



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.

New research of 262 working women, commissioned by the online businesswomen's network group Sphinxx, found that children and careers fail to mix.

Key findings:

- 48% of respondents said childcare costs had hit their career, but not their partners (71.6%)
- 52% of respondents qualified for the rebate, but 92% still rate childcare costs as important or very important political/ election issue
- 86% would give their vote to the party with a tax-deductible policy on childcare 48% say cost of childcare has impacted upon career to date
- 62% say the cost of childcare has led to a reduction in their working hours
- 74% say it's difficult or very difficult to find available quality child care

Jen Dalitz, founder of Sphinxx and a company director, says **the centenary for International Women's Day on March 8** puts the spotlight back women's participation rates in paid work, and why they suffer from existing childcare arrangements.

"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.

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

"The Government needs to think outside of the square," says Danielle Robertson, CEO of national childcare providers Dial-An-Angel.

"We see huge demand for permanent part-time in home professional childcare on the basis of 15 hours or more a week, as well as after-school and before-school care. But many clients feel it's grossly unfair that they cannot obtain the childcare rebate for in-home care as they do for registered day care or child care centres".

Ms Robertson said the trend to a cash economy in these services also means that not only do carers lose out so does the Government.

Bernie Bolger, a professional counsellor, says the shortfall in retirement income for women directly results from this structural barrier to work. Middle-aged divorcees are the new poor as they approach retirement, she says, and if they'd been encouraged to stay longer at work, the country would be better off for it.

Women are urged to sign the petition on a site – www.makecarefair.com.au – so that politicians can see the level of engagement and respond. The aim is to make the Government reform childcare policies, and extend the tax breaks.

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