

WEL member Barbara Cameron has put together some recent debates in the media on Child Care. The subject seems to be widely discussed amongst the women presenters on TV current affairs these days - they are obviously having to address the problems of working mothers coping with all sorts of situations and time schedules. WEL could consider some of these very relevant points:

1. The quality of child care is most important, so workers should have higher salaries to attract better carers. At low wages, workers are leaving employment and there is a lack of qualified staff. There needs to be continuity of care with specific needs catered for. Children who have been at child care do better at literacy and numeracy at school and develop specialisation and social skills.

2. Part-time mothers gain very little money from employment after child care costs. Part-time work is however very valuable for mental stimulation and social interaction as well as the opportunity to keep skills up to date.

3. Tax deductibility for child care is needed (WEL lobbied for this in the 70s!)

4. Child care for teenagers. There seems to be nothing for children after primary school, i.e. 12 - 14 year-olds. Holidays are also a problem. There seems to be the notion that high school children can look after themselves. Child care is subsidized for younger children only. Grandparents can help, but may not have the energy or are situated far away.

5. Company Child Care, Community Child Care or Family Day Care in homes? Child care centres at schools would be welcome to the mothers with school-age children at the same school.

6. The country needs the skills of educated women.

My own experiences of being a working mother were:

SCHOOL DAYS: Morning: Drop off toddler at creche and eldest at Grammar School, drive to work in the city (two others walked to local schools).

4pm - 6pm: Nanny picked up two from local schools, eldest came home.

6pm: I drive home from city, picking up toddler on the way then collect nanny and drive her to tram. Then cook dinner!

HOLIDAYS were just as bad - creche then dropping off at grandparents then into the city - a trip of 40 km, morning and night.

We must make it easier for working mothers!