

Childcare: New ideas for parents and kids ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Noor Shah is planning to take get back into the workforce and has done "a lot of homework" in regards to researching the care options available.

"I'm a first time mum and I'm just new to the whole system of day care ... and I don't have grandparents here."

Ms Shah has even started learning to drive in case her son's gets accepted into a centre further away from her home.

She is keen to return to the workforce, even though the income earned would be going straight to childcare.

"Because I have done my qualification and I want to go back into the workforce and be a productive member."

"At the same time I love my kid, I want to spend time with him, you don't want to rely totally on the government ... because it's a blow on your self esteem as well. So in fact I want to go back into a career and I want to pursue what, you know, that fulfills my self actualisation thing or whatever it is."

Despite this, Ms Shah knows it's going to be a juggling act between negotiating the part-time hours offered by her company around the days available at the day care centre.

"I don't want to sound too pushy to my employer ... I want to have something that works out for me and what's best for my employer as well."

Newcastle mother-of-three and paramedic Emily Huntriss is also in a similar boat.

While currently on maternity leave, she is working two shifts a week which are rostered around her husband's work as a fireman.

"My husband works day shifts, ten hour day shifts, 14 hour night shifts and I do 12 hours shifts."

She says flexibility and affordability is a big issue as there is no childcare centre that is open during the hours she needs.

"Long day care, family day care around our area is not flexible for us. It's not an option really for us to go to work because our needs for day care are different each week."

"I might need Monday, Tuesday, one week, I might need five days the week after, I might need nothing, I might need weekends ... I think I might be like a minority though where my need for day care changes day-to-day, week to week, month to month."

Eva Antonova and her husband have also rearranged their work schedule because they couldn't get the after school care for her daughter Maya who started kindergarten this year.

"At the moment she's started school and it's an absolute nightmare. They have to be at school quarter past 9 and we have to pick them up at 3 o'clock ... there is no after school care available in our area."

"It is a struggle so again, with my husband we rely on each other. We don't have family and he's doing the drop offs in the morning so he's late for work. This means that he stays late and I start very early work."

Ms Antonova says the waiting list for after school care is about two years and while her employer has so far accomodated her request to work outside the core business hours, she still feels "guilty".

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the need for child care services is set to increase as the number of children aged 0-12 years is expected to rise to half a million by 2020.

What solutions are being proposed to meet the demand?

Liz Graham was looking to get back to work last June and was sharing a child-minding service with a friend when her idea turned into a space where other parents can rent a desk with complimentary childcare.

Ms Graham calls her business Bubs and Boardrooms a "labour of love" which was "borne out of desperation".

"We don't, we don't fall under the childcare or long day care service facilities, even though we try and operate as closely to it as possible."

"So the child minding's free, the parents rent the desk and therefore, if you're a small business owner or you work from home, you consult, basically if you have an ABN it becomes a 100 percent tax deduction because it's an office space with free child-minding and that's how we've operated it," Ms Graham says.

Mark Woodland runs a centre based in Melbourne that is opened 15 hours six days a week.

"Our attitude is we are, heaven forbid, we provide a service to parents and everyone seems shocked when they hear it but all we're doing is literally providing a service that parents wants."

Another parent Sean Collins created a mobile app that lets parents see real time updates of what vacancies are available on the days that their child is not booked in.

"I was aware that at least 60 to 80 percent of kids don't show up a day, but whether that's because the parent hasn't told the director they're not coming, or the director just simply doesn't have the time. It just sort of led to the obvious point there needs to be for a parent to be aware of what days they are enrolled and what days are available."

Region: Australia and New Zealand ^[2]

Tags: work life balance ^[3]

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