

29 January 2016

Committee Secretary
Senate Education and Employment Committees
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Senate Education and Employment Committee

*Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Jobs for Families Child Care Package) Bill 2015
Inquiry into Child Care.*

Who we are

The National Council of Single Mothers and their Children Incorporated (NCSMC) is an organisation dedicated to single mothers. The Council has become a platform whereby both the community and the government can communicate; it has led the way in obtaining a range of beneficial outcomes; has actively sought to reduce systemic prejudice; continually challenges existing norms, and over many years has achieved improved opportunities and outcomes for single mother families.

One of our greatest strengths is our expertise and commitment in working with and for, the advancement of women and children impacted by poverty, violence, exclusion and gender inequality.

Key points

The National Council of Single Mothers and the Children Inc welcomes the national focus upon child care. We also support the connection made between women's capacity to participate in the labor workforce and acknowledgment of structural and societal barriers such as the access to affordable child care.

However, we want to impress upon the Committee the need to appreciate that access to child care has value that goes beyond supporting a parent to participate in paid work. We seek that the committee take into consideration the benefit for the child and in particular vulnerable children.

1. *A New Child Care Program* should be underpinned with *universal access for all children* and that this should occur and be independent of the parent's hours of work and or a prescribed activity in order to access affordable care. Child Care is an important element in early childhood education and is part of a child's wellbeing. It can 'bridge the gap' between disadvantage and its access should be encouraged rather than limited.

National Council for Single Mothers and their Children Inc.

Eliminate and respond to violence, hardship and inequality for single mothers and their children

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2. Sole parenting arrives with additional demands and often with reduced informal support options, tight financial constraints and access to extended family members. *A New Child Care Program* would review and ensure that families who have an increased level of need for formal care be accommodated.
3. *A New Child Care Program* needs to be creative in how it can respond to 'on call work' and unknown work patterns. It is devastating to refuse an 'on call shift' due to a lack of child care and then be known as an 'unreliable employee'.
4. The process of work preparation can include job search activities, voluntary work and vocational preparation. This needs to be considered in the design.
5. Sole parent's circumstances may include safety concerns and we seek that child care providers form a solid understanding and responding to family and domestic violence.
6. Women reported the value and benefit of the 'JET Scheme' and that a *New Child Care Program* could replicate the positives from this scheme.
7. Irrespective of the funding/rebates and/or assistance that may arrive from *A New Child Care Program* it is important that there are some boundaries which prevents significant out of pocket cost increases as per the statement below;

'My Jet subsidised childcare went from \$2.10per day to \$22 per day in approximately 3 1/2 years. How can we be expected to sustain such increases'?

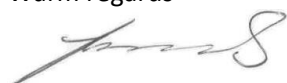
The Nanny Pilot

NCSMC has a keen interest in the Nanny Pilot and promoted the trial through to our members and broader networks. It was encouraging that the Department of Social Services communicated directly with NCSMC and ensured that the information was available in a range of mediums including social media which enable timely and board promotion.

NCSMC would like our partnership with the government to extend beyond the promotion of information and for it to include engagement in the design and review of trials and programs that are important to single mother families. Our immediate first reach now extends to 100,000 single mother families. This 'electronic footprint' places us in a position to gain and provide valuable information and learnings to initiatives such as the *New Child Care Program* and trust that the Committee makes a recommendation for a process of review with diverse stakeholders including NCSMC.

If you wish to seek additional information or clarification please do not hesitate to contact us.

Warm regards



Terese Edwards
Chief Executive Officer

