what the most important factors are when they are deciding on early childhood education and care services. It is as if parents' concerns are of little or no interest in the Government's agenda.

"The new Minister has failed in her so-called 'consultations' on childcare reforms – many community meetings have had as few as one parent turn up.

"This Labor Government needs to ask itself who is actually meant to be benefiting from these reforms and what the Government is trying to achieve – in both cases the answer is not children or parents in Western Victoria," Mr Hawker said.

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