



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Child care:

Australian expert brings cautionary tale of commercialization to Canada

OTTAWA—Australian child care expert, Lynne Wannan, has witnessed the take-over by Wal-Mart-style child care in her own country. As the debate over Canada's child care program heats up, she is spending three weeks on a cross-Canada tour to share the lessons from Down Under.

At the heart of the discussion is whether governments in Canada will make funding equally available to for-profit and community-based child care operators.

Ottawa has made \$5-billion available over the next five years to the provinces and territories for licensed child care. With few federal restrictions on who can access the money, advocates for community-directed child care fear much of it will be siphoned off in profits.

Australia's national government introduced funding changes a decade ago that allowed corporate child care chains to emerge and gobble up public dollars. Child care players now include real estate developers, dot.com tycoons, professional athletes and brokers who duke it out in the back rooms and stock market. The biggest Australian chains recently merged and are posting record profits. ABC Learning Centres now controls 25% of the sector and is looking to expand beyond its borders to other countries, including here, says its Canadian-born CEO, Eddy Groves.

The proliferation of commercial child care in Australia has created a public policy crisis:

- Access for immigrants, aboriginal populations, children with special needs, rural and low income families has been restricted.
- Community-based child care programs and small owner/operators have been squeezed out.
- More state funding has gone to monitoring and prosecuting violations.
- The working conditions of child care workers have declined.

Lynne Wannan is a member of the National Children's Services Reference Group, which advises the Australian Minister for Children, and is chair of the National Association of Community Based Children's Services of Australia. She has served as a social policy analyst for state and local governments and as an advisor to the child care sector.

Lynne Wannan's Itinerary

Sept 30 – Oct 1	Ottawa, ON
Oct 3 & 4	Vancouver, BC
Oct 5 & 6	Winnipeg, MB
Oct 7	Halifax, NS
Oct 11	St. John's, NF
Oct 12	Fredericton, NB
Oct 14 & 15	Toronto, ON
Oct 15	Ottawa, ON
Oct 17	Toronto, ON
Oct 18	Edmonton, AB
Oct 20	Ottawa, ON

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The Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada was founded in 1983 to promote quality, inclusive, publicly funded, non-profit child care accessible to all. The association's more than 140,000 members include parents, caregivers, researchers and students; and women's, anti-poverty, labour, social justice, disability and rural organizations.