

This submission offers comment on the workings of Parenting Payment in a future Australian Tax/transfer system.

It is unjust and unacceptable that Government presently requires that in order to receive Parenting Payment partnered Principal Carer Parents, whose youngest child has turned six, MUST seek 15 hours of work per week. Though the work sought need only be between the hours of 9am to 3pm -school hours- the requirement extends across school holidays, sick days and pupil free days. Of course the legal duty to provide for the care of children during these periods remains - but Government effectively demands that it be outsourced. Government only demands that a child's medical and educational care be outsourced when it is deemed to be for the good of the child. However, for the poor and only the poor, Government is demanding that the primary care of the child be outsourced for the good of the Economy. As a result, with no fanfare and little Media notice, Government has foreclosed on the option of stay at home parenting for poor families.

The care provided by Government Approved Childcare Providers - the setting that the children of the poor are directed to - is care that is well within the competency of principal carer parents. This type of care is at the core of parenting and it is a quite natural expectation of both the child and the principal carer parent that, if competent to provide it and desirous of providing it, the principal carer parent will provide it. This is especially so for families motivated by conscience to provide constant personal engagement in the life of their child in the area of primary care. These families refuse to have their vocational role re-assigned to someone else - they refuse to have their children re-assigned. Further, they refuse to have their children entered into the social experiment that is the wide spread use of institutional care for children; they desire to protect their children from the emotional damage that may accrue with the breaking of the integrity of the family unit. That this breaking of the integrity of the family unit is engineered by Government is particularly disturbing.

The Government's response to principal carer parents who make their children their highest priority is their complete exclusion from transfers aimed at contributing to the primary care of children. This is a devastating attack on family rights, on conscience, and on the well being of Australian children. While 'capacity constraints' may be somewhat of a crisis, recent Governments should be reminded that even when Australia faced total war and imminent invasion, the children of the poor were not rounded up into childcare.

Labour Force Participation Requirements attached to Parenting Payment should be optional during school holidays, sick days and pupil free days until the youngest child turn 16.

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