

The Productivity Commission into Child Care

I am the sole parent of 3 children who are currently 12, 9 and 5 years old, and we live in the suburbs of Brisbane. We have no family support at all.

Prior to having children I had a 15 year career as a consulting IT engineer – meaning that I would need to be available 24 hours a day to resolve IT issues or install new IT equipment when businesses were not operating. I enjoyed this very much, despite sometimes having to work through the night.

Once I had children I worked part time for the organisation that I had previously been employed with, and could no longer work outside standard working hours as the only child care option at that time of night was a baby sitter or nanny who cost around \$20-\$25 / hour back then (2002).

After a year of working part time for this organisation I was asked to leave as the Director's preferred that I work fulltime – I could not give as much as I had before children to the business. I could not find any other part time work in my industry so I started working in child care. This was a very demanding job and paid very little – I've found that if you don't have a genuine love of wanting to be with children that you will not last long and you won't be an effective employer or carer. I got my Certificate in Child Care and often worked as a Group Leader in a centre – some of the things that I witnessed were abhorrent such as a young Group Leader threatening to turn off fans in the midst of Qld Summer if the children didn't go to sleep; young assistants taking the children out to lunch in Summer and sitting them down in the hot sun (without sunscreen) when only metres away there was shade. Many of these young inexperienced girls have no concept of risk management and it's generally something that can't be learned from a training course. I have also worked as a Family Day Carer but the remuneration at the time (the rate was limited) made it financially not viable.

Over the years I have found some good quality centres and it is usually the more mature staff that make a positive difference. My children are quite introverted and they have always hated going to child care, including outside school hours care.

It should also be noted that at all 4 centres that my children have attended, I have never been given priority (as a single working parent) over partnered parents that are already enrolled in the centre – there have been instances of me needing a place on a particular day for work purposes, and I've known that there are children enrolled on that day who have at least one parent who is not working (or looking for work or studying etc). I have heard of other centres though who have asked the enrolled family to change days to accommodate a single working parent.

So when I heard about aupairs, I investigated this option – it took me several years and some renovating around the house to make room to have a young German girl (on her gap year after high school) come to stay with us. She was fantastic – I was able to go to work at 7.30am and not have to worry about getting kids to school / day care on time; I didn't have to leave work at 2pm to pick them up from school; I didn't have to listen to the complaints and crying every day because they had to go to Outside School Hours Care. We have now not had an aupair for a year and these current Summer school holidays have been a nightmare for me – I had thought that I could work from home while they fend for themselves as they are older but this is not the case. I will be getting another aupair as soon as possible, although it is expensive at around \$200 per week for 30 hours plus the expense of buying a car to take them to and from school.

I have previously been able to receive CCB for having an aupair but it is a very complicated process. I am eligible because I often work outside normal working hours. The aupair needs a Blue Card yet

she cannot even apply for this until she is in the country – this can take around 6 – 8 weeks to obtain. Then she needs First Aid, insurance, tax file number etc.

I have also attempted to get a local nanny through the in-home care agency – most of these local nannies charge way over market rate – at least \$30 per hour – as they know that the families are getting CCB / CCR for the service so think we can afford it! So any government assistance basically goes to line the pockets of the nanny not the family. A local sitter only charges \$15 - \$20 per hour.

I look at families that have extended family around with envy. I think the government needs to look beyond the provision of financial remuneration to families to provide care – what about those of us that don't have that option? There needs to be:

1. Understand that children are different and cater for introverts who need time to themselves to recharge – not everyone is an extrovert who likes being around lots of people
2. A more formal program for aupairs in Australia such as that of the USA and other countries
3. Government assistance should be provided for those of us that don't have a high dual income – extend the number of places for in-home care and the eligibility requirements for same
4. Attraction of more mature (not specifically skilled) workers into the child care sector through acknowledgement of experience and references as well as qualifications and better wages.
5. Enforce the prioritisation of family enrolments according to Legislation, regardless of enrolment status.