

memo

Attention To whom it may concern

Childcare - Productivity Commission

Sender Bindi Mira-Bateman

Date 16.12.2013

Subject Public Submission

File / Ref No. ~

Dear Sir / Madam,

With regards to the upcoming review of Childcare by the Productivity Commission wish to advise of my experiences as a self-employed mother of two young children.

Over the last 6 years I have utilised a variety of childcare options being:

- Private nanny (in home care)
- Live-in au pair (in home care)
- Family Day Care services
- Preschool / Long Day care

Each of these services was in place at different stages over the last few years to suit my children's ages, and each attendance was for three days per week only.

My particular issue is regarding the lack of any government benefit or rebate for employment of a private nanny or au pair.

Even though this is a fairly expensive option, I felt strongly enough that my 6-month old child should not be in any form of out-of-home care, and chose to employ a nanny at considerable cost. The financial decision to undertake this was not taken lightly, as our family generally earns average, not high incomes. The common perception that only the very wealthy have nannies is simply not true in our case. Our priority was quality of care and for me to be available to my children if needed.

The benefits to our family and to the greater community in employing a private nanny are as follows:

1. Allowed for minimum disruption to my children, as they were cared for in-home and able to follow their regular routines. As I work from home I was also able to continue breastfeeding for as long as desired. The close parent / child bond was not compromised in any way by my returning to the work force part-time.
2. Creation of employment. If this option was promoted then many jobs would be created, in addition to all existing childcare positions currently filled.
3. Decrease in pressure for enrolment places in other, formal types of childcare, as this was a separate private arrangement.

4. Also, anecdotally from other parents I know, once you have 3 children in any form of care, then a nanny is actually the cheaper option than paying childcare fees per child, as for Long Day Care or similar.

At the time when I employed a nanny or an au pair, there was no allowance for the government CCB (Child Care Benefit) or CCR (Childcare Rebate) being applicable. If there had been, that would have made a huge difference to our family finances and also I would have kept such an arrangement in place for longer, thereby increasing all of the above benefits.

If these benefits did apply to in-home care such as nannies, I think many families would also come to arrangements to job-share nannies either on different days or with say two single children only; and that more nanny positions created would be both secure and full-time. I did discuss this at the time with another family however the logistics of such an arrangement ruled this out.

On the basis of these points, I believe that promoting in-home childcare such as nannies or au pairs through the application of existing government benefits and rebates would greatly benefit the whole community.

The system to be put in place to do this should not be overly complicated or onerous, and it certainly should not require that nannies be sourced through an agency as this adds significantly more cost to the placement to the family providing employment.

It is also worth noting that currently all childcare workers are required to gain minimum tertiary qualifications, and that current wages do not generally reflect this increasingly educated workforce. Childcare workers could possibly earn higher incomes as private nannies, although all should be paid in recognition of the important care they provide. As the various types of government assistance are based on percentages, any increase in childcare costs due to higher wages, would only be proportionally higher for families.

Thanking you for your consideration of this information.

Regards

Bindi Mira-Bateman