

060307 Supplementary Submission Work & Family - Bishop Inquiry

Submission No 180

Supp to 163

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7<sup>th</sup> March 2006

**The Secretary,**  
**Standing Committee on Family and Human Services**  
**Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600**  
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Dear Sir or Madam,

**Re Inquiry: Balancing Work and Family**

**If it is not hopelessly too late, I wish to offer a Submission Supplementary to that which I sent on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2005, for consideration by the STANDING COMMITTEE ON FAMILY AND HUMAN SERVICES, Inquiry into Balancing Work and Family.**

## **Supplementary Submission by Dr Peter S. Cook**

to the

### **STANDING COMMITTEE ON FAMILY AND HUMAN SERVICES**

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#### **Terms of Reference: Balancing Work and Family**

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"The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Human Services has reviewed the 2003-2004 Annual Report of the Department of Family and Community Services and resolved to conduct an inquiry. The Committee shall inquire into and report on how the Australian Government can better help families balance their work and family responsibilities. The Committee is particularly interested in:

- 1 the financial, career and social disincentives to starting families;**
- 2 making it easier for parents who so wish to return to the paid workforce; and**
- 3 the impact of taxation and other matters on families in the choices they make in balancing work and family life."**

Adopted by the Committee 9 February 2005

## **Supplementary Submission**

A number of particularly relevant things have happened since my submission of 26<sup>th</sup> October 2005 under item 3 above: - "impact of ... other matters on families and the choices they make in balancing work and family life."

## 1 Clamour for more ever more childcare

Wide publicity is given to demands for ever more money - not for mothers but for subsidizing more childcare, without any reference to the age of the child concerned, or breastfeeding, or increasing evidence of the hazards involved, or the long-term national interest. For babies and infants this clamour is ignorant, misguided ideologically-driven folly, which ignores all the evidence against placing babies and very young children from normal families in institutional long daycare, and what is best for very young children. It is only in very unhealthy situations that this is in the best interests of infants or their mothers.

All this prompted me to realize that I omitted to include my 1999 article in the *Medical Journal of Australia* "Rethinking the Early Child Care Agenda", which summarises five reasons why the current childcare agenda is misconceived, and calls for a rethink on the massive subsidizing of this childcare industry juggernaut. The reference is:-

Cook PS. Rethinking the early child care agenda. *Medical Journal of Australia* 1999, 170: 29-31.

<http://www.mja.com.au/public/issues/ian4/cook/cook.html>

The paper is appended below and now forms Appendix 9 of my submission.

In it I said :-

"I argue here that for children up to 2 ½ to 3 years of age, and particularly during infancy, this agenda of subsidised, universally available, high quality professional childcare is misconceived, and a rethink is needed. Evidence suggests that this agenda:

- Is unrealisable (e.g. high quality care for all is not affordable);
- Overlooks accumulating evidence of risks of undesirable outcomes sometimes associated with early childcare;
- Is contrary to much expert opinion about what is likely to be best for infants;
- Is contrary to the desire of many working mothers to care for their own young children if they could afford it; and
- Relies partly on the now discredited ideology of cultural determinism. "

These five reasons were summarized in the opening of the sequel article in *The Australian* which I did send in my submission, in section 4 on *What should be done?*

Home truths absent in early childcare debate: We need parent-friendly options. Opinion page. *The Australian* March 24, 1999. Sydney.

[http://www.naturalchild.org/peter\\_cook/home\\_truths.html](http://www.naturalchild.org/peter_cook/home_truths.html)

## 2 In Australia and other countries, most mothers prefer to be helped to care for their own children in the years before they are ready to go to school.

Large surveys by Evans & Kelly (2001, 2002) from 24 countries show that the overwhelming majority (71%) of mothers think mothers should not work when their children are of pre-school age (in Australia 71%). A minority (27% in

**Australia) think part-time employment with young children is good, while a tiny minority favour full-time work. So such a policy should certainly be electorally acceptable. The experience of such reform initiated by Dr Brundtland, as Minister of Health and the Prime Minister, shows that, given support, most mothers prefer to continue breastfeeding for much of the first year (see below).**

Evans, M.D.R., & Kelley J. Employment for mothers of pre-school children: evidence from Australia and 23 other nations, *People and Place*, 2001, 9(3):28-40.

Evans, M.D.R., & Kelley J., Changes in public attitudes to maternal employment: Australia 1984-2001, *People and Place*, 2002, 10(1):42-57.

### **3 Naval officer cadets impaired by Obesity and Asthma**

On 1st Dec 2005, our Navy reported that they cannot recruit enough naval officer cadets without lowering standards to accept young men and women with asthma or obesity! This underlines the national importance of the evidence in the authoritative reports which I summarized in my Appendix 1 article:-

**Equal opportunity for babies: breastfeeding as a strategic priority  
*Byronchild* Sept 2005.**

**[http://www.naturalchild.org/peter\\_cook/equal\\_opportunity.html](http://www.naturalchild.org/peter_cook/equal_opportunity.html)**

These show that the risks of obesity and asthma (as well as reduced IQ) are all reduced by breastfeeding as recommended. In other words these risks are increased by artificial feeding.

### **4 Don't-mention-the-"B"-word.**

Since there appears to be a "Don't-mention-the-'B'-word" taboo on breastfeeding (!), I have slightly amended the emphasis, as follows :

**As an essential step in primary prevention in the health of our nation, I am urging you to do whatever you can to:-**

- i) Advocate the policies and steps required to provide optimal nutrition to promote the healthy development of all babies, as recommended by the National Health and Medical Research Council, and supported by the WHO and other expert authorities. This includes raising infant breastfeeding rates and durations in Australia to those of world best practice,**
- ii) Ensure that whatever financial assistance is given to families of young children (whether by childcare subsidies or other benefits) is so distributed that all mothers who wish to breastfeed their babies to these recommendations are financially able to do so and given the necessary supports.**

Some information about how these goals were achieved in Norway, through Dr Gro Brundtland as Health Minister and Prime Minister, before she became Director of the WHO, is in Appendix 11.

## 5 Misinformation about the nature of human nature: cultural determinism, equality feminism (rather than maternal feminism), and childcare.

The 5<sup>th</sup> point cited above from my *MJA* article (see below) – that the childcare agenda relies partly on the now discredited ideology of cultural determinism - is of far-reaching importance. A major article in *The Australian* of January 25, 2006 presented an *ad hominem* attack on the late Prof Derek Freeman, seeming to discredit his evidence that Margaret Mead had been hoaxed. It is not generally known that, not until after Freeman's final hardback was published, did he go through his papers to unearth the clinching evidence obscurely published by Mead herself in 1931. He presented the details in a peer-reviewed Journal, and also in supplementary pages at the end of his later paperback edition of *The Fateful Hoaxing of Margaret Mead*. He regarded this paperback as the definitive book. There is no reasonable doubt that Mead was indeed so hoaxed. She believed what she wanted to believe. According to her husband, when she was presented with chapter and verse evidence that a contention of hers was not true, she would say: "Well if it isn't, it ought to be."

Mead and her colleagues then used this misinformation to promulgate their ideology of cultural determinism and cultural relativism until it became the dominant ideology in relevant social sciences. Freeman argued that this ideology is directly traceable to Margaret Mead, Boas and Benedict, and their crusade to rid their discipline of what they saw as the dangers of social Darwinism.

I published a summary/critique of Freeman's book, which he endorsed for accuracy. (A shortened form which I did not edit is on the internet.) It is appended as Appendix 12: The fateful Hoaxing of Margaret Mead – a Summary-Review.

Now, academic University of New England sociologist David Theile has argued at length in *Quadrant* in October 2005, that sociology is not scientific, has no agreed body of facts, and is cut off from any basis in the proper relevant science, which is biology.

This misinformation about the nature of human nature which came to pervade the social sciences, was the basis and background of Simone de Beauvoir's (*The Second Sex* 1952) view that men/women differences are wholly "cultural constructed", and her quote to Betty Friedan (author of *The Feminine Mystique* 1963).

In *Motherhood: How should we care or our children*, Anne Manne (2005, p.33) records: "In a conversation with Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan said she "believed women should have the choice to stay home to raise their children if that is what they wish to do". De Beauvoir answered: "**No, we don't believe that any woman should have this choice. No woman should be authorized to stay at**

home to raise her children. Society should be totally different. Women should not have that choice, precisely because if there is such a choice, too many women will make that one."

Manne comments: "Feminism is not about giving women freedom to choose; it is about taking away choices of which feminists disapprove. And one choice they disapprove is participation in a conventional family."

Simone de Beauvoir, author of *The Second Sex* (1952) and Betty Freidan, author of *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) are two leading icons of equality feminism.

Betty Friedan, in *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), set women on paths to careers and equality, avoiding motherhood - only to be reproached later by disillusioned followers who pointed out that, unlike them, she already had a husband and children when she urged this life pattern. But her recantations in *The Second Stage* (1981) were ignored, as equality feminists continued to implement her earlier prescriptions. Yet she wrote: "The equality we fought for isn't liveable, isn't workable, isn't comfortable in the terms that structured our battle."

Germaine Greer, too, had a belated and poignant rethink. Having inspired a generation of women not to want motherhood, she now "mourns for her unborn babies", and confessed "I still have pregnancy dreams, waiting with vast joy and confidence for something that will never happen." In *The Whole Woman* she says: "In *The Female Eunuch* I argued that motherhood should not be treated as a substitute career: now I would argue that motherhood should be regarded as a genuine career option...". She says the "immense rewardingness of children is the best kept secret in the western world".

These ideological errors about mothering (leading to serious distortions in the work/family balance) have profoundly affected for the worse the lives of millions of mothers and their infants in Australia and elsewhere.

See Appendix 10 - my article *Feminism, childcare and family mental health: Have women been misled by equality feminism?*

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