

Media Release

Jenny Macklin MP

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Shadow Minister for Families and
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Federal Member for Jagajaga

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JENNY MACKLIN & SHARON GRIERSON ANNOUNCE NEW CHILD CARE CENTRE FOR NEWCASTLE UNDER A RUDD LABOR GOVERNMENT

A Rudd Labor Government will build a brand new child care centre in the Hamilton-Merewether area to help address the chronic shortage of child care places facing local families.

Jenny Macklin and Sharon Grierson made the announcement today.

The Howard Government's own Childcare 'Hot Spots' list identifies Newcastle as being in urgent need of more child care places. Areas like Merewether and Hamilton, in particular, have high numbers of families with children aged 1-4, but very few local child care places.

"The Howard Government has ignored local families who need additional child care," Ms Grierson said.

"It makes it really difficult for parents, especially mums, to return to work or extend their working hours if they can't find a child care place."

Ms Macklin said that Federal Labor was committed to building up to 260 child care centres around Australia in areas of real need – an investment of over \$200 million.

"We will place these centres on primary school grounds or community grounds where possible as part of Labor's new approach to child care and early childhood education," Ms Macklin said.

Labor will work with the NSW State Government and the community to find a suitable location for the centre.

Ms Macklin said that Federal Labor will also provide universal preschool for all Australian four-year olds, an annual investment of \$450 million when fully implemented.

Ms Macklin said that Labor wanted to make sure that local families had access to affordable and high quality care.

Federal Labor's Affordable Child Care Plan will:

* Increase the Child Care Tax Rebate to 50 per cent – covering up to \$7,500 a year of out-of-pocket costs for each child in child care in NSW

* Pay the 50% Child Care Tax Rebate quarterly - with the goal, subject to the development of delivery mechanisms, of paying the rebate to parents every fortnight.

Ms Macklin said that the Howard Government had done nothing to address spiralling child care costs and done little to address the serious shortage of child care places across the country.

"The local shortage of childcare places is driving up costs for local families" Ms Grierson said.

"The Howard Government has denied that there is a child care crisis, instead blaming parents for being too choosy," Ms Macklin said.

“And yet days out from an election Mr Howard has announced that he will fund a handful of new centres across Australia - demonstrating that he will say and do anything to win the election”.

In addition, Federal Labor will:

- * Provide parents with helpful information about local child care centres such as vacancies, fees and quality status so parents are better informed;
- * Ensure child care services provide parents with notice about proposed fee increases;
- * Implement tough national child care quality standards including a quality improvement system that assesses child care services from A to E and regular unannounced spot checks;
- * Invest \$73.5 million in incentives and opportunities to improve the qualifications of child care workers to ensure our children receive expert early learning and care.

“The Howard Government has refused to match Labor’s plans to make child care more affordable and accessible – demonstrating just how out of touch they are with working families,” Ms Macklin said.

Federal Labor understands the pressures facing local families and we will continue to work hard to help them make ends meet.

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