

17549 - New submission from Early Years Strategy - Public Submissions

Dear The Early Years Strategy Taskforce,

First of all, thank you for bringing to light the importance of children in this very vulnerable age group (0-3yrs). I agree that a strong start in life will absolutely increase the likelihood of success in a child's future. For this same reason, as well as many others, I have chosen to be a stay-at-home wife to my four children, all of whom are under the age of seven. With this mind, my submission pleads with the government to stop focussing on childcare; stop nudging women back to work; and instead recognise and support non-working parents.

the important role we play as our children's first educators.

How can we be better supported?

To answer this, it's important to review why parents, particularly women decide to go back to work before their child turns 3. For many, it is simply a financial one, where the family can no longer survive on one income. This worsens the bigger the family grows, so often women return to work sooner with subsequent children than their first. I ask that the government review paid parental leave provisions, as well as the length of the time our unpaid leave has in the Fair Work Framework. I ask that the government implement a fairer tax system for our spouses who are currently taxed at the same rate as a single person, despite having a partner and children to support. Further, it absolutely makes no sense that a couple with a combined income greater than my husband's will pay less tax than us and thus have greater disposable income to spend on their kids. If the combined income of both couples is the same, so should the tax paid.

Another reason that women return to work prematurely is that they don't feel supported at home. For this reason, I ask the government implement better programs that enrich home based learning environments as well as a complete revamp or retraining of Early Childhood Clinics. Many women have felt shamed by staff in these clinics whose views are simply obsolete. For example, a clinic nurse once scolded and lectured me about "healthy eating" when my daughter's weight was in the 80th percentile. Once she finished her lecture, she measured my daughter's height and head circumference and found both to also be in the 80th percentile. When questioned, she still insisted that I still must be feeding my daughter unhealthily because of her weight. The nurse's knowledge of height/weight biometrics as well as genetics was clearly limited and I left that appointment feeling angry. Similarly, another nurse recommended that I send my kids to childcare because they will be missing out. On what exactly? To even imply that childcare is better than what a mother can give her children undermines the mother's role and existence.

It is known fact that many mental issues stem from the lack of parental presence in one's life. Having 'daddy issues' or 'mummy issues' is not a myth. So if the best thing for our children is to have greater time with their parents and if this Strategy is truly child and family centred, then the inclusion of financial and non-financial support stay-at-home mums and single income families must be at the centre of every discussion.

Thank you.

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