

## **68 PER CENT OF WORKING MUMS WANT TO DITCH THEIR JOBS AND GO IT ALONE TO MAKE WORK-LIFE BALANCE BETTER**

Recent survey by CareforKids.com.au revealed that while many employers seem to be fairly supportive of working mums in terms of part time, flexible hours and working from home; the daily struggle to successfully juggle child care, parenting and work is driving many mums towards home-based working options and to setting up their own businesses...

Mums over daily struggle of the juggle!

Although 13 per cent of working mums said they don't find juggling work and child care difficult at all, for many mums the daily struggle has just become too much: 45 per cent of working mums surveyed said they were completely "over" work and found juggling child care and commitment to work very difficult; 32 per cent said they are considering looking for alternative employment or changing their working hours to accommodate child care and 68 per cent are considering working from home or setting up their own business to improve their work-child care balance.

Employers are becoming more adaptable

When asked how supportive their employers were with regards to parenting, only 3 per cent said their employer was not at all supportive – with 53 per cent being "ok" and 44 per cent being very supportive.

Although only three per cent had the opportunity to work from home full time, 46.3 per cent were able to work from home part time or even so often. 30 per cent were still not able to ever work from home unless it was an emergency situation.

Although 18 per cent of employers are not open to flexible working and part time working options (18 per cent); 54 per cent are open to part time working options for mums (some employers may have an ulterior motive in terms of cost saving ) and 28.4 offer flexible hours.

Working mums find work commitment and child care hours difficult to manage

Mums still find it very difficult to juggle work and child care with 59 per cent having been late to work due to child care issues; 83 per cent having been absent from work due to child care issues and 15 per cent have actually been reprimanded by an employer over absence or lateness due to parenting issue.

Parents find child care opening hours hard to meet with 66 per cent admitting to being late to pick up from child care due to work and 20 per cent are often to be found waiting outside the child care as the carers arrive to open!

With this in mind 21 per cent of mums said that child care would be more appealing if centres increase their opening hours; 32 per cent would find it easier if the days their children attended was more flexible.

Cost is still an implication too. 64 per cent said they would appreciate not having to pay fees for public holidays and family holidays; 55 per cent would like lower fees and 54 per cent increased or more widely available benefits/rebates.

#### Holiday Child Care and Fees A Real Drag

Two things that most incense parents about the holidays:

1. Child care centres that close in the school holidays
2. Being made to pay fees when your child's not even in child care!

The long summer holidays are not far away and 19 per cent of working mums would love more child care centres to offer more vacation care, particularly when you don't have access to vacation care, a very accommodating employer or a large bank balance!!!

CareforKids.com.au has a unique Vacation Care tool though which will hopefully make life easier for some parents in this situation... enter your postcode and click on the search button and you will be given a list of child care centres that offer vacation care – marked with red or blue houses depending on whether they have vacancies or not.

The issue of fees during public holidays and vacations is not quite so easy to find a solution to...

66 per cent of parents polled in the working mums' poll said that they have to pay full rates when they're on holiday – even though most parents know that the child care centre will usually manage to fill their spots for the duration of their child's absence. 25 per cent pay half or portion of fees which is more acceptable, but still not ideal.

While it's not really viable for most child care centres to offer a total fee refund for children on holidays and understandable they have to be paid something to keep a spot reserved for children while they're on "annual leave", a portion or at least half rate should be the norm in order to cover themselves if they can't pass on the fees to other parents – which is pretty unlikely.

Child care centres that charge for public holidays when they're not even open for business may seem ridiculous, but as with all employers, most child care centres with salaried staff will have to pay their staff's wages for public holidays which they have to pass on.

Unfortunately holiday fees are a necessary evil. But the best thing is to make sure you have discussed the issue with your child care provider at the outset and are comfortable with their policy.