

Child care main barrier to women in work [AU] ^[1]

Author: Irvine, Jessica

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AVAILABILITY

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EXCERPTS

Almost a quarter of a million women want more work but are not available or looking for it because they are caring for children, official statistics show.

A lack of suitable child care was blamed by the majority of women, 130,400, while the remainder of mothers did less work by choice to care for their children, an annual survey by the Bureau of Statistics has found.

While it is estimated that Labor's \$31 billion tax policy will bring an extra 65,000 people into work, the survey suggests fixing problems with child care could induce double that number to work.

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The bureau's survey of barriers to work found child rearing was by far the main reason women who wanted to work held back from greater participation.

A small number of men (12,700) said they were not working because of child-care responsibilities, but the bureau warned that the numbers were so small they should be "used with caution".

Studying or returning to study was a greater barrier to men's desire to work more.

The most commonly cited problem with child care was that it was too expensive (32 per cent), followed by a lack of availability (30 per cent) and children being to young or too old for the type of care available (20 per cent).

The Treasurer, Wayne Swan, has promised to address problems with child care as part of a push to encourage more people to work and relieve pressure on inflation.

"The report underscores the importance of our plans to boost labour force participation, particularly through child care and skills initiatives," Mr Swan said. "We've got a suite of policies designed to encourage people to contribute their skills and energy to an economy that needs them."

Labor has promised to lift the Child Care Tax Rebate from 30 to 50 per cent, establish 260 new long day care centres, spend \$77 million training child-care workers and set tougher standards for child-care providers.

The survey came as a Commonwealth Ombudsman's report found serious faults with the administration of the previous government's more punitive efforts to get people back to work.

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