

04/02/2009

Committee Secretary
Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Re: Inquiry into the Provision of Childcare

I wish to bring to the attention of the Inquiry Committee some important results from the new *Good Childhood Report* released by The Children's Society on 3rd February 2009. *The Good Childhood Inquiry* (www.goodchildhood.org.uk) based on over three years of research, including consultations with 30,000 children and parents and headed by 11 relevant experts. This inquiry is the UK's first independent national inquiry into the conditions that lead to a good childhood. The Children's Society has 125 years of experience of working with socially disadvantaged children in the UK.

Among the conclusions of the report was that children develop better when they are looked after by their mother rather than left regularly in childcare at a young age. Polls in the UK showed that 60% of young people think parents do not spend enough time with their young children (based on surveys of 11,000 young people aged 14 to 16 years). I believe this view is shared by young Australians (I am 20-years-old myself); this shows an awareness among the upcoming generation of parents that consideration of the parent-child bond is of paramount importance in the deliberation of childcare possibilities. The government should keep this in mind and provide parents with a real viable option of the parents caring for their child at home.

A possible system to facilitate this could be for the Government to provide a Child-Care Allowance to all parents with children of suitable age. The parents then have the option to either use that money to pay for childcare at a childcare facility or to use it to offset the cost of either parent staying home to look after the child. [Such a system would obviously make it arbitrarily unfair for tax payers to subsidise only 'institutional' childcare facilities; taxpayers could instead subsidise such a Child-care allowance scheme as outlined above.]

Sincerely,

Miss Siobhan Reeves