

From: Selina Lyons [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 4 April 2005 11:34 AM
To: Committee, FHS (REPS)
Subject: [REDACTED] - Disincentives of starting a family

Dear Committee,

I am a 36 year old female engineer and manager with no children.

If my partner and I were to have children, then because of our hard work in obtaining an education and forging good careers, we would not qualify for any government financial incentives whatsoever.

There is also the big question of who goes back to work. Is it the one who earns the most (not necessarily the male)? Is it the one with the most to lose by not being in the workforce? As a manager I cannot go back to my pre-child role unless I am full time. This is part of the parental leave of the organisation that I work for. They will find a role for me, but cannot guarantee the same salary, conditions or career prospects afterward. Luckily (if luck has anything to do with it) I can fall back on my technical qualifications in this regard, however it will still be a backward step unless I am prepared to go back to work three months after having a baby, full time.

I am saddened to see professional colleagues of mine with children taking drastically underpaid and under-utilised roles in order to gain the flexibility of stable, part-time work. Surely they are now not worth less just because they have children? But that in essence is the male dominated, job market we are in. Why go back to work at all to be undervalued, underpaid, and made feel grateful that you have a job at all, as well as having to pay the full brunt of the childcare bill?

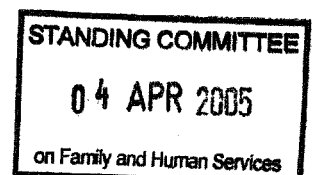
There is also the long waiting lists for local childcare you will need to stress about, as well as getting out of work on time to pick them up. Then what of the school holidays in the years to come?

So do I go down this irreversible track and have children and become like my friends? Without knowing the joys of motherhood in advance, the "after child life" that I can see in regard to career (firstly) and financial security (secondly) does not appear rosy, and certainly does not balance the chequebook. This is the dilemma I face in the current environment when deciding to start a family before my time runs out.

What would change my views on this? In an ideal world I would like one of us not to work at all and to always be there with the children as we were brought up. But this wouldn't be fair on the other even if we could afford to do it. So my solution would be to both work part-time (say 3 days a week) at the same pay rate we currently enjoy. This would mean minimal child care (one day a week) with equal parenting/home time. Making the childcare payments a tax deduction and childcare move available would encourage us to work more - say 4 days a week each or a 5/3 arrangement. Of course this still does not tackle the "different role because you are part time" business.

Later on in school years we could both go back to work full time with after school care (having nurtured our careers along in the early years), but will need to buy back leave from the employer so that we could spend the holidays with the children (a reduction in pay again). A radical change such as having a supervised "after school room" at your place of employment would also help in relieving the stress (both time and money) on parents.

So in summary the main issues from my perspective are:



1. Fulfilling part-time work with no drop in pay rate or career opportunities;
2. Tax deductible childcare;
3. Ability to increase annual leave entitlements;
4. Easier access to childcare (more places); and
5. At work after school care.

Please note that none of these involve one off government handouts.

Regards,

Selina Lyons

, Tasmania