



media release

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BAYSIDE COUNCIL PRIVATISES YOUNG CHILDREN

The first ever transfer of a local council owned long day care centre in Victoria into the hands of a private for-profit operator is cause for deep concern to those who understand the role of community owned children's services in building strong communities.

As the peak body for community children's services in Victoria, Community Child Care believes that any council operated services should remain in non-profit ownership and management. We are deeply disturbed at the announcement that Bayside Council has rejected a viable proposal from a highly skilled group of local residents to take over the operation of council child care centres in Sandringham and Hampton – instead they have decided to lease these publicly owned facilities to a commercial for-profit chain of children's services, Bambini Juniors.

Council's assertion that financial investment in facilities offers 'the most significant community benefit' shows a worrying ignorance of the essentials for a strong community – community engagement and social capital. CCC Executive Director Barbara Romeril said today 'There are hundreds of parent run child care centres around Victoria which are financially viable and clearly demonstrate powerful community engagement.

'Families in Bayside will no longer have real choice with only one non-profit centre remaining in the municipality and that is a GoodStart centre which is still in the midst of transforming from a commercial ABC Learning model to a genuinely community responsive model.

'Our research shows that parents care about the kinds of places in which their children are educated and cared for and many parents believe that community ownership provides the best context. Families want a partnership with the service their children attend. This automatically occurs in a community owned service – Bayside parents will need to be very assertive to protect this partnership with the new commercial operator.'

For further comment:

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