

## Government Quietly Scraps Regulations of After-School Care Providers

P&C Federation is stunned that the New South Wales Department of Education has abolished regulations governing who can bid for contracts to run Out of School Hours (OOSH) services in Government Schools. This has opened the door for private equity firms to take over OOSH services from local community providers, even if their services are substandard.

Previously, operators bidding to run an OOSH service in a Government School had to show that at least half of their services met certain standards before being able to bid for a contract. This included a rule disqualifying any operator from bidding for contracts that was prosecuted in the last three years or was the subject of complaints to an Australian Regulatory Authority.

This rule resulted in Camp Australia, one of the largest foreign-owned OOSH providers in Australia, being banned from tendering new contracts in New South Wales in 2017, due to a fine it received after a child with Down Syndrome wandered away from one of its facilities in Western Australia.

P&C Federation Vice President Joel Matthews commented "In whose interest is it to scrap screens against operators who have breached regulations? Certainly not parents or children in the care of these providers. How can we trust that our children in after-school care will be in the hands of service providers that ensure the safety of our children?"

"The main beneficiaries of this decision are private equity firms, who are now free to bid for lucrative OOSH contracts without having to show they're capable providers."

P&C Federation believes that the most vulnerable children must be protected at all times. This means that any organisation wishing to run an OOSH service must be able to meet certain standards to show that it is capable of delivering quality services for children in its care.

"Dropping these regulations mean that a private equity company with no experience in OOSH services, or with a history of poor OOSH services, can bid to be an OOSH operator if they feel it's a good commercial opportunity, and there's now nothing to stop them being successful", Mr Matthews stated.

"It seems the Department of Education is more motivated by financial gain than the protection of our children. Allowing foreign-owned private equity firms to run OOSH services may mean more money for the Department of Education, since commercial operators pay higher licensing fees than community operators. However, it's at the expense of guaranteed quality services for our children. It beggars belief that the Government did this without the slightest consultation with parents."

P&C Federation calls on Premier Gladys Berejiklian to immediately reverse this decision, in order to guarantee that all children attending an OOSH service are in the care of able providers.

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