

The SheEO Blog

[MEDIA RELEASE: Childcare and careers don't mix for women, says new poll](#)

March 2, 2011: Despite the Federal Government's moves to strengthen maternity leave and benefits, Australian families remain worried about the affordability of childcare, saying they will vote for the party who offer tax breaks, the latest poll shows.

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New research, commissioned by the online businesswomen's network group [sphinxx](#) in a poll, found that children and careers fail to mix.

Almost half of those surveyed (48%) said the cost of childcare had negatively hit their careers but not their partners – 71.6% said their partners hadn't been held back at all.

Almost three quarters of respondents (74%) agreed that quality child care is hard to come by.

Jen Dalitz, founder of sphinxx and a company director, said the centenary for International Women's Day on March 8 puts the spotlight back on improving women's participation rates in paid work, and the problems about childcare arrangements.

"It's still profoundly concerning to see a lack of women in leadership, but the loss of women through from the ranks when they become mothers is clearly an ongoing problem.

"In 2011, we want to see more change for women who want to move ahead in their work because we still only have 3% of women in CEO roles - that's a terrible return for the investment in the education for women."

As a mother of a young child, Ms Dalitz said both political parties should be seeing childcare as a top policy issue if they were 'fair dinkum' about helping women stay in the workforce and support more choices in the childcare industry.

"It's crazy that you can deduct expenses for laptops, ipads and cars, but receive no tax breaks for family daycare or in-home care, especially in emergencies," she adds.

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The most recent joint Senate committee into child care five years ago confirmed there was an economic argument for reforms and further government spending on childcare, saying that for every \$1 the Government spent in this area, they get back \$1.86 in revenue from improved participation rates. Yet little has changed, she said.

Bernie Bolger, a psychotherapist with a special interest in financial affairs for women, says women are also losing out on any retirement income planning.

“If the woman leaves the workforce for a decade at say, the age of 35 years, she is giving up \$1.2 million in post -tax dollars.

“On top of that, there’s a loss of super at the SG rate, and if you compounded that amount, and invested it at a rate of 7% over 30 years then it would have been worth \$1 million. Even over 20 years, the super balance would be worth around \$600,000.

“When you see these figures, it’s clear how women are disadvantaged by leaving the workforce too fast.”

Ms Bolger says that women working part time, who don’t qualify for the rebate, are likely to be earning say \$41,000 net, and will have to pay the full childcare costs.

Current day care charges may be around \$1,000 a week for a family with two children. Community centres average \$65-85 a day while private centres charge \$70-100 per child. The rebate is capped at \$7,500 a year for Family Benefits part A.

“The Government needs to think outside of the square, and look at other childcare models,” said Danielle Robertson, CEO of national childcare providers Dial-An-Angel.

“We’re seeing a huge demand for permanent part-time professional child carers in the home on the basis of over 15 hours or more a week, as well as after-school and before-school care in addition to school holidays.”

Ms Robertson said her typical clients tend to be a double-income family, who may spend \$450 per week on child care, but the woman may only work part-time.

“Many clients feel it’s grossly unfair that they cannot obtain the child care rebate for in-home care as they do for registered day care or child care centres”.

The trend to a cash economy in these services also means that carers lose out, but so does the Government, she adds.

The rising cost of childcare was cited by 92% of respondents in the poll as a top policy issue in the next election. The latest study sampled mostly women - not just high earners – with almost half the households earning less than \$150,000 a year.

All Australians are urged to sign the petition on www.makecarefair.com.au so that politicians can see the level of engagement and respond.

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