

Submission

It is with interest that I read in the Saturday Age (March 29th 2014) about the current Productivity Commission Inquiry into Childcare. I particularly support the ideas of both:

- allowing some form of tax deduction (or benefit in other form) to families employing a nanny and
- allowing nannies from Asian countries to work in Australia.

I base this support from my own personal experience of raising two sons from very young on my own and having to meet the challenges of after school care, school holiday care. I operated my own consulting business in Perth and frequently experienced the dilemma of trying to juggle client requirements for meetings early in the day or late in the day around the times that childcare services operated.

We have extended family living in Singapore and I have also worked and lived in Singapore and am well aware of the great benefits of having live-in maids / nannies. Having a live in nanny takes a lot of stress out of child time management. The children also enjoy being in their own home whilst cared for. The nannies / maids, predominantly from the Philippines with whom I have become acquainted and been treated as members of the family accompanying us on family outings, meals etc. Although they work long hours in Singapore they are mostly much appreciated and when they return to the Philippines for an annual break, or to live, they are always given extra clothing, money etc.

As my sons now try to balance work and childcare with their own young families we often discuss how much they would like a "Singapore maid" and they are most envious of their cousins there who have the benefit of maids / nannies for their own families. As it is I spend a lot of my time now picking children up from school or day care and looking after them until the parents return from work often not until 7 p.m. +. One of my sons has in fact just recently engaged a French live-in au pair thru an agency to assist cover these hours. At present though au pairs can only stay about 6 months or so in a family given the visas they have and a young child does not have the assurance of stability from the same carer. Whereas someone able to stay 2 or 4 years on a visa would be far preferable.

Employing nannies from third world countries is a great way to assist developing nations as the monies go directly to the nationals involved. Although I am well aware that there are instances of agencies exploiting the maids and in our own Singaporean family there has been a recent instance of a maid from the Philippines returning on holiday and to recoup the bond monies owing to her from the agency in the Philippines as she had completed her contract only finding out that the agency had "gone bust" and that she could not recoup her bond. Hence there does need to be very tight rigour over the agencies involved in maid / nanny placements.

People hiring maids/ nannies also need to be educated in how to treat them. Singapore has introduced a system whereby people hiring maids / nannies for the first time need to attend sessions in how to manage and treat the maids / nannies. It would seem a very worthwhile process for Australia to adopt if it allows the introduction of nannies from third world countries.