

Robert Fitzgerald
Locked Bag 2
Collins Street East
Melbourne Vic 8003

6 October 2008

Re: Maternity Leave research.

Dear Mr Fitzgerald,

Over the last couple of weeks we have been presented with the ABC programs Life at 1(2&3), and the debut of the new series Future Makers tonight featured Dr Fiona Stanley: Risking our Kids. Insight on SBS tonight featured their program on Child Care. I investigated your role in the Commission on Maternity and Parental leave and am writing in response to your presence and input on the Insight program.

As an ex-youth worker, welfare worker and teacher, and now a grandma, I applaud the level of awareness communicated through these programs and the research currently being undertaken in earnest. They reveal the wisdom of a longer term visionary approach to social problems erupting all over the western world.

My suggestion is a practical one which can be incorporated NOW:
Simply, that **parenting training** becomes a natural (mandatory) part of the Baby Bonus and Family Benefit support schemes now being offered within Australian Society. These could be offered when pregnant women present to health care and/or hospitals during pregnancy.

The Marriage Act now requires that couples presenting for marriage be guided towards pre-marital counselling services. This has established a precedent and model on which our Federal policies can build. Provide parenting training as part of the Government support packages for people beginning (and continuing) families. Please.

Trainers are plentiful amongst the Baby Boomers - many who are now semi retired. Loads of ex-nurses, teachers, trainers, psychologists, child-care workers, community and social workers are now grandparents. These people can be recruited to assist in these parenting programs on community levels for modest and welcome remuneration. At these training workshops presented in local communities, referrals to resources available and general information re care of both parents and children can be adapted to local needs with a common content linking all across Australia. There are many benefits that may arise from such programs.

A win:win all round?

Thank you to all involved.

Sincerely,

Hilary Allen
Victoria