



8th June 2020

Childcare reform makes economic & societal sense – Policy makers need to step up & listen

BPW Australia (the Australian Federation of Business and Professional Women) has joined with the organisations committed to childcare reform to call on the Federal Government to stop plans to 'snap back' to the already broken system.

BPW Australia advocates for a quality national childcare and early learning system that is flexible, available, affordable and accessible. BPW Australia supports subsidies and rebates, rather than tax deductibility, as a fairer system of supporting families incurring childcare costs. Childcare is a societal issue that benefits families balancing work and care; it is not simply a women's issue but requires a mainstream focus by governments.

As Grattan Institute has highlighted, "The high cost of childcare doesn't just drain family incomes. It has a big impact on workforce participation, particularly for women. Women are more likely to be a family's 'second earner', reducing their paid work hours to accommodate caring responsibilities. For many, childcare costs interact with other elements of Australia's tax and benefit system to make extra hours of paid work financially unattractive"

"The PWC report commissioned by The Front Project published in 2019 showed that \$2 of benefits flow for every \$1 spent on early childhood education. Now more than ever the need for evidence-based data to form strong and sustainable policy for our post COVID future is a strategic imperative" Jacqueline Graham, BPW Australia President, said.

BPW Australia commends the work of The Parenthood and Director Georgie Dent for their campaign to say no to 'snap-back' on childcare. BPW Australia joined a town hall virtual meeting called by The Parenthood and moderated by Georgie Dent on 26 May. Over 200 parents and advocates unanimously agreed for the need to apply pressure to the political process and for policy makers to take notice of the value of universal childcare and learning for early childhood.

With announcement made today by Federal Education Minister, Hon Dan Tehan, free childcare will cease on 12 July. For many parents this means making difficult decision such as whether to reduce working days or remove children from childcare completely. This will impact women more than men and further reduce the gains we have made over the years of women's participation in the workforce.

Experts at the Mitchell Institute for Education and Health Policy at Victoria University advise that governments must ensure children and families are not locked out of early education because they can't afford it. Ensuring access is critical for children's learning and development, as well as economic recovery through parental workforce participation.

"A post COVID recovery needs to be gender balanced. The Grattan Institute again provides evidenced that increased workforce participation by women can boost GDP by \$11 billion in the medium term. Our policy makers need to step up and listen to the facts," Jacqueline Graham said.

To find out more of The Parenthood campaign and support go to www.theparenthood.org.au/say_no_to_snap_back_on_childcare

To read the full report commissions by The Front Project , go to www.thefrontproject.org.au/news/media-releases

To read the summary of findings by Grattan Institute, go to <https://grattan.edu.au/news/childcare-wont-remain-free-after-the-pandemic-but-it-should-be-reformed/>

To read the expert commentary of the Mitchell Institute, go to <https://theconversation.com/number-of-australias-vulnerable-children-is-set-to-double-as-covid-19-takes-its-toll-140057>

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About BPW Australia

BPW Australia is a community of women working to end gender inequity. Our members share an interest in the issues that affect working women in Australia and around the world today. BPW's membership includes employers and employees who work across many sectors including corporate, small business, professions, trades, non-profit and government. BPW Australia is affiliated to BPW International, which has consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and has expert and experienced representatives accredited to most United Nations agencies.

BPW Australia recommends actions in line with UN Global Compact Sustainable Development Goal 5: To Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls

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