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## Education Minister Opposes Excluding Men from Childcare Sector

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Federal Education Minister Jason Clare has dismissed calls to ban men from working in the child-care sector, arguing that targeting one gender won't solve safety issues. This follows allegations against Joshua Dale Brown, a Melbourne child-care worker charged with 70 offences against children. Clare's push for a national worker database and stricter regulations aims to enhance safety, but critics question the Labour

government's ability to address systemic failures without overreaching. This article examines Clare's stance and the broader implications for child-care safety.

The allegations against Brown, a 26-year-old accused of abusing eight children at a Point Cook centre, have sparked outrage and calls for drastic measures, including barring men from child-care roles. Clare rejected this idea, telling Sky News, "Targeting blokes is not the solution," noting that abuse isn't gender-specific, as both men and women have been perpetrators in past cases. He referenced the National Child Safety Review and the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, which recommended a national register and mandatory safety training over blanket bans. Clare's plan includes legislation to cut funding to substandard centres and allow unannounced inspections, aiming to lift standards without shutting down facilities.

Public sentiment, reflected in X posts, reveals frustration with the child-care sector's vulnerabilities, with some users arguing that excluding men might oversimplify a complex issue. Clare emphasized the need for a centralized database to track workers' employment histories, addressing the "drip feed" of information about Brown's work at 23 centres. Early education advocate Lisa Bryant called the lack of centralized records "unusual," noting that most centres use software for compliance, making manual record-keeping a red flag. This gap allowed Brown to move between centres undetected, highlighting systemic flaws.

While Clare's reforms, like increased CCTV and stricter penalties, aim to deter misconduct, critics argue the Labour government's focus on funding and subsidies overlooks deeper issues like understaffing and low wages, which destabilize the sector. Only 3% of child-care workers are

male, and blanket suspicion risks alienating dedicated educators. The challenge is balancing robust safety measures with fairness, ensuring children are protected without punishing an entire gender for the actions of a few.