

Policy Recommendation: Change to the Child Care Subsidy

Current Situation in Australia:

Subject to means testing and other variables the Australian Government pays a subsidy for the care of child/ren if they are in a Child Care Centre (CCC) or receiving care through a Registered Family Day Care Scheme (FDACS).

Recommended Change:

That Australia adopt a scheme similar to that currently in place in the Netherlands whereby the subsidy is paid direct to the mother who can then determine the care she wishes for her child.

Advantages:

1. The mother who best knows the needs of her child can choose the care best suited to that child.
2. If it is determined that the child will thrive better in his or her own home environment then a nanny can be employed to provide that care. Health statistics show that at home care will protect the child from picking up many of the virus and colds and flues he or she would be exposed to in a CCC or FDACS.
3. A grand parent or other extended family member can care for the child. This caregiver is more likely to be someone who loves the child and will always be a part of the child's life and so lifelong meaningful relationships are established.
4. A grand parent living on a pension can look after the child and not be financially disadvantaged. Transport and food costs are taken care of by the subsidy. I personally know of grandparents who willingly choose to provide care for their grandchildren but find it financially difficult after paying for the extra petrol associated with pick up and delivery of children and cost of food and outings for the child.
5. Parents would feel better asking a family member to care for their child or children if they were able to pass onto that family member the care subsidy they are receiving from the Government to have their child in a CCC or FDACS.
6. The Basic trust is not compromised when the care is provided by a close family member or trusted long term family friend. Research tells us that the development of basic trust in the first two years of a child's life will impact on a person's ability to engage in trusting and healthy adult relationships. Research also informs that basic trust is established in the first two years of a child's life and requires that a trusting relationship is established between the child and his or her caregiver. A child can cope with a small number of such caregivers but not the larger number found in Child Care Centres. In the Centre my 11month old grandson goes to, two staff members start the morning shift but are replaced by relief staff during their rostered breaks. Then in the afternoon the first two workers leave and another two workers come on duty, thus a minimum of 6 different caregivers each day. How can this be the best care for an under two year old?