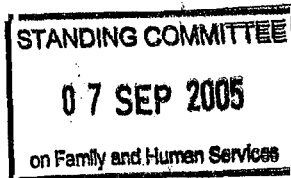


MC

The Hon. Bronwyn Bishop  
Family and Human Services Committee  
Parliament House  
Canberra  
ACT 2600



Dear Ms Bishop

I understand you are currently reviewing childcare options in your role on the Family and Human Services Committee, and I would be very grateful if you would spare a minute to read my letter.

If your government is so determined to get more women (i.e. mothers) back into the workforce, the single most important issue is childcare.

I am the mother of three children of pre-school age. This year I was ecstatic to secure a part time job in a fantastic company – it is a great feeling to be using my skills and contributing to society (and finally being paid for it). With such young children my only childcare option was to hire a nanny – this was actually cheaper than putting all 3 children into long daycare.

It seems your childcare policy totally discriminates against nannies and the families that use them. You seem to fall for the general view that if you can afford a nanny you must be really well off. This is absolutely not the case with many families I know. For many, getting a place in day care (either a long day care centre or family day care) is just impossible – it's nothing to do with affordability, there just are not enough places available. A nanny offers a secure, loving option, and an excellent back up for the inevitable sick days with young children.

I don't see why families that use nannies should not be able to benefit from all the rebates that are offered to other forms of childcare. The amount we receive back under the "registered carer" category is pathetic. By offering so little support to families who use nannies, many families just pay their nannies cash, so it costs them less. That just encourages a black market – surely your government wants workers declaring their income and paying their tax.

My husband and I work hard. Now that I work, we don't qualify for family tax benefit Part B (a ridiculous policy anyway that discourages women to go back to work, the exact opposite of what your government supposedly wants) and we only just miss out on Part A and all those benefits. I'm not expecting government support, I've never had it in the past, but if you are serious about

helping families, and about supporting a work-life balance, then please explore the child care issue seriously.

I guess what I am asking is that you give long and hard consideration as to how the tax system can help families with their child care costs. Why can you not consider making childcare (AND THAT INCLUDES NANNIES) tax deductible? Can't you see that meaningful support like that will enable an army of qualified, enthusiastic and capable women to return to the workforce? Rebates here and there are never going to work. Fixing up the childcare issue with bold policy decisions is the only way you are really going to get this sector of the community fully contributing to society in the way they would like to.

I wish you well on your Committee and am very interested to hear how it progresses.

I hope you will take my comments into consideration.

Regards

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Edwina MacDonald'.

Edwina MacDonald

(NSW)