

The Council of the Shire of Walgett



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**Parliament of Australia
House of Representatives
Standing Committee of Family and Human Services**

**Submission to Balancing Work and Family
(From a Rural and Remote Aspect)**

Attention: Dr. Louise Mendel
Senior Research Officer- Committee House

Thank you for accepting this late submission.

Financial, career and social disincentives to starting families

- Rural families are often asset rich but cash poor
- Consumerism is rife – possessions/assets/lifestyle v children and families
- General breakdown of the family unit
- Mobility of people causes families to be isolated units with no extended family support
- Decline in government departments and institutions such as banks leave very little opportunity for maternity leave
- Many smaller businesses operate with low staffing therefore parental leave is often difficult to access and maternity leave is unpopular
- Shortage or non existence of child care facilities
- Shortage of professionally trained child care workers
- Difficulty attracting quality childcare workers due to very low wages
- Lack of incentives to attract professionally trained workers to childcare industry
- Cost of housing and living expenses/lifestyle appear to be high: children can be seen as an added expense
- Position of 'Mother' no longer seen as worthy in society.
- Children not valued in society

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Making it easier for parents who wish to return to work

- Link 0-4 childcare with the Education Department to increase childcare workers' training opportunities and incentives (similar to the incentives teachers and police receive when they transfer to rural and remote locations)
- Increase childcare facilities for 0-4, especially Long Day Care, Family Daycare and flexible Centre Based Care
- Increase OOSH type facilities and funding for all school aged children
- Increase all types of 0-4 childcare training opportunities in rural and remote locations
- Increase child care workers wages (cleaners currently receive more per hour)
- Many little pre-schools are community run – the parents 'driving' them are often involved in all the other child related activities in their area. There is an acknowledged shortage of volunteers in most communities now.
- Stand alone pre-schools and child care facilities especially need appropriately qualified staff to ensure they perform adequately and meet the approved standards
- Funding agreements and grants for current pre-schools are often very outdated – they need to be brought up to to-day's level and forward planning included

Taxation and other matters on families in the choices they make.

- Migrate the baby bonus to establish ongoing government support and better taxation benefits/systems to allow families to hire nannies or use childcare facilities
- Split taxation for single income or if one partner is a part-time worker

Attracting Families/Workers to Rural and Remote Locations in Australia

- Ensure that the varying forms of childcare is available wherever there is an identified need – no available childcare often means the professional people decide not to move there
- Ensure that education is of a high standard – the same standards should apply throughout Australia
- Make it mandatory that the State Governments improve the overall quality of education and behaviour standards in High Schools. Some rural areas often appear to have lower standards which then flows through into their communities with antisocial behaviour, no employment skills and the general breakdown of traditional cultural and family values
 (Too many families with High School aged children, including people of aboriginal backgrounds, leave rural and remote areas or send their children to boarding school for High School).
- Assist employers to continue the employment of young people until they have finished their trade/diplomas/degrees.
- Encourage decentralisation for populations and industry to re-locate to rural and remote regions
- Offer real incentives and tax breaks for private industry and people living in rural and remote locations

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- Offer a rebate or tax reduction on the cost of fuel for private businesses and everyday workers living in rural and remote locations
- People should be encouraged to move away from the overpopulated coastal regions and the now underperforming infrastructure to rural areas where existing infrastructure could be utilised (also the cost of housing is much cheaper)
- This would increase social diversification and social interaction (Professional people e.g. G.P.'s, Dentists, Vets., can feel isolated due to them often being the only one in the community)

Please contact me if you have any further inquiries.

Thanking you



Gai Richardson
Community Liaison Officer
28th June, 2005.