

# Nannies can be a super option



What nanny would suit you best - the stern *Supernanny* Jo Frost (above) or the fun-loving Fran Drescher (in *The Nanny* far right)?

The nanny is not just limited to the wealthy anymore. With many families having both the mother and father working, hiring a nanny is becoming a more popular option, writes LISA WACHSMUTH.

The modern-day Mary Poppins comes in many guises.

She might be a middle-aged nurse, a university student or childcare worker, a young-at-heart grandma - she might even be a he.

Despite the tough times, nannies remain a popular option for many families looking for a convenient, safe and flexible childcare option. And it's not just the rich and/or famous who are seeking at-home help.

In fact, when compared to the cost of other childcare options and the limited availability, nannies can be a sensible option.

Dapto nanny Emma Dopper has been helping care for the children of Illawarra families on a full and part-time basis for about eight years. She says families - and single parents - need nannies for a variety of different reasons.

"For six months I worked full-time for a beautiful couple looking after their twin girls while the mother was undergoing treatment for cancer," says 28-year-old Ms Dopper.

"I've helped out families with two working parents on a part-time basis, and I also helped some grandparents look after their grandchildren when the parents had to go overseas.

"I've even worked on a film set at Wollongong harbour where a children's show was being filmed. The job offers a lot of variety and flexibility."

Ms Dopper grew up an only child in country Condobolin, but did a lot of babysitting as a teenager. She has the appropriate police and Working with Children checks plus a childcare certificate.

"I love working with kids - they make you laugh and are a lot of fun to be around," she says.

"I've made many wonderful friends from the families I've worked with and it's been amazing to watch the kids grow.

"I think the qualities a nanny needs are

patience, energy and definitely a sense of humour. They need to be friendly and nurturing too."

Ms Dopper says families love the individual attention nannies can provide, and it's convenient for them to be able to leave their children in their home environment.

"I've cared for up to four children at a time, and a lot of babies," she says. "Depending on their age, I organise a lot of games and activities to keep them entertained, and also do whatever domestic duties the parents require. Basically, you're like a second mum."

Some families source nannies privately, some seek them through websites such as [weneedananny.com.au](http://weneedananny.com.au), and some use agencies such as Dial-An-Angel.

The CEO of Dial-An-Angel Danielle Robertson says the company has been providing live-in and live-out nannies on a short and long-term basis since 1967.

"The demand for nannies is still there regardless of the economic climate," Ms Robertson says.

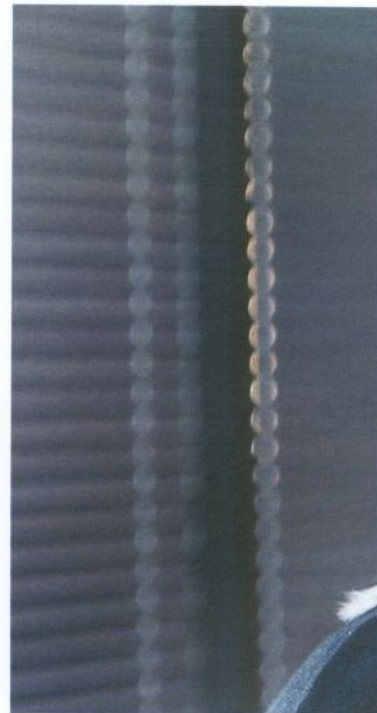
"In fact, we are seeing a slight increase in demand of late, as many people are having to return to their professional jobs earlier after having children, therefore need to employ a nanny to care for the children particularly if they a) can't get their child into a child care centre or b) prefer their child to be provided with one-on-one care in their own home."

Jason Everest, manager of We Need A Nanny agrees. The online service ([www.weneedananny.com.au](http://www.weneedananny.com.au)) was established in 2006 and there are more than 12,000 nannies and babysitters listed on the site.

"We have noticed an increased demand for nannies as the global financial crisis deepens and more families now need both parents working," Mr Everest says.

"(Plus there's been) a definite increase in demand with the closure of (many) ABC learning centres and the cost of childcare going up."

Ms Robertson says a range of Australian



families enlist the services of a nanny. Ms Robertson says.

"Families who have no external support, ex-pats from overseas, two income families, single parents who have custody of their children, families who have a terminally ill parent, people who are working and find that their normal childcare arrangements won't take the child when it's sick," Ms Robertson says.

"We get people from all walks of life and it's not just high-income families although we do get high-profile people seeking our services. We have clients in the western and southern suburbs of Sydney as well as the North Shore and eastern suburbs.

"We have a Newcastle and Central Coast office in regional NSW and provide nannies to clients in those areas. The Illawarra area is covered by our Edgecliff office at this time."

There's also many different types of nannies available for families.

Most full-time nannies have formal qualifications such as childcare certificates, university degrees, preschool and teaching degrees, or are mothercraft or registered neonatal nurses. Many are mothers and grandmothers who feel they have the skills and patience required by a nanny.

"We do have angels aged from 19 through



**McKeon's SwimSchool**

[www.mckeonswimming.com.au](http://www.mckeonswimming.com.au)

**Sharing our love of water**

Learning to Swim is a vital layer in the protection against drowning

Our passionate, caring and qualified teachers have been teaching the Illawarra to swim for over 20 years

UNANDERRA  
4272 7272  
1 Marley Pl

TOWRADGI  
4285 1666  
Wollongong Surf Leisure Resort

**To be able to swim well is a gift for life**



Dapto's Emma Dopper has held a number of nannying positions and loves the job.

to their 70s. We tend to encourage older applicants to apply. Some clients prefer young nannies in their 20s and others request a more mature nanny (ie 35-plus)," Ms Robertson says.

"Some clients request only female applicants although we have had several nannies over the years. Generally though,

visitors on work visas who are looking for some work while travelling the world and what we call the 'Mrs Doubtfires'. Usually retired, these are often grandmothers who have time and are looking for some extra work."

The traditional full-time nannying model is not the only option these days, with flexibility

**"We get people from all walks of life and it's not just high-income families."**

they work casually through us.

"We encourage males to apply as we are often requested for a male nanny where it's a single mum of boys who wants the influence of a male in her boys' lives.

"Young girls are energetic and fun, older women tend to have had life skills and are very motherly, men provide the male influence often missing with so many split families. All of these people can bring benefits to our clients."

Everest says casual and part-time nannies tend to fall into two categories: "The two main types of nannies are the overseas

needed for modern families.

For instance, share nannies are great for two or more families, emergency nannies can pitch in when kids or parents are sick and short-term nannies help out when parents need to travel overseas on business and can't take their children out of school.

Nannies for after-school care - between 3-6pm weekdays - are also popular says Everest.

Ms Robertson adds: "In the last five or so years, we've noticed an increase in the requirement for part-time nannies on a live-out basis rather than full-time nannies.

"If the client has family support (grandparents), they may only need assistance two or three days a week. Previously the roles were full-time and often live-in and the nanny would take over the running of the home."

It's up to the family to decide what roles they want their nanny to take in the household. They may want a disciplinarian (like *Supernanny* Jo Frost), a playmate (aka *The Nanny's* Fran Drescher) or a nurturing figure (the Mrs Doubtfire type) - or a combination.

"The role of the nanny is all of (that) ie carer, disciplinarian, teacher, playmate and a mother substitute when mum or dad is unable or unavailable to be there," Ms Robertson says.

"Nannies in Australia also need to perform housekeeping and cleaning duties in addition to caring for the children. Nannies from overseas will only care for the children and expect a cleaner to be employed in addition to them."

Ms Robertson says people generally choose nannies because they can fit into the family's needs and wants. They also come to the child's familiar home environment and can take them to their regular social and recreational activities.

"Nannies can really influence and teach children from a very young age before the child attends pre-school or school," she says.

"There is now evidence that adult involvement from a very young age can actually enhance a child's learning ability and intellectual capabilities later on.

"Nannies also can develop a social network and attend mothers groups, Gymbaroo, swimming, other art and craft, music, etc with the child and therefore the child would have other social interaction with children their own age."

Ms Robertson believes even more families would be able to employ nannies, if government policies were more equitable.

"Nannies were extremely popular in the 1980s. Clients who travelled a great deal would use our short-term live-in nannies for overnight stays and for up to six weeks," she says.

"What really changed was the



introduction of the childcare rebate for registered providers of childcare, ie long day care, childcare centres, family day care, but not in-home care.

"Clients receive 50 per cent of their fees as a rebate but for employing a nanny in the home, the rebate is something like 48c per hour and there is quite a lot of paperwork that needs to be completed for the client to receive this minimal amount back. Most of our clients don't bother.

"The government has always been of the opinion that nannies were only for the rich which is totally incorrect assumption. It's something that has been a real issue for clients who want to employ a nanny for two or more children or share a nanny with another family."

Dial-An-Angel, which conducts thorough checks of all applicants, charges a one-off placement fee of nine per cent of a family's gross annual salary with a minimum charge of \$1100 for part-time placements and \$2200 for full-time placements.

On the We Need a Nanny website, parents can do a free trial search of the 50 caregivers closest to them and view their profiles. If they like what they see they can join for \$55 and contact as many as they like, as well as post a job on the site. They must interview and check the nanny's credentials themselves.

**Pool Safety Net**

- \*100% Safer where fences may fail
- \*Toddlers head cannot fit through mesh
- \*Child cannot crawl on net

The ultimate barrier between your child & the pool!  
**Call Just Covers Now on 4636 6826**  
[www.justcovers.com.au](http://www.justcovers.com.au)

**Tribal Jewels and Jewels of the Harem are Wollongong's Premier Tribal Style Bellydance Troupe and Dance Studio**

Our Style of Bellydance is based on traditional dances from India, Arabia, Spain, Turkey and Morocco

<b>JUNIOR CLASSES</b> 5 yrs to 13 yrs Thursdays from 10am
<b>MOTHER &amp; DAUGHTER CLASSES</b> All Ages Saturdays 10.30am

Artistic Director: Jacqueline Peperkamp  
 P: 0419 241 649  
 W: [www.tribaljewels.com.au](http://www.tribaljewels.com.au)  
 E: [info@jewelsoftheharem.com.au](mailto:info@jewelsoftheharem.com.au)

**Jewels of the Harem**  
 We are NOW at Dancespace 383 and Kiama