

Submission to Productivity Commission

I am the mother of a two-year old girl. I work fulltime and my husband is a fulltime stay-at-home father. We have maintained this arrangement since our daughter was 10.5 months old when I went back to work fulltime after my husband was made redundant. After extensive research into the advantages and disadvantages of daycare, we decided against using daycare at all for our daughter. Instead she receives ample outdoor play time, attends a weekly playgroup and a cultural group, and most importantly receives one-on-one care from a parent who loves her.

My concern with the debate over childcare is this: Nowhere is the damage caused to children by longterm daycare and any form of daycare for babies documented or discussed. It is assumed that daycare has no ill effects on the child, when extensive local and international research shows that any form of daycare (or care which is not one-on-one) has lifelong, irreversible emotional and intellectual consequences for the child, and indeed for our society as a whole.

The idea that we can put our economy's needs over the future needs of our society is disingenuous and misguided.

My husband and I made a conscious decision not to put our child in daycare solely because of the damage it causes to children. Fortunately we are able to survive – just – on one salary with minimal state subsidies (around \$100 a week).

If the Productivity Commission is serious about increasing the longterm productivity of this country, and not looking for a short-term politically acceptable solution, the prospect of subsidising stay-at-home parents should be investigated. If the government paid \$7500 a year to stay-at-home parents instead of propping up a bloated childcare industry, the longterm benefits to the economy and to society would more than compensate for the financial input.

The idea that a parent – and generally all we hear about is mum – is not productive by staying at home is insulting and ill-informed. It is time we looked closely at the new cultural norm of outsourcing parenting for our children – beyond subsidies and waiting lists – and considered the longterm repercussions of these actions. Even the short term consequences of daycare make the Productivity Commission's assumptions untenable. Every child that goes into daycare gets sick. Then their parent gets sick and has to take time off work. Then the rest of the family gets sick and takes time off work and school. These unplanned absences – please examine the uptake of personal carers leave in the first year of daycare – have a significant impact on the economy. Any uptake in financial profitability of parents returning to the workforce must be balanced against these results to ensure an accurate picture is obtained of the true cost of daycare to our society.

I ask the Productivity Commission to firstly familiarise themselves with the excellent research* conducted by Australian child psychologists on the effects of daycare on infants then look deep into their hearts before promoting this Victorian system as the way forward for our country.

**Parenting for a Peaceful World, By Robin Grille; Raising Babies, By Steve Biddulph.*