

Why childcare is still secret women's business ^[1]

Author: Le Marquand, Sarrah

Source: The Daily Telegraph

Format: Article

Publication Date: 19 Jun 2016

AVAILABILITY

Read online ^[2]

EXCERPTS

It was the lavish mid-election campaign announcement that should have won votes, but served only to remind the electorate that issues aimed at working parents remain very much “secret women's business”.

While unveiling a \$3 billion childcare package, Opposition Leader Bill Shorten declared that “men in Australia rely on women in Australia to do the childcare and to organise the childcare” — remarks that promptly generated a flurry of unflattering headlines.

Today show host Lisa Wilkinson echoed the frustration of many when she criticised the Labor leader for “entrenching a stereotype of women as second class citizens”.

So why do senior politicians and policymakers still presume that childcare in modern Australia is primarily a women's issue? According to Dr Elizabeth Hill, senior lecturer in political economy at The University of Sydney and co-convenor of The Australian Work and Family Policy Roundtable, it's because the facts bear them out.

“On average Australian mothers perform more than twice as many hours of childcare as fathers,” Dr Hill tells RendezView. “So Bill Shorten is correct when he says that ‘men in Australia rely on women in Australia to do the childcare’. They do!”

Data also shows that 46 per cent of female employees in Australia work part time — an inequity that is a direct result of the inadequacies in the current childcare system.

“The unequal division of responsibility for childcare has a detrimental impact on the types of employment Australian women are able to access,” says Dr Hill. “This makes childcare policy a critical issue for women.”

As with childcare, the polarising debate over paid parental leave (PPL) in recent years has been framed in highly gendered terms despite there being workplace and productivity targeted policies that apply to both men and women.

“Business has much to gain in terms of retention of skilled staff and productivity gains when female employees remain engaged in the workforce,” agrees Dr Hill. “It is important that the design of our PPL and ECEC (early childhood education and care) system allows for a smooth transition between being at home caring for children and accessing ECEC services on the return to work.

“PPL and ECEC policy are important gender equality issues that support equality in the workplace. They are essential building blocks for women's economic security and well-being. And they are critical policy measures for a decent society that supports families with young children.”

-reprinted from The Daily Telegraph

Region: Australia and New Zealand ^[3]

Tags: equality ^[4]

women's work ^[5]

gender equality ^[6]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/16/06/why-childcare-still-secret-women%E2%80%99s-business>

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/16/06/why-childcare-still-secret-women%E2%80%99s-business> ^[2]

<https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/rendezview/why-childcare-is-still-secret-womens-business/news-story/7b93b3116ae2d2210471b7b7e84d4380> ^[3]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/region/australia-and-new-zealand> ^[4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/equality> ^[5]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/womens-work> ^[6] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/gender-equality>