

The Australian Family Association (AFA)



Submission to the

Productivity Commission

**Inquiry into the Paid Maternity, Paternity and Parental
Leave**

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**Inquiry into Paid Maternity, Paternity
and Parental Leave
Productivity Commission
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About the Australian Family Association

The AFA is an association of people in the community who are concerned about the wellbeing and sustainability of family life in Australia. The Association is financed through membership fees and the generosity of benefactors. A journal, *The Australian Family*, is published three times a year and a regular *Family Update* is published bi-monthly.

The objectives for which the Association is established are as follows:

- (i) to cultivate within society an appreciation that the integrity and well being of the family is essential to the stability, morale, security and prosperity of the Australian nation;
- (ii) to analyze laws and policies for their effect on the family and to formulate and promote corrective measures as necessary;
- (iii) to support initiatives taken by other individuals and organisations in support of the traditional family;
- (iv) by means of conferences, seminars and the active involvement of individuals and groups, to create public awareness of the fundamental importance of the family unit;
- (v) to facilitate research and act as a resource centre for the effective pursuit of the Association's objectives;
- (vi) to facilitate programs in family education;
- (vii) to promote and encourage the development of services to assist families in difficulties; and
- (viii) to do all such things as are incidental or conducive to the attainment of the above objectives.

The Association's patrons are

Sir Peter Lawler, O.B.E. REV. Dr. Margaret Court, A.O., M.B.E., Ph.D. (Hon), LL.D. (Hon). Major General Peter R. Phillips, A.O., M.C., B.A. (Qld), F.A.I.C.D. Prof. J.L. Chipman, M.A., Ph.D. (Oxon), LL.B. Rev. Dr. J.I. Fleming, B.A., Th.L. (Hons), Ph.D. DR. C. ISBISTER, C.B.E., M.B., B.S., F.R.A.C.P. Major General W.B. Digger James, A.C., A.O., M.B.E, M.C., M.B.B.S.(Syd), F.R.A.C.S. Dr. T.B. Lynch, A.O., M.B., B.S., F.R.A.C.P. Dame Elisabeth Murdoch, A.C., D.B.E. Lady Scholtens. Judge Frank Walsh. Emeritus Prof. Jerzy Zubrzycki, A.O., C.B.E., M.B.E. (Mily.), F.A.S.S.A. Founder: Mr B.A. Santamaria, M.A., LL.B. (1915 - 1998) :

The Association has a Federal Executive, with Branches in all States.

Preliminary comments

The AFA welcomes the commission's inquiry and its intended consideration of the needs of infants in the first 2 years of life in the light of workforce and economic policy considerations. The AFA regrets that major shifts are to be considered in the interface of family and labour force policies without consideration for broader issues of policy impacts on the wellbeing of families over their whole life span, in which needs and priorities naturally shift and shift again as babies arrive, children grow and grandparents age.

Research indicates the importance of present, involved, responsive, loving parents in the lives of their children, especially from birth, and in the first 2-3 years of life, but also through to majority. There has been substantial research on the importance of attachment in infancy and early childhood, as well as breastfeeding. Other research is beginning to reveal the importance of loving parental care and guidance to children and teenagers. (This research on infancy and childhood is provided as Appendices to this submission).

Everyone in society is a member of a family. Single adults are sons or daughters, siblings, uncles, aunts, cousins etc. Widows or divorcees may have children who will keep them connected to their previous spouse's family. Divorced parents have family connections to each other and the children they created together. These connections are real, usually very important to people and extend out across households and through communities.

The economy's relationship to the family

The AFA believes that family wellbeing and especially the needs of children should be the central concern of workforce and indeed all economic policy.

The economy can be understood as a natural institution of society or alternatively as referring to all those aspects of social organization and interaction that pertain to the allocation of resources and the production and trade of goods and services to improve standard of living. Society, and therefore the economy, is the fruit or the creation of families and family life. The Geneva Convention's identification of the family as the fundamental group unit of society reflects the conviction of diverse signatories that the family is prior to the state and hence also it must be prior to the economy.

The AFA understands the complexity of economic policy and the interactions of both material and non material outcomes of economic activity and their role in standard of living.

Pro-family labour force and economic policy needed

Economic policy should seek to facilitate healthy and sustainable family life in both the broadest extended sense and also and especially in regard to the family unit of parents and children. The health and wellbeing of the core unit in which intimate relationships, parenting and child development take place is vital. Significant stresses and difficulties here can have serious impacts for the future maximization of children's chances of relationship building, work and happiness.

In economic terms, childhood experiences of stressed, harried or pre-occupied parents, of unhappy or compromised family relationships, chaos and lack of sufficient parental care through childhood or the adolescent years, may result in very significant losses of future labour-force productivity.

Important publications relevant to the considerations of the Inquiry

The Commission is urged to consider the important contributions made to debates on the balancing of work and family, work and the care of children, by several authors:

Anne Manne," Love and Money the Family and the Free Market", *Quarterly Essay* 2008 Black Inc Melbourne; ***Motherhood how should we care for our children?*** 2005 Allen and Unwin Sydney

Steve Biddulph, *Raising Babies - Should Under Threes Go To Nursery?* 2006; Harper Collins UK (and available through Amazon.com)

Dr Peter Cook, *Early Child Care Infants and Nations at Risk*, 1996; News Weekly Books; Australia.

Jennifer Buckingham, *Childcare who benefits?* Issues analysis no.89 24 October 2007 The Centre for Independent Studies Sydney (can be downloaded free from www.cis.org.au.)

If the Commission is not able to obtain these publications, the AFA will be happy to arrange copies for consideration.

This submission will make frequent reference to these works.

Appendices accompanying this submission :

1)Reference List for *Raising Babies - Should Under Threes Go To Nursery?* 2006, Harper Collins UK made available by the author at - http://www.stevebiddulph.com/site_files/raising-babies-references.pdf

2)Reference List for research showing links between parental involvement and availability and optimal outcomes for school aged children and adolescents

Economic ramifications of policy impediments to parenting and healthy child development

The economic ramifications of a failure to accommodate and support family life economically, and socially may be significant. Professor Fiona Stanley, Dr Peter Cook and others¹ have sought to draw a connection between infant and childhood experiences of deprivation, disrupted attachments and pre-occupied or dysfunctional parenting and serious future incapacity to engage productively in the workforce. Cook, Biddulph, Manne and Stanley have also raised concerns about the impact of deficient parenting and family experiences on children's future capacity to form lasting and sustaining relationships in adulthood or to parent their children effectively.

In short, if family life and the capacity of parents to provide for the developmental needs of their children is harmed by economic and other social policies , then its is likely that a downwards spiral of dysfunction will be generated with each generation suffering more than the last. Cook takes the view that whilst this is a serious concern, adequate remedial support and improved policies may be able to work with an evolutionary, genetic or innate drive to parent in healthy ways so that damaged parenting capacity may be improved.

¹ For example see Fiona Stanley, Sue Richardson and Margot Prior, *Children of the Lucky Country? How Australian Society has turned its back on children and why children matter*, 2005 MacMillan; also Cook, Manne, Biddulph as listed in main text above

The AFA believes therefore that labour force policies and economic and social policies generally ought to work to accommodate the needs of infants, children and teenagers for involved, responsive, present, loving parenting.

Policy settings ought to be evidenced-based, recognizing the substantial research on attachment and the inadequacy or harmfulness of childcare as a parental care substitute.

Appropriate Child Care policies

The AFA recognizes that many parents will need to access child care services because of real needs for workforce participation, or respite or time off from parenting. Modern economies have often required highly mobile and flexible labour forces. Many more households operate with dual income workforce participation structures especially as children grow older, limiting the help that can be provided by siblings and friends. Many older parents continue to work and are no longer so available for grandparental assistance.

Child care policies should aim to provide genuine high quality care to provide as close a parental substitute as possible. Child care policy should work to achieve stable, attachment oriented service delivery aimed at maximizing the capacity of services to provide very high quality care to infants and young children.

Family and economic policy should, in light of the research on childcare, be aimed at maximizing the number of infants cared for in the family home and by parents, especially breastfeeding mothers, for at least the first 2 years of life. Secure attachment with mothers especially but also with fathers, siblings or other family members is not fully established until late in the 2nd or early in the 3rd year of life. Variations, are of course, common in the timeline of attachment in young children. Significant trauma and separation in older children may damage attachment. At the very least, the AFA believes that such policy should be neutral as to parental choices, not penalizing or disadvantaging families who want to care for children at home.

Greater flexibility in appropriate responses to children's needs becomes possible in the 3rd and 4th years of children's lives. Research has indicated that high quality kindergarten style programs that are part time can be advantageous for children and parents. High quality programs have generally been open to parental involvement. Policy neutrality in relation to family participation in these programs ought to be maintained or restored.

Child care conceptualized as an economically rationalized service aiming for micro-economic and macroeconomic efficiencies, such as economies of scale and optimal resource allocation must be rejected as profoundly antithetical to the needs of families and children. Research (see Manne, Biddlph, Cook) is revealing just how badly such a model of care has served children with strong evidence for dose related harm in ordinary child care centers but also even in centers considered high quality.

The AFA believes that an appropriate carer ratio for infant care is 1:1 (with 1:2 being the only acceptable compromise) with carers who have the capacity to establish a stable attachment to the infant. (see discussion of research- appendix 1)

Appropriate Leave Policies

In regard to options for policies addressing maternity, paternity and parental leave, the AFA:

- supports universal maternity and parenting payments that ideally should be paid to the primary care parent from the time of the birth of the first child until the last child in the family starts school. (Presently the system of family tax and transfers goes some way to achieving acknowledgement of the value of parental care of children)
- supports additional paternity payment provision that can run in conjunction with maternity leave to allow fathers to be more available during times of intense parenting demand, especially with younger babies. Such circumstances might arise because of illness, colic, reflux, mother's fatigue or even father's fatigue. Such paternity payment would be conceptualized as being in addition to parenting payment entitlements and could be offered for a maximum of 6 weeks that could be taken at any time during the year after the birth. It could be claimed in fortnight long blocks and families might like to keep some in reserve for emergencies.
- supports neutrality as to family and parental choices and preferences concerning the use of child care or at home parental care or other familial care. Targeted subsidies and child care benefits ought to be paid directly to parents to use as they see fit and should be absorbed into the parenting payment.
- supports child benefits or allowances that could be maintained in the current family tax and transfers system (family tax benefit, large family supplements, baby bonus etc) or might better be re-badged and preferably expanded to specifically acknowledge and accommodate the real costs to families and value of each new child to society.
- generous mandated parental leave provisions and greater scope for workplace flexibility to accommodate the needs of children for their parents when sick, or for social or educational activities, for care of children during school holidays and for adequate shared family holidays. Some leave provision could be coupled with flexible work provision for holidays or leave to care for sick children. Such provision should apply to families with children of all ages.
- acknowledges scope for optional maternity and paternity leave schemes whether paid or unpaid to be provided by employers as needed. Such leave however, should not force particular models of care on parents such as by limiting the amount of maternity leave that can be taken and offering "use it or lose it" paternity leave in its place. No policy should have the impact of forcing a leave arrangement on families that results in greater difficulty in the maintenance of breastfeeding or that might unnecessarily disrupt attachments or family care preferences. Maternity and paternity leave schemes must not be allowed to operate so as to pressure parents back to work earlier than is optimal for their children's wellbeing. Optional unpaid schemes that allow lengthier breaks from the workplace, perhaps until a parent's youngest child enters school could be encouraged for larger employers.
- supports a basic mandatory unpaid maternity leave provision scheme as an adjunct to universal parenting payment as above to ease difficulties with flexible workforce attachment where workers wish to maintain that attachment. The AFA believes that a basic minimum should allow all mothers to take a minimum of 6 months of maternity leave followed by a minimum of another 6 months of maternity leave that could be swapped with paternity leave if a family wishes. This mandatory component should also include mandated provision of flexible and part time working

arrangements on request of returning mother (or father), with such request only refused when the employer cannot reasonably comply. Small businesses could be granted extra protection from or help with compliance difficulties.

- Calls for the rolling of funding for the child care benefit and child care rebate into a parenting payment. The AFA believes that this heavy subsidization is poor policy ending up mainly in the coffers of private for profit child care providers, after mainly assisted higher income families. This funding should be given directly to all families who will then have the freedom to use it to pay for child care provided by grandma, a nanny or a child care provider, or to help fund parental in home care.

The AFA supports publicly funded universal maternity payments for all mothers whether they have been in employment or are attached to the workforce or not. The Baby Bonus can be seen as operating as either a de-facto maternity payment or a child benefit. The time is right to consider renaming this payment. to better reflect the worth of the work done by mothers and fathers in caring for infants and young children or to reflect in a more targeted way, the real costs of raising children and their value to society.

Given the onerous demands on mothers in the first year of life, it is reasonable to provide additional payments to help families, particularly if they need to purchase home help services. The AFA believes that Government should expand this scheme further by making maternity or parenting payment payable to parents, ideally from the time of the first's child's birth until the last child begins school. Such a maternity or parenting payment scheme would properly reflect the significant value of parenting work. Current and substantial subsidies and benefits tied to the use of non-parental child care could be wound into a maternity or parenting payment scheme to better accommodate parental choice. Those who choose to use child care could allocate the parenting payment to child care payment subsidization. As such the money could be used by parents to help pay a grandparent or a nanny or a family day carer for example.

Maternity leave policies must not operate to pressure mothers back into the workplace during the first 2-3 years of a child's life. Optimally, economic and social policy should be devised to maximize the capacity of mothers, and fathers too, especially as children grow older, to maintain sufficient flexibility in their attachment to the workforce to accommodate the changing needs of their children throughout childhood and adolescence.

In infancy, mothers typically and naturally establish an attachment relationship with their infant. This relationship is crucial to the healthy development of infants and disrupted attachments to some degree may create subtle or more obvious emotional and psychological impairments into adult life.. Mothers should be able to enjoy their babies. Babies have an innate need to feel enjoyed and cherished (see Manne especially). Babies also need to feel responded to with relative consistency to develop feelings of security and the capacity to manage emotions.

Mothering in early childhood and infancy has traditionally and naturally involved breastfeeding at least into the second year of life. Breastfeeding provides enormous health and nutritional benefits but is jeopardized by stress, fatigue, heavy psychological or physical demands and by workforce participation. Research continues to reveal the benefits of breastfeeding across a broad range of measures from minimization of infant infection through to risks for diabetes and obesity. Research continues to find links to better cognitive outcomes. Studies reveal that even after the introduction of solid foods, and even into the second year of life breastfed infants obtain significant portions of their

daily requirements of a range of essential nutrients from breast-milk so that it can still be called a principal part of their diet. (see <http://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/bfinfo/index.html>). Australia's breastfeeding rates have plateaued since the 1990s with possible recent declines and fall well short of WHO targets.

Some highly committed mothers manage to combine early return to work with continued breastfeeding. Such women require supportive workplaces. In many instances, the AFA believes that highly motivated employers might better accommodate the nursing mother by accommodating her baby in the workplace as well.

Research has shown that mothers and fathers provide different styles of care and that both are vitally important to healthy and happy infancy and early childhood. Early childhood and infancy is also a time when strong needs for mothers' presence and care is typically manifest practically and in research. A father or other loving attachment figure such as another relative or a nanny can provide good but not exact substitution.

Fathers and other family members such as siblings and grandparents form vital attachment relationships and these often become significant carers of infants and young children, especially when mothers return to work.

Workforce policy such as maternity leave provision must aim to facilitate these processes or at least to ensure neutrality between mothers who want to care for their own baby and those who wish to return to work early. That many mothers feel workplace or even financial pressure to return is reflective of massive policy failure.

Policies that pressure mothers' early return to work and the relegation of their infants to child care services, may be good for business in the short run. However long term costs, economic and social, are likely to emerge as significant.

Mandated employer funded maternity leave only addresses the needs of about half Australia's mothers and tends to be conditional on ongoing workforce attachment and early return to work, usually after one year or less. As such, these types of schemes operate as a marked disincentive to mothers who would rather stay home with their infant into the 2nd or 3rd year. Many mothers report that they felt that return to work was necessary to ensure continued earning capacity and potential in the face of ongoing high housing and other costs.

Any kinds of Maternity leave policy, publicly or privately funded with insurance schemes or directly premised on eligible mothers having attachment to and relatively early re-engagement with the workforce are problematic. The needs of many mothers, especially very young mothers, mothers with several children already, and mothers in casual employment are not addressed by such schemes.

Maternity leave that is conditional or that is structured to place strong incentives on mothers' early separation from infants to return to work is not likely to be in the interests of infants.

Many women anticipating pregnancy or the birth of their first child are unprepared for the strong feelings they will experience in relation to their child. It is fair to say that many mothers are very surprised by the intensity of their desire to stay with their child. Paid maternity leave tied to commitment to an employer is not an ideal policy in this context.

Employers would and should be free to top up publicly funded maternity payments with additional maternity leave payments on an optional basis. However employers should be prohibited from any kind of threat of job loss or status as a result of the use of extended maternity leave certainly for the first 2 years of a child's life.

Employers should be encouraged to develop more innovative strategies to facilitate the retention of mothers with infants. Work place nannies or very high quality workplace child care that facilitates ongoing breastfeeding and attachment to mothers may help to address infants needs in situations where employer and employee are highly motivated to continue workforce attachment. Flexible arrangements, work from home and part time work are other ways in which families might engage with the workplace whilst meeting their infants' needs.

However, it must be born in mind that the care of infants tends to be a full time and around the clock business. Infants with regular and lengthy sleep patterns, who are happy and content to play in a bouncer may allow a mother or other primary carer a number of hours a day for paid work. Many other infants have sleep, feeding and play needs that require more hands-on and full-time attention. Parents often find that even basic tasks are not able to be completed. Workforce attachment policies must accommodate to the individual needs of infants and their parents.

Paternity and Parental Leave

Flexibility should be facilitated so that both mothers' and fathers' necessary involvement in raising children is accommodated.

Increased parental leave provisions for the early years and into young childhood or even into primary and secondary school years would be greatly appreciated by families. Young children tend to get sick more often than older children. Young children are also engaged in activities for which parental involvement is very important. Capacity to manage the extra demands of kindergarten attendance could be enhanced by parental leave provisions.

Such leave should not be gender specific, and should not try and enforce some kind of gender equity. Parents' preferences should be respected.

Paternity Leave

Paternity leave is an excellent idea only if it is not provided instead of maternity leave. Schemes that set "use it or lose" rules and that try to force some kind of gender "equity" in the taking of leave fail to respect family choices and preferences or to focus on the needs of children. Such schemes are often not especially popular overseas. Again, Manne discusses this issue in *Motherhood*.

Given the incredible value of breastfeeding and recommendations that it form a substantial nutritional part of infants diets into the second year of life, it is hard to understand why some would advocate a mandated paternity leave that would act to cut short maternity leave.

Paternity leave would, however, be extremely valuable especially in the early days and weeks after a baby is born. The establishment of breastfeeding and the round the clock care of new babies puts heavy demands on mothers and fathers. Paternity leave would enable fathers to be more supportive in these early days and would assist in helping them to bond with their baby. It is well known that fathers often front up to work exhausted after nights spent helping mothers at home with sick, poorly sleeping or feeding or colicky babies.

Paternity leave might help support mothers to obtain respite or to engage in some limited part time employment or recreational activity. Maternal exhaustion is often a factor in the emergence of postnatal depression and paternity leave, more broadly available, would help in prevention.

Whilst this may seem like a radical departure from standard workplace culture in Australia, there is a clear and obvious need for such workplace flexibility. Less stress, more sleep and physical activity, a feeling of coping and so on will all help to encourage the most important developmental experience arguably of a person's life to unfold without a hitch. Attachment's importance cannot be over-emphasized. Manne describes the fundamental basis on which attachment works as the engendering of a sense in the baby that they are cherished, safe and enjoyed.

A paternity leave scheme mirroring that available for mothers should also be available to fathers who wish to take on primary caring roles. This scheme should be entirely optional but normally available to fathers where the mother is re-entering the workforce.

There are many families in which mothers seek to take the first 6 months to a year off work and then want to switch with their spouse so that dad then takes on the care of their infant in the second and even third year. Often in these situations, mothers are higher earners and families want to maximize their earning capacity. In many situations such leave arrangements have not been well tolerated by employers and men's career credentials are harmed.

In the second, third or fourth year of a child's life when breastfeeding frequency is reduced, paternity leave ought to be available as an alternative to maternity leave. It is important that families be allowed as much choice as possible to work out their own strategies for balancing the needs of their children, their finances and their work or career aspirations. Combinations of alternating leave over several years, or a combination of part-time paternity and maternity leave ought to be facilitated.

The AFA envisages that the capacities of families to manage leave opportunities, breaks from the workplace and flexible engagement as necessary to facilitate as much as possible the parental care of children in the first 2-3 years of life and also possibly in to the 4th year of life.

To achieve this, families' workforce participation would necessarily be reduced through this time.

Real needs of children and families the proper ultimate objective of economic policy

The AFA notes that "the Commission's focus is on ways of achieving a more productive economy" characterized as the "the key to higher living standards."

It is expected that submissions to this inquiry will be broad ranging and will include submissions from industries and individuals as well as many other agencies and bodies ranging from public through to private or community status. Some submissions will assist the Commission to engage in detailed analysis of a range of policy models relating to encouraging participation in or attachment to the workforce, or policy models that tend to create greater policy neutrality about parents, family and work balancing decisions.

Questions of work-life or work -family balance have been prominent in a range of community and political debates of recent years. A very substantial proportion of Australian families are very much aware of the challenges of balancing work and family life, and are actively engaged in a range of strategies or decisions to achieve a satisfactory outcome. A range of family members are directly affected by these issues, including, of course, mothers and children but also fathers and often grandparents and other family members including older siblings who may participate in the care of younger siblings.

The AFA welcomes the Governments initiative in asking the Commission to give consideration to maternity leave issues and other types of parental leave in light of central concerns about the impacts on infants during their first two years of life of workforce attachment or participation. The AFA believes that an honest appraisal of the needs of infants and young children must be a priority in this inquiry.

The AFA emphasizes that both Government and the Commission should not lose sight of the appropriate priority that the needs of families and especially children or even the frail aged should take in any considerations of economic policy or the targeting of economic aims and objectives .

Economic performance is important for family and children's wellbeing

The pursuit of economic aims and objectives through economic policy is of course ultimately about maximizing the capacity of our economy to facilitate economic opportunity and a good standard of living for all Australians. Australians know that the healthy functioning of our economy is crucial to the sustainability of family life at a material level. A case can readily also be made for the myriad non-material benefits that flow to family life and communities when the economy is healthy, strong and productive..

Policy to facilitate productivity maintenance and improvement has been a key feature of economic planning for many years. The AFA understands the important connections between competitiveness, productivity and issues such as unemployment and inflation, external balance and standard of living.

In the intersection between family and work or family and children and the economy, questions of productivity are important. But in all matters economic, it is helpful to sometimes step back from economic analysis, and remind ourselves of the reasons why we ask Governments to adopt policies on the economy, on productivity, industrial relations etc.

The family must never be reduced to a set of labour market or consumption units.

Ultimately, the economy arises and grows as a natural social institution for the purposes of resource allocation and to meet the material needs of society's members efficiently and fairly. Society also is a fruit of family life. The family is the fundamental group unit of society and its origin.

Economic policies must always operate in such a way as to respect the family and its needs. Families have the natural and primary responsibility for protecting and nurturing their children and economic policy must continually be open to examination as to any problematic impacts on the wellbeing of children and the capacity of parents to care for them.

It is well understood that standard of living and quality of life are concepts that reflect the interaction of material and non-material factors on the wellbeing of people, communities and families. It is not enough that economic policy settings are geared only to maximizing economic growth or productivity as measured by a range of quantitative indicators. Economic policy must be carried out with modeling that attempts to factor other non-material human goods into analysis.

Efforts should be made to factor family wellbeing into economic performance analysis. Measures of the amount of shared time available to families over the course of a day, a week or a year could be considered. Measures of shared family activities across leisure

or household and family work could be considered. Other measures of wellbeing are being developed in Australia such as the Australian Unity Wellbeing Index. Indices of ill health amongst children and adolescents such as self harm , eating disorders, depression or obesity statistics can provide clues as to family functioning.

Economic policy must also be constructed to realistically accommodate the realities of uneven distributions of income and wealth and unevenness in market power. Economic policies ultimately usually impact different economic actors in different ways.

Potential winners and losers of policy to lift workforce participation rates

Examination of policy questions about appropriate maternity, paternity and parental leave arrangements has implications for wages and profits growth, and competitiveness in regard to employers including major corporations. Governments' fortunes are also tied to various aspects of economic performance such as wages growth suppression. Unions may see in enhanced workforce participation greater opportunities to expand their membership. Family decisions about workforce participation of parents and their ability to earn preferred income levels, are influenced by economic variables, such as costs of living and mortgages.

Economic winners from increased participation and attachment rates.

Particular industries may directly benefit from specific policy changes that lead to increased demand for their products. Examples of industries that benefit from the increased participation of young mothers in the workforce might include, the growing child care industry, the clothing industry, the petrol industry, fast food and processed foods and frozen meal industry, domestic cleaning.

The share of revenue going to profit rather than wages is more easily maintained or lifted if the workforce participation of mothers is lifted. Increased workforce participation helps relieve pressure on wages thereby helping to protect profit shares. Of course downwards pressure on wages also helps to keep the cost components of inflation lower. Low inflation helps keep interest rates lower.

Such economic outcomes, particularly the avoidance of a wages breakout deliver political advantages to Governments. Labor governments, particularly have found wages breakouts to be politically difficult.

Possible impacts of workforce expansion policy to constrain wages growth on housing affordability .

Downwards pressure on wages and the growing presence of double income households may have serious implications for long term housing affordability. A range of housing economists or economic commentators have stated that **the major long term solution to the housing affordability crisis around the country is real wages growth in conjunction with slowed house price growth. Using policy to suppress wages growth may be a strongly anti-family policy in the long run.**

Using policy to encourage the growth of family household workforce participation and family household income relative to personal income may have other significant impacts on long term housing affordability and further lock in below replacement level fertility.

Dr Garrick Small² identifies household income growth fueled by increased workforce participation by women especially (although arguably a case could also be made for the longer hours routinely committed to paid work by many married fathers) and trends to suppress fertility to maintain home buying capacity. He argues that by the 1990s, any excess capacity in households for workforce participation was drying up and that the increased economic capacity of households had largely been absorbed by the housing market. Small also points to the escalation of debt leverage as a key factor in the continued house price rises of the last decade.

However he cautions that the current situation creates great instability because households have so little capacity left. He briefly touches on the concept of a limit to fertility decline based on contraceptive failure. It may be possible that families will seek to limit their fertility further given the precarious position many younger family households find themselves in.

Fertility may be further compromised by the need to maintain secure employment and workforce attachment in an environment in which interest rates have been rising. Small explores the concept of market failures in relation to these developments .

The gap between fertility preferences and reality

Fertility emerges here and in other debates as the "meat in the sandwich", temporarily or permanently limited by families to deal with the economic and social challenges and constraints of modern life and housing costs. A recent Institute of Family Studies report indicated that many couples are having less children than they would have preferred citing financial constraints and insecurity about the future of their relationships.³

Gray, Qu and Weston (AIFS) suggest that there is a growing recognition of the role social and economic policy can play in helping families achieve their desired fertility which they note would lift Australia to above replacement rates again. They suggest that appropriate policy responses might include improvements in policy to assist women in particular to combine paid employment and workforce attachment with motherhood. Paid maternity leave is suggested as a component of this kind of policy.

Delayed parenting an emerging issue - Maternity Leave policies may compound fertility timeline constraints.

There has been growing awareness of the limits to fertility in women but also recently, of men. Marked social trends to delay partnering and child bearing have resulted in the increased likelihood that couples may end up having less children or even no children in contrast to their fertility aspirations. Our economic, financial and social priorities have led us to focus on education and career at the very time when our fertility is at its best.

Prioritising of educational and professional accreditation and career establishment, , travel and house purchase ahead of child bearing seems to be an increasingly unnecessary way of ordering family's life courses. Such prioritising runs in the reverse order to that set by nature and the biological clock. Much research has addressed

² Dr. Garrick Small Social Change and the Residential Market A paper presented at the Australian University's Building Educators Association (AUBEA) conference, Sydney 2006 University of Technology, Sydney

³ Matthew Gray, Lixia Qu and Ruth Weston, Fertility and family policy in Australia, Research Paper No. 41, February 2008. Australian Institute of Family Studies

women's declining fertility, finding significant reduction in a woman's thirties and more so in her forties. Some researchers have indicated that girls of late conceivers may have a heightened risk of infertility. Other research has identified the declining fertility of men and the optimal time for fathering being in the twenties and thirties.⁴

New research has uncovered links between advancing age of fathers and diminished life expectancy for their children.⁵ This study found that children of men conceiving after the age of 45 were found to be twice as likely to die before adulthood as children of younger dads.

Demographic analysis of delayed fertility trends in Australia suggest that the advancing age of first child bearing is likely to result in a drop in fertility rates to 1.4 in a few years, a rate well below replacement level.⁶

Workforce, economic and family policy ought not encourage the delay of parenting. Indeed, it seems increasingly clear that policy and social change is needed to help facilitate a return to younger partnering and parenting and to the facilitation of flexible attachment to education and workplace to assist in career development once family life and child bearing have been established.

It is ironic that the boomer feminists who worked to create our current late marriage and child bearing culture were often themselves young mothers who pursued career and further education after being stay at home mothers at least for a time. These feminists did have it all because they were not fighting against their biological clock. Gen X mothers who have struggled to achieve according to the new paradigms of career over children have often found it difficult to partner, to conceive, or to bear their preferred number of children and to then negotiate a significant career disruption. For some it was easier to seek a career change rather than resume their pre-baby career.

Young parenthood was once celebrated in our society. It may be time that we consider its value again. Women, especially could resume studies as part time or full time students as their children begin to attend school or preschool. Emphasis on maternity leave schemes entrenches further the systematic pressure on women to delay child bearing for the sake of career establishment.

Policies targeting workforce attachment and participation can miss the mark for most women grappling with the fertility gap.

Proposals for paid maternity and paternity leave or other workforce attachment and participation strategies such as parental leave often rest on faulty assumptions.

Many families feeling the economic squeeze of necessary and continued workforce engagement even while children are young are taking a range of fertility measures. Some families seek to minimize the impacts of their child bearing by limiting fertility to 1 or 2 children. Some of these families are seeking to have these children as close together in age as possible to minimize workforce participation disruption. In many instances, families seek to delay childbearing to help build savings and career credentials. In such circumstances, the health and well being of mothers and even children may be compromised. Often breastfeeding is ended early in view of the second

⁴ Mark Metherell, Young men told to make babies now Sydney Morning Herald October 13, 2006

⁵ Older dads sire at risk kids - study Printed June 02, 2008 04:44pm AEST The Australian From correspondents in London | June 02, 2008

⁶ Allison Barnes Low fertility: a discussion paper, OCCASIONAL PAPER NO. 2, 2001 Department of Family and Community Services

pregnancy and the return to work.

Policy recommendations for greater workforce participation supported by enhanced and expanded childcare services miss the point of child bearing altogether. Very few parents are content or would be content to have interactions with their children limited only to a few hours a day, often with that time spent in a harried rush against the clock. Parents and infants and children want relationships with each other. Infants and young children often enjoy and benefit from a slow pace in which learning and discovery can unfold in the context of shared activities or just interacting. If both parents are working full time, parents will often have to quickly dress and feed infants in the morning before work, perhaps taking them to childcare or leaving them with a carer. In the evening, after 5.30 or 6pm at night, parents will attempt to interact with their child over a meal and bath and story. Children are often tired and parenting can be demanding at this time of night. Pressing need to have infants or young children in bed early enough to ensure sufficient sleep means that interaction may only happen for an hour or so. On weekends, between infants' sleep needs and the need to shop and catch up on household chores, parent child interactions will again be limited. Many special moments of child development and sharing will be missed in what is only a very short period in a family's life. Surely this is not the kind of outcome we want from economic or workforce policy- part time parenting?

For many women, the introduction of universal paid maternity leave would probably do little to change these current compromises. Such leave would not help other women, young mothers or those in casual positions. It would not address most women's constraints on achieving their ideal fertility preferences.

Current labour market conditions are likely to continue as baby boomers increasingly retire. For many women, the capacity to re-enter the workforce after time out for children has never been stronger.

Most arguments for paid maternity leave focus on a range of assumptions that ought to be examined. Women's status and "social inclusion" are said to be enhanced or supported, their financial position is strengthened, and their wishes to have children without sacrificing career are supported by workforce attachment or participation.

Manne, especially in her Quarterly Essay, unpacks these assumptions and contrasts them with the social science evidence on women's experience and preferences. She also relates some women's perceptions and experiences of their role and its status. Manne challenges us to see the high levels of social engagement and inclusion that has typified many child and family centered women (Catherine Hakims' adaptive and child centred women), those who have made up the majority of mothers in Australia.

Amongst those who have been able to avail themselves of paid maternity leave in Australia, most would have done so for only one or two children. It is highly unlikely that business would welcome or even tolerate a women who seeks it for the third or fourth time. In many of these instances, women may have had their babies with or without maternity leave payment because they were likely to have been relatively highly skilled and in demand in their field. For these women, tradeoffs in preferences about career, financial benefit and number of children to bear result in the opting for a smaller family. Some women with very strong skills in high demand by their employer and other comparable employers have used unpaid or paid leave, or a combination of both, often also with flexible working hours on return to have three or more children.

Flawed assumptions about the relative economic and social value of parenting and family work compared to paid work.

There has long been community debate about the importance of recognizing the social contributions, or even the economic contributions of women who focus on child-rearing or prioritize it in relation to other desired career aspirations..

This current inquiry into the question of paid maternity, paternity and parental leave seems to be couched in terms of core assumptions about the superior value of workforce participation over other kinds of work in the family and community, especially work managing family life and a family household and work and other activities related to the parenting of children.

Economic objectives are ultimately geared to achieving quality of life and human flourishing. Workforce participation may not always be what is needed to achieve these ultimate goals.

The value of parental care and involvement for infants, children and adolescents and parents is increasingly evidenced in research.

There is substantial evidence from psychology and the social sciences that indicates the importance of parental work and participation in family life and especially in the parenting of children and teenagers. There is substantial evidence too about the vitally important role of parents, usually mothers primarily, in the care and nurture of infants.

These benefits range from the physical through to the emotional and cognitive development of the infant. Research also shows that health benefits accrue for mothers, mainly, but also fathers, when they are able to focus on their infants' needs. Through breastfeeding and constant interaction, attachment develops. Parents gain greater attunement to their infant whilst infant's neurobiological development is nurtured in healthy ways.

Through breastfeeding, mothers are able to benefit from hormones that help them manage the stresses and fatigue of infant care. Breastfeeding mothers are more easily able to lose weight gained in pregnancy. They are able to avoid the hassles and time needed for the constant sterilization and formula preparation, and forward planning for any excursion that goes with formula feeding.

Breastfeeding itself, is enormously beneficial to infants' health and development. Mounting evidence of the health benefits include reduced likelihoods of obesity in child and adulthood, increased resistance to a range of infections, reduced likelihood of developing diabetes. There is growing evidence of the emotional and cognitive benefits of breastfeeding and the likely influence of the process and the nutrients on long term healthy neurobiology. Such benefits continue to accrue to infant feeding into the second year of life and more. WHO's revision of breastfeeding targets was conducted because of improved understanding of these benefits including the substantial nutritional benefits of breastfeeding for infants of 6 months or older, even after solid foods have been introduced. (see the Australian Breastfeeding Association's Breastfeeding Information at <http://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/bfinfo/general.html>). WHO does not recommend the cessation of breastfeeding at 6 months of age but its continuation in conjunction with the gradual introduction of solids.

The economic value of parenting

Given the value of this work, the AFA urges the commission to model an economic valuation of breastfeeding. Extrapolations from the market cost of formula feeding (formula, bottles, cleaning equipment and supplies), formula preparation time, including resources used in boiling and refrigeration could be used as a starting estimate. Additional value could then be factored in to account for reduced risks of a range of illnesses and health problems and health gains (for both mothers and babies), added value to reflect emotional and cognitive gains as well as efficiency gains.

The AFA believes that such work as well as other parenting work and activities and household maintenance ought to have an economic valuation that could appear in some way in national accounts.

An estimation of the value of parenting and family household management could start with a economic valuation of institutional child care provision. Research indicates that the normal standards of child care provision fall well below the quality of care provided by most healthy mothers who are able to focus on parenting and family management. The quality and consistency of the interactions in terms of psychological, emotional and cognitive benefits, are likely to be much higher in the home between a loving stable carer such as a mother and her children. Of course the work of parenting and family management continues through the evening, sometimes during the night and is taken up in the early morning again.

The longer term benefits accruing to society and the economy must also be factored into such evaluations. Children reared in the home with the care of loving parents are likely to have less behavioural, social and learning problems in school. They will be less likely to disrupt the learning of others in these contexts. They will be, eventually, more likely to succeed in education and to become productive workers. They will be more likely to form and sustain quality relationships and to parent well their own offspring. Such benefits therefore have enormous economic significance.

It is usually women who, because for a variety of reasons, are more willing to step away from paid work to engage in the alternative work world of care. Women engaged in family management, care and nurture of infants and children or even elderly parents are doing extremely valuable work. Such work has been valued from time to time by a number of economists. Manne discusses, in the Quarterly Essay, a range of estimates that started at around half the level of GDP at the time.

Stay at home parents also frequently help to support and assist the greater workforce participation of the other parent. Stay at home and part time working parents are also more likely to engage in community volunteer work through children's' kindy or school or other outlets.

Workforce participation and family policy must acknowledge and accommodate the preference patterns of all families.

The AFA believes that economic policy should not seek to depart from a policy of neutrality in regard to family decisions about matters relating to the care of infants or children unless there is clear and grave reasons for doing so.

Economic policy ought not impose penalties on parents who seek to care for their infants and young children themselves and make decisions about the participation or non-participation of the parents to achieve that end.

There are strong public policy grounds to support the design and implementation of

economic policy to acknowledge most women's preferred adaptive approach to fitting paid work around family needs. There is also strong public policy reasons for facilitating and accommodating without penalty those mothers who want to be child and family centered to the exclusion of paid work. It is these mothers who are most likely to have 3 or more children and also to combine their child centered lives with a range of community and volunteer work.

There are many parents, including mothers who would prefer to care for their children themselves and to fit part time work around the needs of their families as children become older and begin school. The work of Catherine Hakim has been very important in revealing preference patterns amongst mothers in regard to the work and family balance question. Manne discusses Hakim's work and relates that to discussion on appropriate public policy responses to mothers' work and family care aspirations.

Women's Preferences- Catherine Hakim's Research

Manne summarizes Hakim's research in her Quarterly Essay. Many women want to structure some continuity in career or workplace attachment or some work for extra income around the needs of their children. Catherine Hakim's research identified this group as being around 60-70% of women. She called these women adaptive women. Other women, about 10-30% of women, prefer to focus on home and family management and the care of their children to the exclusion of paid work, according to Hakim. Some of these women will seek to have above average numbers of children. .⁷ Many of these women may still find that there are times when they need good child care backup for sport, or appointments, for health reasons.

Usually amongst women, another small portion 10-30% are decidedly career focused or work centered.⁸ They may be highly skilled and motivated to keep working full time and will often have fewer or no children. These women need very high quality child care that provides as close a substitute as possible to the stability of the attachment bonds between them and their children.

Most women make their workforce participation decisions consciously as part of a team effort with their family and their spouse. Many couples agree that the stability and continuity of the father's workforce engagement provides needed security for family finances. In some cases, the woman's skills and experience enable her to be the higher earner and families may adjust their care and work arrangements accordingly.

Commission Inquiry should acknowledge workforce participation implications for children and teenagers as well as infants.

Biddulph, Cook and Manne all explore in detail the amazing and vital process of attachment and the kinds of experiences and circumstances in which it can be derailed. The risks of a range of short and long term harm to infants' psychological makeup are increased with disrupted attachment.

Infants and young children have been shown to be vulnerable to attachment disruption especially before the age of 2 but also to some degree until the age of 3. Biddulph and

⁷ Anne Manne in her Quarterly Essay, p. 35-37 summarises Hakim's research on preference patterns of mothers in regard to work and children across a range of modern societies. Manne explains how Hakim's findings tend to agree with other research conducted by Hakim and others in which preference patterns, difference and diversity have emerged as the key characteristics of women's work or life choices.

⁸ Manne in the Quarterly Essay p.36

others argue that ideal provision of resources, best suited to the needs of preschool children would constitute part time kindergarten programs for 3 and 4 year olds, and perhaps open kindergarten or play group programs for parents and infants.

The AFA notes that the Commission is only seeking to inquire into these matters in regard to the needs of infants in their first 2 years of life. The AFA believes that this limitation on the discussion is regrettable and that it implies that parents of children older than 2 do not require economic policy to facilitate their parenting needs. In particular, there is very good grounds to ensure, at the very least, that parents are not penalized for seeking to maintain parental care and nurture of their children until school entry together with participation in educational kindergarten programs.

Beyond school entry, there is good and growing evidence to support traditional beliefs about the importance of having parents available and present in the lives of school age children and teenagers. This could range from being home to supervise and monitor through to being available for companionship, conversation and discussion or other help. Most older children do not enjoy after school care. Many adults forget how tired children can be after 5 or so hours at school, with the intense social, emotional, physical and cognitive demands of an average day. It is good for children to be able to come home to a loving parent and their own home where they can relax, de-program and do some homework or share some family activities.

An Appendix is provided to summarize the challenges thrown up by the growing body of research on the needs of infants and young children and the harmful impacts of child care. A second appendix summarizes some of the research on the kind of parenting and parental availability that is being shown to be vitally important to young people's wellbeing.

Alternative policy considerations to ease women's (and sometimes men's) difficulties in balancing work and family

Women who fall into the adaptive group or the child centered group in Hakim's analysis face substantial economic and social penalties presently. Financial ramifications range from diminished superannuation through to lost earnings. Other wage penalties flow from inaccurate perceptions by employers or management of insufficient career or work commitment, inferior skill sets or lost career momentum.

Continued public, governmental and social disparagement of the value and importance of parenting and household management contributes to women's difficulties in re-engagement with the workforce and in contending with such negative perceptions

Women may value their professional and work lives highly and have strong commitment to pick up where they left off or to structure part time or flexible arrangements around the care of their children and families. Yet they can encounter unthinking resistance from employers and work colleagues. Fathers too who want to carve out more space for family involvement risk similar resistance and incomprehension.

Recognition and full accommodation of the real costs of bearing and raising children to adulthood ought to be addressed. After all, mothers who elect to have more children, face all the usual problems of lost earnings and workforce re-engagement or attachment issues but compounded. The additional costs of extra children eat further into family budgets, savings and superannuation.

Improved parenting payments could also provide scope for superannuation components.

With well designed and targeted assistance and a tighter labour market, many women may begin to find that it is easier to re-engage with the workforce.

Education campaigns on the skills and valuable experience mothers bring to the workplace would also help address obstacles. Such programs would also help older women and men to keep attached to the workforce.

The value of unpaid maternity leave

Unpaid maternity schemes are an excellent vehicle for helping women transition in and out of the workforce in accordance with their needs as mothers and their children's needs. Unpaid and generous Maternity leave helps women remain attached to the workforce with less pressure on them to return.

Such leave could at a minimum provide 12 months leave but would ideally be available until a woman's last child has entered school and many larger enterprises would be able to manage such a program. Smaller businesses could be enabled to offer a more limited scheme that required them to accommodate the woman if there was a vacancy and to assist in helping women to obtain employment elsewhere if they were not able to themselves. Small businesses might be given greater flexibility within the scheme, occasional exemptions and assistance from a small business advocacy or assistance body. At the very least, the small business leave grantor could be required, with the assistance of the advocacy or assistance body, to assist a leave grantee to find comparable or other wise suitable employment with another firm.

Such a scheme should not preclude limited part time work which might be helpful in assisting a woman maintain workplace attachment or because she finds it personally satisfying.

Unpaid leave can operate to help mothers feel secure about future workforce re-engagement. Such mothers are even able to enjoy their young children more because of the security of knowing they have a foot in the door when they want to go back to paid work. Some schemes, such as an old SA public school teachers scheme gave women the capacity to exit the workforce for the time it took until their youngest child entered school. Refresher and induction courses operated to ease the transition towards the end of the leave. This scheme accommodated the needs of children and families very well and also helped to encourage women back. It is probable that many women teachers are working in SA schools today because of this sensible, flexible and family and woman friendly scheme.

Overseas trends facilitating parental preferences

Universal parenting payments and child benefit operate as practical assistance to help parents manage the financial implications of prioritizing the needs of their children. Such schemes are seen in Scandinavia especially in Sweden and also increasingly in the UK. Parents are able to choose between the cost of a paid child care place or home care. Most parents increasingly elect to take child benefits and payments for parental care. Both Manne and Biddulph discuss these alternative schemes and the take up rate of payments for parental care. Changes in policy to facilitate choice have seen parents vote with their feet, abandoning institutional child care in favour of parental care at home in substantial numbers. Again, the figures match up with the picture painted by Hakim

and other researchers into ordinary families real preferences about care of children and workforce participation.

Such schemes stand in increasing contrast to the current Australian system where parent's child care expenditure will be heavily subsidized with a 50% fee rebate to a maximum of \$7500 per year on top of child care benefit if payable.

Pro child care policies in Australia not in best interests of children or families

Such subsidization has generally been unthinkable in regard to any other commercial/for profit economic activity since the beginnings of the micro-economic reforms of the 1990s.. The profits of companies such as ABC Learning have been very substantially boosted by such a policy.

The child care industry, particularly private operators like ABC Learning, engage in aggressive marketing of their service, making claims that are not supportable in the face of the body of research on child care and child development. Such claims are also not supportable in the face of growing anecdotal evidence of the very serious care shortcomings of such businesses. Typically such operators make misleading claims about the presence of kindergarten programs and other early learning programs offered in their centers. Anecdotal evidence reveals worrying indications that staff and operators are often deficient in their understanding of child development generally or in relation to particular children in their care. (Some anecdotal reports are available in confidence to the Commission if required)

Whilst indications are that many families seek to limit the use of child care and prefer family members to look after their children. Parents often state a belief that their young child needs some child care for socialization with other children. This, despite the reality that until the age of 3, children's needs for socialization are very much focused on family and attachment figures.

However, advertising and propaganda can help to change behavior. This is especially compounded when government policy is structured to encourage the use of child care and when even members of the government or child care advocacy academics support and echo those claims as well.

It may be worth considering too, that whilst messages devaluing the worth of stay at home parents continue to be received in the community, and often too because of significant mortgages, many mothers have opted for more work under the mistaken belief that others' care for their children is a close or equal substitute for their own. In fact sometimes mothers fail to understand the importance of their own "good enough" care and move towards acceptance of the notion that someone else, be it the family day carer or ABC Learning provide care that is superior to her own.

From the research it is clear that nearly all mothers' "good enough" care is exactly the right care for their children, especially those under 2, and that any substitute will have to be of a high quality indeed to ensure that the caring experience is healthy for the child. Biddulph, Manne and Cook explain this research.

Recent introduction of means testing for Family Tax benefit B and the Baby Bonus helps also to shift policy subtly away from universal recognition for the value of parenting and the needs of all children. Increasingly, parental care of young children is seen as an economic luxury that is discouraged because of workforce "needs".

Countries such as the UK have moved away from policies that were encouraging workforce participation over parental care of children. Previous targeted subsidies to

child care purchase have been augmented by child benefits that give parents real choice about opting for parental or other care arrangements. The UK Government has increasingly realized the very substantial evidence of the harms of early day care and the real and legitimate diversity of parental preferences about paid work and parental care. Increasingly, with much better government neutrality, parents are electing to care for their own children.

In Australia, childcare benefits could be converted in to parenting payment or child benefits payable to all families for each of their children. Parents love their own children and are building a community of life and love to last into their old age.

Such children will also be immensely important to the rest of society. They will one day pay taxes that help support the care and treatment of elderly people who chose not to or could not have their own children. Good parenting has immense positive ramifications for the future well being of society and the health and productivity of the labour force.

Hence there are excellent public policy grounds for providing at least neutrality for stay at home parent families.

Child care deficiencies

Child care industry claims that children will thrive in child care or at the very least will not be worse off than if they were home with mother. They imply that only professional carers can give children an appropriate start socially and academically.

However, in the light of the research on infant and child development and the impacts of child care, these claims can be seen as largely inaccurate. Child care has not been shown to be a perfectly satisfactory and equivalent substitute to mother care of other care by significant loving attachment figures in a child's life.

If we recognize the seriousness of infant needs to be cared for in the context of an attachment relationship, then it becomes imperative that child care be of a very high quality providing a care ratio of at the most 1:3 and preferably 1:1 for infants. If the very real needs of infants and young children are recognized then child care services would strive to provide well trained, mature carers whose employment was as stable as possible in order for attachment relationships to be maintained.

However research indicates the impacts of even high quality childcare on infants especially, but also children below the age of three, can be harmful and that the likelihood of harm increases in relation to the amount of time spent in care.

This research on child care and child development is discussed by Manne in both *Motherhood* and in her Quarterly Essay. Child Psychiatrist, Peter Cook was the first Australian author to write a critique of childcare and of the state of childcare research at the time. Cook drilled down into some of the faults of earlier research and some of the efforts to conceal or limit the impact of the earlier emerging findings of studies like the longitudinal NICHD study that had begun to indicate worrying elevations on problematic behaviours or symptoms in children who had spent a long time in care.

Jennifer Buckingham is less convinced than Biddulph, Manne or Cook but she nonetheless, in examining the state of the research on impacts of care on kids, arrives at the conclusion that caution is warranted and that Government policy should be at least neutral in regard to family choices to care for their children themselves.

In *Raising Babies - Should Under Threes Go To Nursery?*, Biddulph discusses the variety of studies in attachment theory, brain development, cortisol (a physiological

measure of stress), emotional development and behaviour.

Biddulph explains why he has changed his position on the benefits of child care as a result of these findings which show harmful effects on the under three age group's brain development and development of empathy and trust. Biddulph explains how the problematic impacts of childcare on infant and early childhood development are found even in very high quality institutional childcare (i.e. nursery or daycare) settings. Biddulph, Manne, Cook and Buckingham draws on the findings of a range of important studies including:

- NICHD (National Institute of Child Health and Development) NICHD (ed), *Childcare and Child Development*, Guildford Press, 2006 and
- The UK EPPE study, Kathy Sylva, Edward Melhuish, Pam Sammons and Iram Siraj-Blatchford, *Effective Provision of Pre-school Education*, Institute of Education, 2004, London

Biddulph has made available to Australian readers a list of references for a range of important studies on childcare impacts. This reference list is attached as appendix 1.

In addition Biddulph draws on hundreds of conversations with carers, directors, parents and other professionals as well as his own observations of a variety of child care facilities. He cites favourably the work of Australian retired child psychiatrist, Dr Peter Cook, and the recent book by Anne Manne, *Motherhood, How We Should Care for Our Children?* 2005; Allen and Unwin; Australia

Biddulph's book provides an excellent easily accessible guide to the growing body of recent research showing damaged social and psychological development in children who enter nursery "too much, too early, too long".

He argues that new brain research gives us a much clearer understanding of infant and early childhood neurobiological effects of secure and responsive attachment relationships between a child and their parent or other loving attachment figure. In this he echoes the important work of Anne Manne in discussing what happens between parent and infant in a loving relationship.

Manne in her Quarterly Essay, also discusses the substantial research on impacts of child care (p.49 -60 and especially at p.52-54). She also discusses the Perry Preschool study and the misrepresentation of its findings in recent years- especially in the constantly repeated and completely unsubstantiated claim that investment in childcare characterised as "early learning" before the age of 3 results in substantial yields, usually nominated as 7-fold over the long term (p.55 through to p. 60) In that set of pages, Manne also briefly discusses the way policy development in Australia has become divorced from evidence.

This material is highly relevant to the matters before the Inquiry Into Maternity, Paternity and Parenting Leave. **Biddulph and Manne make a strong case for proactive policy redirection so that the balance between work and family is viewed over the time frames relevant to infants, young children and their parents.**

We believe that families and children will be best served if their needs for strong, loving and constant attachment relationships are recognized in public policy settings.

Biddulph and Manne point to new policy shifts in the UK and some European countries that may better enable parents to carve out sufficient time from the span of their working life for caring for their own children. They are not calling for primary carers to be relegated to the "mummy track" but argue that it is important that we enable families to find real solutions that balance work and career aspirations with the needs of young

children to be cared for primarily by their parents over the life span of each family. Biddulph, Manne and Peter Cook, argue that policies that have the effect of encouraging more and more young children into care will have long-term and very significant detrimental impacts on our society and our economy.

The AFA wishes to emphasize, to this Inquiry, the importance of the growing body of important findings on the detrimental impact of childcare on infants and young children. Hence we would argue that parents who aspire to care for their young children in the context of close family ought to be strongly supported. As children grow older, parenting demands become less intensive and parents are able to find additional time for other activities including greater amounts of paid work.

It is vital that choice for families is maximized and that no family is pressured, by propaganda or financial constraints or penalties to adopt non-parental modes of care that they did not want all in the name of supporting industry or government priorities or a pro-child care and "get to work" ideology.

The Needs of Older Children and Adolescents

However we believe that it is important to emphasize that there is also growing social science evidence identifying clear links to healthy developmental outcomes of the active, involved presence of parents in the day to day lives of older children and adolescents. Whilst many parents and families gain great personal and financial benefits from parental participation in the paid workforce, most parents have indicated concerns about maintaining sufficient space in their day, week and year for the parenting responsibilities and family involvement they feel is necessary. Many families have expressed frustrations with the time pressures they feel impacting on their capacity to be there for their children.

In a range of studies it is becoming evident that school aged children and adolescents need involved responsive, authoritative parents who are engaged in active guidance, monitoring and support of their children and teenagers.

Studies have highlighted important links between a range of outcomes and the frequency of shared family dinners experienced by adolescents. Frequent experiences of shared dinners are associated with feelings of family connectedness, enhanced confidence in parental support and with low incidence of behavioural, psychological or emotional problems, substance abuse and sexual involvements.

Clear positive links have been shown between the amount of unsupervised time experienced by teenagers and a range of problematic outcomes such as substance abuse, lower educational attainment, antisocial behaviours and sexual involvements. Another study shows that at least some types of non-parental supervision, such as involvement in sport in which coaches are supervising, may not be helpful to the well being of children if parental and family involvement is minimal.

Responsive parental involvement is strongly related to improved educational and behavioural outcomes and emotional development in both childhood and adolescence.

Parental capacity and willingness to be available to help with problem solving, to be available for talking, listening, guidance and other forms of support has been shown to be linked to better outcomes.

Workforce participation policies, policy proposals and current family tax and transfers

The AFA supports improved generosity in the fiscal recognition of the value of parenting and family household management and in the value of children.

However it must be borne in mind that Australia's taxation and family payments system has gone quite some way to achieving this already. Of late it has been tinkered with in the name of reducing so-called middle class welfare.

The targeted subsidies and payments tied to child care service purchase has been an ongoing flaw in this system. The AFA has long argued that such monies, and they are very significant budgeted outlays, ought to be provided directly to families to use as they see fit. Many families may prefer to use this money to help fund a stay at home mum or dad as has been the case in the UK recently and also in countries such as Sweden where parental choice has been restored. Some might use the money to help pay grandma, a nanny or a formal child care provider. Presently the Government has committed to a substantial 50% industry subsidy up \$7500 known as the child care rebate.

The present family tax and payments system has recently been characterized by a number of economists and other commentators as welfare payments. This is despite the fact that the structure and admitted complexity of the system have worked very well to achieve strongly targeted recognition of children in family tax, income and outgoings. Nicholas Gruen cites Peter Whiteford's analysis which showed Australia to be a top OECD performer in efficient use of tax and transfers to produce a marked flattening in household budget sizes for families with children in low and middle income brackets. Economists such as Gruen have identified the success of this policy in minimizing disincentives for workforce participation especially in lower income households. As a result, Australia is a leader in achieving marked improvements in standard of living especially in lower income bracket households with children.⁹

The system rested on the assumption that it was appropriate and just that some redistribution of resources should occur from the childless to those with children in view of the long term social and economic benefits shared by the childless when others bear and raise children. The AFA agrees with this principle of horizontal equity. It is crucial that economic policies impacting on workforce, family formation and fertility issues recognize fully the value of children to society and to the economy and also the value of parenting and family work that contributes to the healthy and balanced development of young citizens.

Consideration should be given to the integration of improved acknowledgment and accommodation for the value of parenting and children within the current family tax and payments system. The AFA advocates this to the present inquiry and suggests an expanded parenting payment or allowance scheme ongoing whilst a family has young children, together with expanded child benefits. The AFA also believes that current heavy subsidization for the child care industry ought to be wound back into parenting payments and child benefits.

Whilst the Baby Bonus could be rolled into a parenting payment and child benefit, it has overall been a successful policy within the context of the overall family tax and transfer scheme. Evidence of abuse has only ever been limited with such cases being remediated with social worker attention and payment by installment.

⁹ Nicholas Gruen What's wrong with churning? Online Opinion 17 Feb 2006

The previous Government had acknowledged that the Baby Bonus was not needed by the very wealthy but cited the costliness of a means test that would have outweighed the benefits of withholding the bonus.

The AFA believes that the previous universality of the baby bonus was strongly symbolic in recognizing the contributions of mothers in bearing and raising children. The Bonus was given to the mother and represented a strong message of recognition and social appreciation. It also constituted a strong and even permission-giving symbol of the value of having another child. For many Australians, whose fertility has tended to fall short of their ideal family size, this symbolism was appreciated as an acknowledgement of their deeper aspirations.

It is intriguing to witness the calls for a non-means tested paid maternity leave policy that would always tend to favour higher income workers over lower income workers anyway. In the same way the child care rebate is non-means tested and will favour higher income earners and major profit seeking industry participants. Yet many who have called for or welcomed these have greeted the introduction of a means test for the Baby Bonus with cheers.

Large family supplements could be expanded. Many families believe that the purchase of a larger car presents significant obstacles to having more than 2 or 3 children. The need for larger housing and greater acknowledgement of many other expenses that accrue would help those families who, because of temperament and circumstance, have generously stepped up to the challenge and joys of the larger family.

Additional issues affecting work and family balance

Many families are stressed with the demands placed on them by the modern economy. Cars have become increasingly necessary as suburban sprawl leads to sparse distribution of services where many families live. But larger families or those contemplating the 3rd or 4th child find the cost of appropriate sized and reasonably safe cars daunting.

Travel times in Melbourne and Sydney eat up sizeable chunks of family time every week. A recent study found that up to 10% of parents spent more time (10 -15 hours weekly) commuting to and from work than they spent with their children. The researchers identified trends of increasing commuting times in major metropolitan centers and growing numbers of commuters especially in Melbourne and Sydney contending with the average losses of around 4 and a half hours every week. They found links between these longer commutes and poorer family, community and social engagement as well as self care. Outer suburban families seeking affordable housing are contending with some of the worst of these commuting times¹⁰.

Housing costs relative to family financial capacity have never been higher.

Increased workforce participation by both men and women, continuing long hours by married men especially and also many women, the highly geared financial situation of recent housing market entry households all add up to a situation in which many families do feel that they would like to have more down time. Many families desire more time for relaxation, more time to be with their kids, to interact with them or simply even to just keep an eye on them.

¹⁰ Michael Flood and Claire Barbato, Off to Work Commuting in Australia Discussion Paper Number 78 April 2005 The Australia Institute

The trend to dual income houses is welcomed by families in which mortgage stress is reasonable and where job flexibility and hours mean that parents are able to have time for family life and be there for their children or teens.

No-one wants to return to the days of the old family wage regime that relegated women to unequal wages and little opportunity to pursue professional interests or other work.

Most women do value paid work and career that can be structured satisfactorily around the work of family care. Most women also want policies that help them balance and manage the patterns of changing involvement in the paid workforce as they adjust to the early and intense needs of infants and young children through to the changing needs of children and family through their life. Many husbands are seeking to share domestic loads when possible. Provision for unpaid maternity leave, together with parenting or maternity payment, may help many women, and their families, manage those transitions with greater ease. Specific assistance programs for women going through transitions might also assist women to maintain their confidence and effectiveness in workforce re-engagements.

Traditionally, and in other cultures, women have for most of history been able to manage creative and other work in conjunction with their work in their families. It is only since the Industrial Revolution that women and men, have been required to separate their work for economic return physically from their family life, often with large geographical separations increasingly the norm.

A clearer valuation and higher status for the work of women, and men, as parents would greatly assist women's management of transitions. Many women have felt invisible as mothers, and in recent times many have felt judged as "bludgers" if they have elected to stay at home with infants and young children. A woman who has concentrated on her children from birth until school may be home for 5- 10 years. Approaching workforce re-entry is extremely daunting with significant concerns about lack of references or "recent work experience" as major obstacles. Some mothers feel that their only option is more education and a career shift. However, many women re-entering the workforce do in fact find that their life as mothers with small children has given them a range of very marketable skills. Many are surprised with how easily they can make the transition from home to paid work.

Unpaid maternity leave provisions could be made obligatory but flexible to reflect the very real constraints on employers, especially smaller businesses to manage leave of 1-2 years, together with requests for flexible work arrangements and part time work. Small business ought to be able to access assistance from a small business advocate body. At the very least, maternity leave issuing small business ought to be obliged to help their on-leave employee find comparable work to that which she performed before going on leave if the size or circumstances of the business make her return difficult to accommodate.

Replace the "eight hour day" with an sustainable family work hours benchmark

Given the research indicating the importance of the parental role and quality family life, the AFA believes that economic policy should prioritize the needs of families and children.

Long term policy goals might be formulated that could bench mark an optimal amount of hours of paid work that could be sustainable and considered appropriate for the support of a family with children and two parents , with another model for single parent households. Such modeling could factor in average household expenditures on necessities and some wants as well as average travel times for workforce participation,

social life, sport, rest. Times for family recreation, for physical fitness maintenance, leisurely meal preparation and household chores as well as family shopping, and socializing with extended family and friends. Sustainable working hours should factor the need for regular and meaningful contact and time with family members daily, weekly and throughout the year. Sustainability should also incorporate findings that reveal that reasonable predictability of hours and discouragement of antisocial hours (nights, weekends, evenings) are important if workforce participation is to be a positive factor in family wellbeing.¹¹

Greater generosity in leave allowances would greatly assist families to care for their members and themselves without additional stress. If children's and adolescents' needs were truly central to the construction of benchmarks for sustainable family workforce participation, there should be scope to consider increasing annual leave so as to better facilitate shared family holidays as well as parental presence and involvement with young people during school holidays. Children and teenagers genuinely need these times away from school and institutionalized "care" to relax, explore individual interests and to engage in shared family work and recreation..

Such a model would help families and policy makers get realistic bearings on what is healthy and sustainable for the ongoing material and non-material aspects of family and children's' wellbeing.

Economists must stop assuming that we can continue to increase workforce participation without paying a price in our families and with our children. Presently, housing market fundamentals have been set to a maximum and possibly unsustainable workforce participation of family households.

Such an approach to workforce policy is not novel. The historic achievement of the eight hour day can serve as a model for the reconceptualisation of an appropriate family household work quota or benchmark that could help to deliver financial and social sustainability to family life. The eight hour day achievement was built on a range of assumptions about the needs of families and working men. The family wage was a critical element in the eight hour model to deliver a level of frugal comfort to a family with children. The needs for sufficient rest and recreation were also strong elements of the model. Of course the recreational component would have often included assistance in the home or with the children or the completion of household jobs and maintenance as well as relaxation. This model assumed a hard working wife and mother whose prospects of hanging up her apron at the end of an eight hour stretch must have been very limited.

Today's families have many labour saving devices that help remove some of the drudgery and hours from the tasks of maintaining a home. Many of today's families also must spend more time in travel and shopping than previous generations. There is greater complexity in regard to household financial management. Many essential services have been privatized and companies have offloaded customer service costs onto households. Expectations as to children's sports participation tie up many family's Saturdays and increased homework requirements from schools eat into family time on weeknights and weekends.

Many families are experiencing increased demands on their time for supervision and guidance of the children because of declining ethical standards and child exploitation evident on the internet and in the heavy sexualizing marketing strategies of media and

¹¹Elizabeth Hill, Barbara Pocock et al Benchmarks Work and Family Policy Roundtable Election, <http://www.familypolicyroundtable.com.au/pdf/benchmarksFINAL.pdf> 2007

marketers. Most parents report a substantial sense of concern about allowing their children the freedoms they themselves enjoyed, largely without problems, as children.

Many working parents experience ongoing pressure to take work home or stay late contributing to Australia's dubious distinction of having workers who routinely clock up some of the longest working hours in the OECD.

An accurate understanding of the optimal hours of work that a family could sustain without compromising relationships, parenting, rest and recreation and healthy living, or desired fertility would serve as a reference point for all discussions on family, workforce and economic policy. Families with more children, or with very young children could have work deficits compensated with greater child benefits and parenting payments.

Economic policy could be referenced against this model so that housing or other market failures could be identified earlier and possibly addressed with more conviction (admittedly the housing market affordability crisis is caused by a range of factors, some more amenable to policy change than others)

A household workforce participation budget for economic planning

Perhaps we could arrive at a model that identified a workforce participation of around 55-hours a week as being appropriate for a family of 2 adults. A 55 hours budget could be made up of a 38 hour a week job and a 17 hour a week job or with some variation of part time positions or perhaps with one partner working that 55 hours per week. This participation hours benchmark could be reduced when parents were caring for infants and government policies such as maternity benefits could help minimize the financial impacts of reduced paid work hours in those early years. Single parent households would probably need to have significantly reduced workforce participation budgets to accommodate the reality that one parent is needed to do the day to day family work of two.

Policy neutrality as to how that 55 hours was shared between mother and father or how it may vary over the life span of the family with dad doing most of it when the children were young and a more equal split later. Perhaps Dad might decide to do the bulk of the household work while mum spent more time in paid work. The aim would be to construct economic policy around humane and evidence based understandings about the needs of family members and especially of children.

There are some families in which fathers and mothers are both highly motivated to arrive at more equal family and paid work arrangements. Sometimes mothers command higher salaries or securer jobs. Often mothers gain great satisfaction from their work and wish to continue if appropriate work and family balancing can be achieved.

Policy to lift workforce participation of mothers, on its own, would in many cases contribute to what are likely to be unsustainable pressures of families. Many fathers are already working long hours in a culture that seems to insist on extra hours to prove commitment to the job. Infants, children and adolescents are unlikely to benefit from such policies and may in many cases be affected adversely by increasingly harried, pre-occupied and absent parents.

Economic policies that rely on family households in which both parents participate at full time rates (and above) and with high productivity and intensity are inhuman. Family members need family time to foster relationships and a happy, healthy lifestyle. Stressed parents are compromised parents. Parental care and guidance is needed for

infants, children and adolescents. Indeed many are realising that teenagers often need more sensitive and careful attention and guidance than those in late childhood.

An Australian study found that many young people have strong preferences for the presence and availability of their parents. These young people are very aware of the way workplace stress and long hours can "spill over" into parent-child and family interactions. They appreciate the economic advantages of workforce participation but would seek to limit such participation rather than have it compromise family relationships, especially once reasonable financial stability or security has been achieved. These young people reported strongly missing fathers absent through long work hours and reported that their mothers presence, whilst appreciated, did not necessarily alleviate their desire for their father's presence.¹²

We submit that, in the light of all these findings and other studies, families further along the life span, with school age children and adolescents also need to at least maintain or even improve their capacity to give time to day-to-day interactions with their children. In addition we believe that it is crucial that an appropriate work family balance accommodate many weeks in the year for shared family holiday experiences.

An appropriate balance is one that makes possible family life that is generally happy, generally relaxed and fulfilling for all members. Over the life span of each family, this balance must accommodate the needs of infants, children and adolescents in such a way that their life chances are not compromised for lack of parental involvement.

Concluding Remarks

All society benefits, very greatly, from the parenting work and child bearing of parents. It is appropriate that those who are childless by choice or otherwise help to share the financial burdens of families with children. Children are not private consumption goods. They will grow up to make important contributions to the ongoing economic activity of the nation. They will help to keep institutions, services and professions running that will help to support the childless and the once fertile elderly. The presence of children in society helps to keep it vital, creative and mindful of its legacy to the future.

All the research points to the reality that families need more , not less time together and need a slower pace to facilitate the kinds of shared activities and conversations that make up so much of parenting. It is likely that unless these realities can be factored in to family and workforce policy, fertility rates are unlikely to lift to replacement level.

Long term solutions are solutions that craft a society in which the needs of children and families, not industries or special interest groups, indicate the appropriate shape of policy. Such long term strategies have the best chance of achieving replacement level fertility. Longer term strategies to facilitate quality family life and parenting will have enormous economic benefits for the quality of the future labour force.

Policy should recognize and give effect to the proper relationships between "the economy" and society and the family. Workforce policy should aim to facilitate access to work and economic activity by men and women in accordance with their needs to be empowered, satisfied and productive workers who work for the sustenance, physically, socially, culturally and spiritually, of themselves and their families. Workforce

¹² Barbara Pocock Jane Clarke, Can't Buy Me Love? Young Australians' views on parental work, time, guilt and their own consumption Discussion Paper Number 61 February 2004 The Australia Institute

participation policies geared to meet the specific economic aims of protecting employers profits, or government 's electoral chances or particular industries' growth prospects, with little regard for the needs of children and families would constitute an abuse of political power.

Child care services must be re-conceptualized as high quality support and back up for families rather than as an economically rationalizing industry aimed at achieving micro and macro economic efficiencies.

All policy concerning workforce participation and attachment must accommodate the needs of families and their infants and young children for care within the context of stable loving attachment relationships. Policy should be at least neutral as to parental choices about the use of child care and return to work.

Appendix 1 -Research on Childcare, Infancy and Early Childhood

References and Notes for Steve Biddulph,-Raising Babies Should Under Threes Go To Nursery 2006 -

• Introduction

1. Perhaps the first real warning sign was the switch in position by a previously strong supporter of daycare, Professor Jay Belsky, in his 1986 paper: Jay Belsky, 'Infant Daycare: a cause for concern?', Zero to Three, September 1986, pp 1–7

2. By 2003 this trickle had turned to a flood, with the release of NICHD's long term study results. For example.. NICHD (National Institute of Child Health and Development), 'Does amount of time spent in child care predict socioemotional adjustment during the transition to kindergarten?', Child Development, 2003, 74, 976–1005

3. Madeleine Bunting's book on the UK's extraordinarily long working hours, compared to other OECD countries., is probably the most important text in this whole debate since it paints a grim picture of a country manipulated and stressed by employers and government policies, so that family life is impaired and damaged, sometimes beyond repair.

M Bunting, Willing Slaves: How the Overwork Culture is Ruling Our Lives, HarperCollins, London, 2004

4. 'Although use of formal daycare is well established in Sweden, in practice its use is concentrated on children aged between three and seven years old.'

Pam Meadows, Women at Work in Britain and Sweden, National Institute of Economic and Social Research, London, 2000 'In Sweden, for example, it is unusual for children under eighteen months to be in public childcare.'

Irene Wolcott and Helen Glazer, Work and Family Life: achieving integration, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, 1995

5. NICHD study data has been released progressively since 1991, most recently in 2005. A good example would be the 2001 below, which reports 'the findings did not merely reflect the fact that the children who spent more time in care were simply more assertive ... they were also more disobedient and defiant and aggressive and destructive.'

NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 'Child care and children's peer interaction at 24 and 36 months', Child Development, 2001, 72 (5), 1478–1500.

6. The UK EPPE study, with an equally large-scale follow-up of children, found similar results.

Kathy Sylva, Edward Melhuish, Pam Sammons and Iram Siraj-Blatchford, Effective Provision of Pre-school Education, Institute of Education, 2004, London

7. AN Schore, 'Introduction and Effects of a Secure Attachment Relationship on Right Brain development, Affect Regulation, and Infant Mental Health', Infant Mental Health Journal, 22, 1–2, 2001

• Chapter 1 What nursery is like

1. Y Roberts, 'An adult approach to childcare', Guardian, 6 October, 2005

2. Fiona Steele, 'To Improve Nurseries, we must improve conditions for nursery nurses', Guardian, 14 August, 2004.

3. Rosemary Murphy was quoted in: M Bunting, 'Nursery Tales, Part Two', Guardian, 8 July, 2004

• **Chapter 2 Slammers and sliders**

1. Patricia Morgan, 'Who Needs Parents: The Effects of Childcare and Early Education on Children in Britain and the USA', Choice in Welfare Series No 31, Institute of Economic Affairs, 1996, London

2. LG Russek and GE Schwartz, 'Feelings of parental caring predict health status in midlife: a 35-year follow-up of the Harvard Mastery of Stress Study', Journal of Behavioural Medicine, vol 20, pp 1–13

3. Bunting, *ibid*

4. Hakim, Catherine, Work-Lifestyle Choices in the 21st Century: Preference Theory, Oxford University Press, 2000

• **Chapter 3 Does nursery school harm under-threes?**

1. Bowlby's own classic is Attachment and Loss (3 vols), Penguin Books, New York, 1971–81.

A great overall summary of the work of Bowlby and Winnicott, the pioneering British researchers into child psychiatry and attachment, is written by Bowlby's son, Richard: R Bowlby, Fifty Years of Attachment Theory: Recollections of Donald Winnicott and John Bowlby, Karnac Books, UK, 2004.

2. Jay Belsky and M Rovine, 'Non-maternal care in the first year of life and the security of infant-parent attachment', Child Development, 1988, 59, 157–67 Jay Belsky, 1986, *ibid*

3. NICHD (National Institute of Child Health and Development), 'Does amount of time spent in child care predict socioemotional adjustment during the transition to kindergarten?' Child Development, 2003, 74, 976–1005

NICHD Early Childcare Research Network, 'Child Care Effect Sizes', American Psychologist, November 2005

4. Clarke-Stewart, Alison, 'The "effects" of infant daycare reconsidered', Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 1988, 3 (3), 293–318.

5. A typical paper from among the dozens released using the NICHD data would be: NICHD Early Childcare Research Network, 'Early childcare and self control, compliance, and problem behaviour at 24 & 36 months', Child Development, 1998, 69, 1145–70

An accessible summary in book form of the entire long-term study was published in February 2006: It concluded "children in extended care – for more than 30 hours per week and starting very young in life – do show outcomes that are in a nonoptimal direction". It found that any beneficial effects of daycare were largely limited to older children, particularly from deprived home environments, and were relatively small in extent.

NICHD (ed), Childcare and Child Development, Guildford Press, 2006

6. The UK press carried extensive coverage of the negative findings in 2004, and noted their growing impact on government policies. The findings and the support they gained from childcare professionals in the UK such as Drs Melhuish and Leach successfully influenced government thinking on parental leave.

M Bunting, 'Fear on nursery care forces rethink', Guardian, 8 July, 2004 M Bunting, 'Nursery Tales', Guardian, 8 & 9 July, 2004

7. EPPE study, *ibid*

8. The Leach, Sylva and Stein study results were first released in a speech by Dr Leach to the National Childminding Association. Reported with comments in: Yvonne Roberts, 'Official: Babies do best with mother', Observer, 2 October, 2005

9. Alison Clarke Stewart, *Daycare – The Developing Child*, Fontana, Glasgow, 1982

10. Kay Margetts, 'Responsive caregiving, reducing stress in infant toddler care', *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 2005, 32, 2, 77–84

11. Cited in Anne Manne's powerful book on the daycare debate. Manne also gives insights into the politics of the NICHD study and the internal wrangles between the team, which likely meant that, if anything, its cautions were underplayed in its reports.

A Manne, *Motherhood: How should we care for our children? Moving beyond the Mother Wars*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 2005

12. M Bunting, 'Nursery Tales', *ibid*

13. Australian academic Sharne Rolfe is among the new wave of childcare professionals who acknowledge how important attachment is. Rolfe has worked hard to bring attachment theory insights to the training of childcare staff. Her excellent book attempts, rather optimistically, to find how it can be incorporated into daycare practice.

Sharne Rolfe, *Rethinking Attachment for Early Childhood Practice*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 2004

14. Interviewed in M Bunting, 'Nursery Tales', *ibid*

15. Harlow's powerful and haunting studies in the 1950s shaped modern thinking about parenthood. At the time he carried them out, it was still believed that affection weakened children and that physical contact of any kind should be kept to a minimum! With Renee Spitz, Anna Freud and, later, Benjamin Spock, he made it respectable for parents in the modern world to cuddle their children.

Harry Harlow, 'Love in Infant Monkeys', *Scientific American*, 200, June 1959, 68, and at <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~adoption/archive/HarlowLIM.htm>

• **Chapter 4 Your baby's growing brain**

1. AN Schore, *Affect Regulation and the Origin of the Self: the neurobiology of emotional development*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Hove, UK, 1994

Schore himself spoke of the 'robust finding of elevated levels of aggression in children using centre care' and that 'such disturbing observations must be attended to very seriously'.

2. AN Schore, *Affect Regulation and Disorders of the Self*, Norton, 2003

3. AN Schore, *Affect Regulation and Repair of the Self*, Norton, 2003

[Readers should note that the term 'affect' is used by scientists to denote 'emotions'. Showing warm emotions to another person is therefore 'affection'.]

4. The best popular coverage of Schore's work is Sue Gerhardt's beautiful book, *Why Love Matters: how affection shapes a baby's brain*, Brunner Routledge, Hove, 2004
Some other books on brain development for general readership include:

Stanley Greenspan, *Building Healthy Minds*, Perseus, New York, 1999

Greenspan, America's most prominent neuroscientist, is notable for persuading parenting guru T Berry Brazelton to change his previously positive stance on daycare; together they published a book on this:

TB Brazelton and S Greenspan, *The Irreducible Needs of Children: What every child must have to grow, learn and flourish*, Da Capo Press, New York, 2001

Lise Eliot, *What's Going on in There?* Penguin, London, 1999

Eliot makes a powerful argument for knowing about brain development – 'Whether we realise it or not, almost every decision a parent makes boils down to a matter of our child's brain development, whether to have a glass of wine during pregnancy, whether to use drugs during childbirth, how long to breastfeed, how soon to return to work, whether to treat every ear infection, whether to enrol a child in a nursery, what kind of discipline to use, how much TV they should watch, and on and on.'

A and R Barnet, *The Youngest Minds*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1998

Please note that I am not suggesting that any parent go out and read all these books. The central message of them all is that you would be better off spending this time visiting the beach or a park with your children!

5. Elinor Ames, Recommendations from the final report, 'The Development of Romanian Orphanage Children Adopted to Canada', 1997, cited in L Hanlon (ed), *International Adoption, Challenges and Opportunities*, 1999

• **Chapter 5 How babies teach us to parent**

1. Psychiatrist Peter Cook believes daycare to be the greatest threat to our future mental health. In this erudite book he also dissects much of the current defence of daycare by US and Australian academia.

P Cook, *Early Childcare: Infants and Nations at Risk*, News Weekly Books, Melbourne, 1996

• **Chapter 6 Babies and emotional intelligence**

1. D Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*, Bantam, UK, 2005

2. S Rolfe, B Nyland, and R Morda, 'Quality in Infant Care, observation on joint attention', *Australian Research in Early Childhood Education*, 2002, 9 (1), 86

This study reported that 'half the attempts at connection by the infants resulted in failure, interactions were fleeting, characterised by only one turn.'

Trudy Marshall, assistant director for daycare for a London borough, reported, after intensive observational studies, on what must have been some unusually grim London nurseries: 'the attention of adults flitted from child to child and rarely lasted more than thirty seconds with a single one ... To comfort a distressed child did not appear to play any part in the repertoire of adults in their daily care of children ... Signals of children's needs were missed, as were levels of distress and tiredness.'

T Marshall, cited in Buxton, *Ending the Mother War*, Pan Books, London, 1999

• **Chapter 7 Why nursery doesn't work for babies**

1. Rolfe, *ibid*

2. Doro Marden, 'Is recent research in the field of infant development and neuroscience relevant to the practice of psychotherapy?', unpublished MA dissertation, University of Middlesex

3. S Watamura and B Donzella, J Alwin and M Gunnar, 'Morning to afternoon increases in cortisol concentrations for infants and toddlers at a childcare centre, age differences and behavioural correlates', *Child Development*, 2003, 74 (4), 1006–20

4. R Lamb and L Ahnert, pre-publication release cited in L Ward, *Guardian*, 19 September, 2005

• **Chapter 8 Couples at the coalface**

1. I am deeply indebted to the couples interviewed for this chapter, and also those whose stories were not used; all contributed to the thinking and conviction behind this book. Names and some details have been altered for privacy.

• **Chapter 9 Our world of greed and speed**

1. Professor Fiona Stanley, Australian of the Year for 2003, spent her year in that role highlighting the epidemic of mental health problems sweeping Western nations among the teenage and child-age groups. A good summary was given in her ABC interviews on 6 October and 19 May, 2003, transcript at <http://www.abc.net.au/enoughrope/stories/s961001.htm>

2. The UK situation is summed up well in this article:

J Carvel and R Smithers, 'Reforms pledged on mental health of children', *Guardian*, 14 September, 2004

3. The article itself was based on a major review of national studies by S Collishaw, B Maughan, R Goodman and A Pickles in 'Time Trends in Adolescent Mental Health', *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, vol 45, 8, 1350–62, November 2004.

4. This comprehensive report, commissioned by the detergent multinational, predicted on current trends 35 per cent of all Britons would be living alone by 2020. The largest growing group was people who had been in 'failed relationships'. Unilever, Report on the UK Family, 2005.

5. For example see: D Elkind, *The Hurried Child: growing up too fast too soon*, Da Capo Press, New York, 2001

6. Ralph Waldo Emerson put it this way: 'In dealing with my child, my Latin and my Greek, my accomplishments and my money stead me nothing; but as much soul as I have avails.'

• **Chapter 10 A world where love can thrive**

1. 'The number of Swedish babies in childcare fell from 3000 to 200 when paid parental leave was introduced.'

Helen Wilkinson, *Time Out: the cost costs and benefits of paid parental leave*, Demos, London, 1997

2. Gerhardt, *ibid*

3. P Leach, *Children First*, Penguin, London, 1994

Appendix 2 - LINKS BETWEEN PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND AVAILABILITY AND OPTIMAL OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS-SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND REFERENCES.

A growing body of social science research is beginning to shed light on the importance of parental involvement in the lives of children and adolescents. The types of involvements investigated include being present and available for conversation and discussion through to parental monitoring and supervision. An emerging picture of optimal parenting styles highlights the successful parent as one who practices authoritative, rather than authoritarian or permissive, parenting styles. Such parents are able to use firm but flexible boundary setting together with sensitivity and responsiveness and openness to communication, needs and feelings.

Successful parents are able to find time for shared meals and other shared activities with their children. They are able and willing to be aware of who their children's friends are, where their children are or what they are doing. They are able and willing to engage in conversation and discussion of issues affecting young people in developmentally appropriate and sensitive ways. They are able to share activities with their children or teenagers including play and sport or cooking, games or household chores.

Parents capacity to be physically, emotionally and cognitively present to their children is emerging as a key factor in the wellbeing and future prospects of young people.

The following summaries and references were obtained from www.familyfacts.org (except the last which was obtained from the Howard Centre as specified below)

On the importance of frequent shared family dinners for optimal behavioural, developmental, educational and health outcomes:

And links between frequencies of shared family dinners and feelings of connectedness.

"The Importance of Family Dinners" The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University CASA Survey Report: The Importance of Family Dinners Vol. NA, Number . September, 2003. Page(s) 3, 7.

."Correlations Between Family Meals and Psychosocial Well-being Among Adolescents," Marla E. Eisenberg et al ,Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine 158 [2004]: 792-796.)

Links between amounts of time spent unsupervised and adverse outcomes - behavioural, psychological, educational and other :

"Home Alone: Supervision After School and Child Behavior" Aizer, Anna , Journal of Public Economics Vol. 88, Number 9-10. August, 2004. Page(s) 1835-1848.

- Compared with peers who are unsupervised after school, children who are supervised by an adult after school are less likely to engage in risky or anti-social

behaviors such as skipping school, using alcohol or drugs, stealing, or hurting someone. This is true even when controlling for other factors such as parents' permissive attitudes.

"When and Where Do Youths Have Sex? The Potential Role of Adult Supervision"

Cohen, Deborah A. Farley, Thomas A., Taylor, Stephanie N.; Martin, David H.; and Schuster, Mark A. Pediatrics Vol. 110, Number 6. December , 2002. Page(s) NA

Sample or Data Description :1065 boys and 969 girls from six urban public high schools

- There was a strong relationship between unsupervised time and youths' sexual activity. The greater the amount of unsupervised time, the greater the percentage of youths engaging in intercourse ever and within the previous three months.

Also found-

- Increased rates of tobacco use, alcohol consumption, and marijuana use were each correlated with the hours youths were left alone. Boys who were left unsupervised were especially at risk of substance abuse.

Relationship between authoritative parenting styles, parental monitoring, involvement, responsiveness, support and adolescent behaviors:

"Risk and Resiliency Factors Among Adolescents Who Experience Marital Transitions" Rodgers, Kathleen B. Rose, Hilary A . Journal of Marriage and Family Vol. 64, Number N/A. November, 2002. Page(s) 1024-1037.

Sample or Data Description: 2,011 adolescents in 7th-, 9th-, and 11th-grade.

- Low levels of parental monitoring were predictive of more frequent use of tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana, carrying a weapon, physical fighting, and more frequent sexual intercourse among teens. Low parental monitoring was especially related to these risk behaviors among adolescents in families with a parent who remarried after a divorce. Low levels of parental support and monitoring were also predictive of reported feelings of depression, suicidal thoughts, and low self-esteem among teens.

"The Effects of Parenting on the Development of Adolescent Alcohol Misuse: A Six-Wave Latent Growth Model" Barnes, Grace M. Reifman, Alan S., Farrell, Michael P.; and Dintcheff, Barbara A . Journal of Marriage and the Family Vol. 62, Number 1. February , 2000. Page(s) 175-186.

Sample or Data Description: Six wave longitudinal study representative sample of 506 adolescents who were interviewed in all six years.

- Parental support is indirectly related to a decreased likelihood of adolescent alcohol use. Parental support, which includes praise, encouragement, and physical affection, is associated with an increase in parental monitoring. In turn, higher levels of parental monitoring are associated with a decreased likelihood of adolescent alcohol use.

"Unpacking Authoritative Parenting: Reassessing a Multidimensional Construct"

Gray, Marjory R. Steinberg, Laurence Journal of Marriage and the Family Vol. 61, Number 3. August, 1999. Page(s) 574-587.

Sample or Data Description: 8,700 14- to 18-year-olds.

- The degree to which adolescents' excel academically, form a healthy identity, have confidence, avoid drug use, and have lower symptoms of anxiety and depression, had a much stronger association with parents being loving, responsive, and involved with the adolescent and encourage the adolescent to express individuality in the family than with parents controlling their adolescents through strict monitoring and limit setting.

"Adolescents' Well-Being as a Function of Perceived Interparental Consistency"

Fletcher, Anne C. Steinberg, Laurence, and Sellers, Elizabeth B. Journal of Marriage and the Family Vol. 61, Number . August, 1999. Page(s) 599-610.

Sample or Data Description : Nine high schools in Wisconsin and northern California were surveyed. Sample consisted of 1,117 students during Year 1 and 514 of these participants during Year 2.

- Youth who described their parents as being highly responsive (e.g., were willing to help with their problems) were more likely to have higher levels of academic achievement and psychosocial development and lower levels of deviant behavior and psychological problems than peers who did not rate their parents as being highly responsive.

"Who Are They With and What Are They Doing? Delinquent Behavior, Substance Use, and Early Adolescents' After-School Time"

Flannery, Daniel J. Williams, Laura L., and Vazsonyi, Alexandar T; American Journal of Orthopsychiatry Vol. 69, Number 2. April, 1999. Page(s) 247-253.

Sample or Data Description: 1,170 sixth and seventh graders from a medium-sized school district in the Southwest.

- "Reports of low parental monitoring [of children] were significantly associated with higher levels of aggressive and Delinquent behavior, substance use, and vulnerability to peer pressure."

"Socialization in the Family of Origin and Male Dating Violence: A Prospective Study"

Simons, Ronald, L. Lin, Kuei-Hsiu, and Gordon, Leslie C; . Journal of Marriage and Family Vol. 60, Number 2. , 1998. Page(s) 467-478.

Sample or Data Description: 113 seventh-grade students (boys) from North Central Iowa.

- Low support and involvement by parents as well as corporal punishment were associated with adolescent delinquency and drug use, which in turn, predicted involvement in dating violence.

"Characteristics of Eighth-Grade Students Who Initiate Self-Care in Elementary and Junior High School"

Kathleen M. Dwyer ; Pediatrics Vol. 86, Number . , 1990.

Page(s) 448-454.

Sample or Data Description : eighth-grade students in 169 classrooms in Los Angeles County (from 35 public schools) and 67 classrooms in San Diego County (from 12 public schools) 1987

- . Compared with peers who were not left alone, students who were in self-care for 11 hours or more each week were 1.5 to 2 times as likely to take risks, experience family conflict, to become angry or stressed, to feel fear of being left alone, and to feel that parents were absent too much. They were also more likely to use cigarettes, alcohol, and marijuana, and more likely to attend parties and consider their friends as a primary influence in their lives.

"Substance Use Among Eighth-Grade Students Who Take Care of Themselves After School" Richardson, Jean L; . Pediatrics Vol. 84, Number . , 1989. Page(s) 556-565.

Sample or Data Description : eighth-grade students

- . Eighth-grade students who took care of themselves for 11 or more hours a week were at twice the risk of substance use (alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana) as were those who did not take care of themselves at all. This was true for both males and females, even when controlling for students' social status, ethnic background, extracurricular activities, and perceived stress.

"Parenting Styles and Substance Use During Childhood and Adolescence" Coombs, Robert H. Landsverk, John; Journal of Marriage and the Family Vol. 50, Number 2. May, 1988. Page(s) 473-482.

Sample or Data Description : 443 youngsters in California aged 9-17

- In families with strict fathers, only 18 percent of the children studied used alcohol and drugs, compared to 27 percent of the families where fathers were less strict and 40 percent in families with permissive fathers. Frequent adolescent drug use occurred in 35 percent of mother-dominant homes but in only 23 percent in father-dominated homes. Fathers of children who did not use drugs or alcohol were more actively involved in family matters, played a more influential role in family decisions, were held in higher esteem and were emulated by their youngsters. Youths who did not use drugs or alcohol typically felt closer to their fathers, spent more time discussing personal problems with them, and depended on them for advice and guidance.

"Home Predictors of Young Adolescents' School Behavior and Academic Performance" Forehand, Rex Long, Nicholas, Brody, Gene H.; and Fauber, Robert Child Development Vol. 57, Number . , 1986. Page(s) 1528-1533.

Sample or Data Description: 46 mother-father-young adolescent triads.

- Mother's depression was associated with an increase in the likelihood of her children's behavioral problems in school. Parental involvement was associated with a decrease in problem behavior at school, and fathers' involvement was also linked positively with adolescents' grade point average.

Differences between outcomes for non-parental adult involvement or supervision

and parental involvement and supervision

Reported at http://www.worldcongress.org/WCFUpdate/Archive07/wcf_update_733.htm
by the Howard Centre For Family in its Family Research Abstract of the Week:

"The Effects of Adolescent Activities on Delinquency: A Differential Involvement Approach, Siu Kwong Wong," Journal of Youth and Adolescence 34 [2005]: 321-333.)

- Time spent with parents and family was found to be positively related to high teenage self esteem while time spent in sport was, surprisingly, found to be related positively with low self esteem, as reported by the Howard Centre with the following comment:

Some Americans suppose that adolescents can learn their most important life lessons not at home from parents, but rather in sports from coaches. But teens who spend a lot of time under the guidance of coaches rather than parents may be headed for trouble. The risks of replacing parents with coaches stand out clearly in a study recently published in the Journal of Youth and Adolescence by Professor Siu Kwong Wong of Brandon University.

By analyzing survey data for 578 public school students enrolled in grades 5 through 12, Wong has established that sports and family life have remarkably disparate effects on adolescents' lives. "Family-related activities," Wong finds, "strengthen the social bond and reduce delinquent association and delinquency." In marked contrast, "the amount of time playing sports increases delinquency and violent offenses in particular" ($p < 0.05$).

Why does "doing things with the family" reduce adolescent delinquency while participating in sports actually fosters such delinquency? "Activities comprised of primarily peer participants," Wong reasons, "compared to those involving family members or conventional adults, tend to have less-positive effects on the social bond."

This new study should foster skepticism about proposals for reducing teen criminality by launching new tax-funded sports programs. It appears that no one wins when teens spend more time learning how to pass a ball to a teammate than they do in learning how to plant a garden with parents and siblings._ The Howard Centre