



# ***Child care in the retail industry in Victoria***

**Master of Arts by research**

**by Gerard Mansour**

**Department of Urban and Social Policy**

**Faculty of Arts**

**Victoria University of Technology**

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Mansour, Gerard  
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## Abstract of thesis

The aim of this research is to investigate the child care experiences and attitudes of those who work within the retail industry in Victoria and it concentrates on the needs of parents with children aged under 13 years old.

A number of issues are presented as part of the background information for this research:

- a summary of the historical developments in relation to the provision of child care for working parents;
- the substantial growth in the participation of women in the workforce, including those with dependant children, as well as the reasons why they work;
- the nature of the retail industry and the structure of employment in Victoria;
- the various types of child care arrangements which are used by working parents.

The methodology adopted to investigate the child care needs of retail workers in Victoria involved several phases: interviews, group discussion, a questionnaire and phone polls. The practical field research occurred in two separate phases, firstly interviews were conducted with retail workers and the second phase was a survey of 893 workers in the retail industry in Victoria.

### Major findings

The major findings of the practical field research are:

- the primary reason for employment is financial,
- part time and casual workers, who are mainly women, make a substantial contribution to the level of family income;
- the majority of families are in receipt of income below average weekly earnings;
- of all care arrangements, 65.7 percent are arrangements used regularly;
- of all regularly used care arrangements 52.1 percent are informal arrangements, 31.0 percent parental, 13.4 percent formal and in 3.5 percent of cases the child cares for themselves;
- in the selection of care both having confidence in the person providing care and the need for a safe environment are essentially prerequisites irrespective of the type of care used;
- in regard to selection of child care there is a strong relationship between: use of informal care for all children and the desire for low cost care; for preschool children, the desire for contact with other children and formal care;
- there is a high level of overall happiness with care arrangements, however those who solely use parental care are the most satisfied;

- there is strong support for additional preschool and out of school hours services to be made available;

In relation to the child care problems or difficulties experienced by working parents:

- caring for sick children is a major difficulty for most parents;
- many experience a problem finding school holiday care and taking leave during school holidays;
- finding before and after school care can be a concern for many parents;
- many have difficulty finding care for preschool children;
- it can be a problem trying to find care to cope with more extraordinary situations;
- location of care and travel can be problems for working parents;
- it can be difficult for parents who have two or more children;

In regard to the direct impact on employment:

- many parents take time off work for child related reasons, and of those who had time off the average number of days off work per year were 4.4 days caring for sick children, 3.1 days when care arrangements broke down and 8.5 days during school holidays, making a total of 6.9 days per year as an overall average
- it was a substantial problem for parents in not being available to work overtime for child care reasons;
- punctuality was a substantial problem;
- a substantial number experienced the difficulty of being delayed at work and then late picking up their child from care;
- a reduction in work performance was a substantial issue of concern.

Other findings of the research are that:

- there are some significant differences between the experiences of male and female working parents. For example women are more likely to work on either a part time or casual basis and have a spouse who works full time; a significantly greater proportion of women believe their work performance suffers from child care related problems as well as the need for additional unpaid leave during school holidays.
- there is strong support for an information service on child care;
- there is strong support among working parents, particularly women, to have the opportunity to remain at home instead of working if income support was available;
- some child care experiences are related to the employment status of workers. For example, full timers are significantly more likely to have problems taking time off to care for sick children; more difficulty finding school holiday care; and greater problems with punctuality.

## Possible responses

It is clear there is no one solution to the problems of working parents, however a number of responses are listed which would be of benefit. These are:

- in order to respond to the problems of caring for sick children additional family leave needs to be available as well as consideration of other responses such as services for sick children;
- there is a need to expand child care services primarily for preschool children during the day, and for school aged children in after school programs and during school holidays;
- the cost of care needs to be affordable;
- working parents need access to accurate and up to date information about child care services and an information service needs to be developed;
- due to the many ways in which child care problems impact on work, there is substantial scope for employers to develop far more responsive approaches such as additional leave and greater flexibility in caring for sick children, greater telephone access between parents and their children and time off work to deal with emergency situations;
- the research supports an active funding role by employers in the provision of child care services such as a child care centre for use by employees;
- given the nature of the retail industry there is substantial scope for workbased child care services to be established in regional shopping centres which could be more multipurpose in nature;
- there is a need for employers to develop company policies which are supportive of the needs of working parents;
- some working parents desire advancement or promotion and they should be given a genuine opportunity to do so;
- there is substantial scope for male working parents to take a more active role in issues which are related to child care;
- there are many gaps in the existing child care regulations, and issues related to the provision of quality care, which need to be addressed;
- the government needs to consider the provision of additional financial support to allow working parents the opportunity to remain at home and care for young children instead of working;
- unions need to continue to take an active role in regard to the child care needs of working parents, but it is unclear whether an enterprise model of negotiation will act in the interests of retail workers in Victoria.

# Introduction

This thesis is in completion of a Master of Arts by research undertaken through the Victoria University of Technology at Footscray Campus.

The issue of child care and its implications for workers gained increasing momentum throughout the 1980's and this continues into the 1990's. The aim of this research is to investigate the child care experiences and attitudes of those who work within the retail industry in Victoria, and will concentrate on the needs of parents with children aged under 13 years old. The research contemplates the particular child care arrangements parents make for both their preschool and school aged children. It will focus on a range of issues relevant to the needs of working parents as they reconcile the needs of employment with those of raising a family.

There are many considerations which have an impact on decisions parents make about their participation in the workforce and the care arrangements they make for their children as well as ongoing issues involved in balancing employment with family responsibilities.

In assessing the relevant needs and issues attention will focus on two main areas:

- social and policy issues that have an impact on decisions which affect working parents, and
- developments which have occurred in Victoria.

In order to allow a meaningful analysis, issues and events are reviewed which have played a role in determining the present child care situation for working parents. A summary of the historical developments in relation to the provision of child care for working parents is presented as part of the background for this research. As trade unions are the principal collective voice for workers within Australia, consideration is given to developments within the union movement and its responses to the child care needs of workers. The Australian Council of Trade Unions is the peak national body of the union movement and the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association is the primary union for those who work in the retail industry both in Victoria and Australia.

In analysing the background and history of child care it is intended to limit these discussions as far as possible to Victoria. However there are also broader developments which are of importance because of their impact on the issue of child care throughout Australia. A number of references are made to data or details which were relevant at the time the practical research was conducted, in order to place the research in the context of the developments at that time.

As further part of the background for this research, attention is given to the substantial growth in the participation of women in the workforce, including those with dependant children, as well as the reasons why they work. The child care needs of working parents are closely related to the workforce participation of women. Child care issues can have a substantial impact on women in the workforce and particularly those who currently have dependant children.

Consideration is given to the nature of the retail industry and the structure of employment within this industry in Victoria. In addition, the various types of child care arrangements which are used by working parents are discussed.

The research occurred in two separate phases. Firstly interviews were conducted with retail workers. The second phase was a survey which was widely distributed in retail stores and warehouses both throughout Melbourne and country areas of Victoria. The interview phase also assisted in determining the content of the questionnaires.

In order to carry out the practical components of this research it was necessary to gain access to the retail workforce which was possible due to the support of the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association, Victorian Branch and many retail employers throughout the state. The cooperation of both the union and employers enabled direct access to retail in a vast number, and a broad range, of workplaces. While the interviews and questionnaire were in no way limited to union members, it is possible that the majority of respondents were in fact union members.

Child care is now an issue of importance in Australian society.

"A major issue for the 1990's is how to assist the children of mothers who work, particularly when the children are very young. There are two directions that can be taken to ease the pressure on families and to enhance the optimal development of young children. The first is ... providing more places in a variety of forms of child care ... The second and more comprehensive approach is to plan an integrated system which includes child care, maternity leave and parental leave .... " (Ochiltree 1990, p. 56).

This research will help fill a substantial gap that exists in an assessment of child care issues as they impact on the specific sections of the workforce in Victoria. The importance of this research can be recognised by the fact that the retail industry is one of the largest single sections of the workforce both in Australia and in Victoria.

The findings of this research will therefore be relevant to a substantial number of workers, and a significant part of the workforce.

The completion of this research results from the support of many individuals but there are too many to name so thank you to you all. It has only been possible to complete this research due to continued support of Diane, James and Carolyn. My heartfelt thanks to each one of you. I am also grateful for the support of the Victoria University of Technology and in particular my supervisor, Harry Van Moorst. Thanks also to a few individuals who worked for the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association, Victorian Branch for their support and their genuine interest in the needs of working parents. There are many shop stewards who supported this research and encouraged those in their workplace to participate in the interviews or complete a questionnaire.

Others in this union, particularly those in positions of decision making, will hopefully be more responsive to the needs and attitudes of working parents which are clearly expressed in this research.

This thesis provides an opportunity for policy to be formulated which genuinely responds to the needs of working parents and there is a challenge for employers, governments and trade unions to be more responsive to the needs of these parents.

## **Chapter 1: Child care and working parents: an historical overview**

This chapter traces the development of child care services which cater for the needs of working parents in Victoria specifically and Australia in general. This review of child care will also take into account social policy considerations and a broad definition of the term social policy is taken. Picton & Boss (1981, pp.6-7) noted that early definitions of social policy concentrated on justifying service provision for those in need. However this research takes a broader view of social policy and will consider social directions, processes and planning involved in developments related to the child care needs of working parents.

The ensuing discussion is closely tied to the workforce participation of women. It is women who make the primary adjustments to their workforce participation as a result of parenthood. Women are mostly responsible for raising children and undertaking the associated tasks involved with maintaining the home. It is the

"... division of labour within the home which accords women the major share of childcare and other domestic labour." (Thea Sinclair 1991, p.1).

It is women, rather than men, who have take time out of the paid workforce to undertake the unpaid domestic and caring work involved with raising a family (Probert 1994, p.155). Consequently the child care needs of working parents is substantially tied to the experiences of working women.

There is a vast and complex body of literature and research which considers the sexual division of labour and how the roles adopted by male and female parents can have an impact on the opportunity for workforce participation. There are many different theoretical frameworks which comment on the respective roles of men and women. For example, the division of labour has been strongly linked to the traditional definition of women's work, that is unpaid work which is defined in relation to the care of children and associated domestic chores that occur within the home (Hargreaves 1982, p.2-5). The traditional role ascribed to males is then as a provider of income rather than in relation to fatherhood. The male role is seen as

"... that of provider, and good husbands should earn enough for their families so that the wives need not go out to work." (Agassi 1982, p.174).

There are substantially divergent views and perceptions about these roles. For example there is the perception that the role of full time mother is of itself rewarding and fulfilling where the child benefits from having a nurturing and caring mother. In this sense the mother would gain

"The rewards of domestic life-the emotionally satisfying elements of domestic work and child care which were assumed to outweigh the attractions of paid work... "  
(Probert 1994, p.154).

Yet there is also a perception that women are essentially consigned to undertake the caring and domestic roles and that there is little real choice involved. This is considered to be ideologically reinforced by society through what is written and expressed about the role of women to play the principal nurturing role (Richards 1994, p.79).

Others perceive the full time domestic role as not fulfilling and oppressive, where women are pressured into

"... unpaid, unrecognised work, drudgery, petty repetitive tasks, powerlessness, unfulfilment, watching patronising housewives television programmes ... tiny demanding children screaming all day and destroying all hope of privacy, or sustained thought or creative activity." (Curthoys 1988, p.14).

In this sense the role of full time mother is little more than acquiescence to the domination of males and an expression of the powerlessness of women resulting from their oppression (Mackie & Pattullo 1977, p.13).

Despite the debate and at times controversy as to role of women and work, there is little doubt that

"Women remain principally responsible for child care and other household duties."  
(House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs 1992, p.xvi).

The participation of women in the workforce does not eliminate their parental role; rather it can become a more complex matter of balance.

"It has become clear that the vast majority of women will continue to combine paid and unpaid work. They want to work ... but they do not want to give up their caring roles..." (Probert 1994, p.173).

The decisions parents make about employment and family responsibilities will have a direct impact on their child care needs. However, it has been mainly women who modify their employment in order to care for their children. Consequently the discussion of the child care needs of working parents will focus on the experiences and decisions of working mothers. There are however broader considerations related to the responsibilities involved with parenthood in general and the implications of workforce participation.

This Chapter deals with the development of kindergartens and child care centres, changes linked to the second world war, increasing activity during the 1970s, the growing support within the trade union movement for the needs of working parents particularly women, the growth in the provision of child care services for working parents, the increasing role of government as well as employer responses to the child care needs of employees.



## 1.1. Child care in the late 1800's and early 1900's.

The existence of both kindergartens and child care centres dates back to the later part of the 19th Century. Kindergartens are often referred to as preschools, and child care centres are commonly referred to as day care centres, long day care, nurseries or creches. The term preschool is also commonly used in a general sense to refer to those children who have not reached school age.

It is clear that from the earliest times kindergartens did not attempt to provide a service which would cater for the needs of working parents. Neither their structure nor their method of operation were responsive to the needs of these parents.

### Kindergarten development

The first kindergartens were set up as experimental operations in New South Wales in the late 1880's (Kelly 1982, p.493). They were essentially a response by the charitable organisations of the day to the needs of those considered to be less privileged.

"... for children of poor working class families who attended on a sessional basis when over the age of three.. (the) purpose was to mitigate the harmful effects on children of a slum environment. The early kindergartens were run by philanthropists, mostly women." (Victorian Post-Secondary Education Commission 1983, p.2).

The predominant social consideration was that underprivileged children needed additional support to offset the negative effects of their environment. Rather than attempting to change the environment in which these children lived, the aim was to supplement it with worthwhile experiences.

Charitable organisations were involved in the establishment of kindergartens at least in part because of what they saw as a lack of quality parenting. For those with a philanthropic outlook kindergartens were a mechanism of assisting the needy care for their children.

"...the poor were not supposed to know how to bring up their children- to keep them clean, feed them or educate them- kindergarteners were urged to make the kindergarten a lovely home" (Lever 1988, p.9).

Kindergartens aimed to provide underprivileged children with educational experiences not considered to be adequately available in the child's own home. From these early times kindergartens emphasised the importance of learning and the development of the child (Lever 1988, p.9).

As the early kindergartens were set up to provide a program for children from a poorer backgrounds, they were located mainly in the poorer areas of capital cities. Buildings and facilities were often donated by churches and in the main they were supported by a committee of volunteers. Those who participated on these committees were mainly drawn from better off suburbs or areas (Victorian Post-Secondary Education Commission 1983, p.2).

The early kindergartens were financed predominantly by the contributions of upper class women with minimal government funding for many years.

" In Australia, a network of educational services for children below compulsory school age developed outside government responsibility. Kindergartens for poor children were established by philanthropic groups, mainly women, in inner city locations." (Kelly 1982, p.493).

Despite the lack of government funding by 1910 there were 32 kindergartens in Australia. To promote the development of kindergartens, state wide organisations known as kindergarten unions were formed. These kindergarten unions were not like trade unions. They were a collection of interested staff and supporters who united in these organisations to expand and promote the kindergarten movement (Mellor 1990, p.63). The first of these was established in New South Wales in 1895, the Free Kindergarten Union of Victoria was established in 1908 and by 1912 there were kindergarten unions also in South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania. Only in Queensland, in 1907, was a joint organisation formed to support the development of both kindergartens and creches (Australian Pre-schools Committee 1974, p.15,17).

In response to the desire for programs to be educational, the need for a professional approach quickly evolved. As a result Kindergarten Teachers Colleges, funded primarily by the Kindergarten Unions, were gradually set up in all states despite the absence of government funding until the 1960's. The Melbourne Kindergarten Teachers College was created in 1916 (Lever 1988, p.10; Kelly 1982, p.493). These colleges strengthened the perception that kindergartens provided a valuable educational program for all children, not just for the needy, and the first step of an education system which would be available for all children in the year before reaching school (Brennan & O'Donnell 1986, p.19).

There was a parallel development within the school system where kindergarten teaching methods were implemented in the late 1800's to aid the educational development of young children and to meet the needs of the many children aged under 6 who attended school (Spearritt 1979, p.11). Some schools throughout New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia and to a lesser extent, South Australia established a separate kindergarten session during school hours such as the Riley Street primary school in Sydney which gave kindergarten instruction for 40 minutes per day (Mellor 1990, pp.61-64).

The introduction of a minimum school age of around 5 or 6 throughout Australia in the late 1800's resulted in most separate kindergarten sessions in schools disappearing. However an approach to teaching young children remained within the school system, closely related to the kindergarten teaching methods but strongly influenced by Froebelian methods.<sup>1</sup> The degree of influence that the developments within schools had on the evolving educational philosophy of the kindergarten movement is unclear. Those kindergartens which operated separate to the school

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<sup>1</sup> Froebel was a European educator who developed teaching methods for use with young children aimed at developing the child's nature through child centred activities, play, craft and so on. (Mellor 1990, p. 60-1; Spearritt 1979, p. 11).

system were influenced more in their activities by the American free kindergarten movement (Mellor 1990, p.111).

Mellor (1990, p.62) acknowledged

"Historians of the kindergarten movement in Australia have tended to concentrate on those who established kindergartens outside the school system ... rather than those who ... helped its development within infants classes."

The focus of this research will also focus on the separate kindergartens because programs in schools did not provide any additional service to working parents.

Kindergartens developed as services which operated for only part of the day. This was at least in part because they were a supplement, not a replacement, for the role of the mother. There was no set number of hours that kindergartens would operate, but in the early years most operated from 9 am to 12 noon and after 1915 many operated from 9 am to 3 pm (Spearritt 1979, p.18). It was not until the 1960's that many of the kindergartens began to run the present system of two sessions per day, each lasting about three hours (Cox 1983, p.192; Brennan & O'Donnell 1986, p.19).

There was an expectation from these early times that mothers would make a contribution to the running of the centres and this was primarily by undertaking some daily domestic chores. Many working mothers were consequently unable to participate in these daily activities. The kindergarten hours were of little assistance, if not a hindrance, to the many working mothers who were employed for long hours. These parents had to arrange care around the kindergarten hours which was complicated by the need for transportation at a time when the parents were normally at work.

In these early years government policy focussed on the basic care and safety needs of children. Legislation and regulations of the early 1900's dealt with the right of children to an education as well as the right not to be abused in either the family or the workplace. The government aimed to ensure that parents did support their children and therefore attempted to control the employment of minors, child vagrancy, truancy and so on (Cox 1983, p.190).

### **Development of child care centres**

While the kindergarten movement was based on an educational model, child care centres evolved from the need for women to work.

"The oldest day nurseries were founded in the inner suburbs during the 1890's depression ... They were for the children of women who were forced to do domestic work in the nearby houses of the wealthy because their husbands had lost their jobs." (Pearce 1992, p.16 ).

As the Commonwealth did not assist working women with their child care costs, the early initiatives in day care evolved from the work of charities and philanthropists. While kindergartens established their educational role, the early day nurseries were seen primarily as a welfare service, assisting

those women who could not provide care for their own children during the day because they were at work.

As an example of the role of early day nurseries, Brennan & O'Donnell (1986, p.19) refer to the objectives of the Sydney Day Nursery Association in its annual report of 1917-18 which were to

"....care properly for the babies of mothers of poor working women of Sydney during the hours when the mothers are forced to be at work".

These same sentiments were echoed by Mellor (1990, pp.97-8) in citing the 1912 publication, *A guide to charity in Victoria*, which referred to day nurseries as

"...one of the most valuable branches of the philanthropic work of the community ... Widowed mothers are frequently placed under the necessity of working to earn a livelihood, and without the relief afforded by the day nursery, the possession of young children would often operate as a serious hindrance. Now, however, it is only necessary to leave the children during working hours at a creche where they are cared for- washed, fed and amused."

There was not the same focus on the provision of an educational program for children. The importance of this historical difference cannot be underestimated and accounts for much of the antagonism that was evident at various times between these two different streams of child care. The Australian Pre-schools Committee (1974, p.17) refers to the failure, as far back as the very early 1900's, for kindergartens and day nurseries to work together.<sup>2</sup>

The two services competed for the limited supply of government funding that would be made available for children's services in later years.<sup>3</sup> However, it is important to note that kindergartens and child care centres were established as two essentially distinct services and this was not necessarily in the interest of working parents who used these services. Working parents were responsible for transportation and finding other care, when the kindergarten sessions finished.

In Victoria, the first day care centres were established in the inner city areas of Melbourne in the 1880's and by 1905 there were nine in operation. In 1910 the Sydney Day Nursery Association was established followed by the Victorian Association of Day Nurseries in 1913 (Lever 1988, p.10; Victorian Post-Secondary Education Commission 1983, p.3). The creches operated under separate auspices to the kindergartens from these very early times. This meant that the two services set up their own structures independently to cater for their own needs.

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<sup>2</sup> The report of the Australian Pre-schools Committee notes that the Sydney Day Nursery Association and the Kindergarten Union failed in their attempt to work together to send older children from the day nursery to the local kindergarten during its hours of operation.

<sup>3</sup> Whilst it is important to acknowledge that antagonism or conflict did exist, it is not the purpose of this research to explore this in detail as it has been documented by other writers. (Lever 1988, p. 12; Brennan & O'Donnell 1986, p. 19; Spearritt 1979, pp. 10, 26-7).

The services developed separately in most states, however in Queensland a more integrated model evolved. One Association was formed for both preschools and creches, and by 1932 five of the six centres combined both services in one location. There was little growth for many years as by 1951 there were only six centres operating (Spearritt 1979, p.20, 25).

Child care centres, unlike the kindergartens, operated for the major part of the working day. They opened around 7.30 am and closed about 6 pm. Even in these early times they opened from Monday to Friday (Victorian Post-Secondary Education Commission 1983, p.3). These hours of operation essentially remained the same throughout the twentieth century. Few child care centres cater for the needs of shift or weekend workers.

## 1.2. The developments in the 1930's

The Commonwealth allocation in 1937 of 100,000 pounds for projects supporting the health of women and children was one of the first indications of a willingness by the Commonwealth to fund services for women and children, although these services were health related (Brennan & O'Donnell 1986, p.19).

In 1937, the Director of Maternal and Infant Welfare in Victoria proposed to the National Health and Medical Research Council that the coordination of baby health centres should be linked with kindergartens and be administered by the State Department of Health (Australian Pre-schools Committee 1974, p.15). Whilst this indicated growing interest by the Victoria Government to support early childhood services, child care centres were not included in the proposal. This report supported the creation of children's research and demonstration centres throughout Australia.

The National Health and Medical Research Council subsequently advocated the creation of a national program of demonstration centres. The Commonwealth acted on this proposal and established Lady Gowrie Child Centres in each capital city. These were named after the wife of the Governor-General who had been an active supporter of the kindergarten movement and was also the patroness of the South Australian Kindergarten Union. These centres aimed to improve services for preschool children by providing educational programs for children and research methods of care, instruction, child development and nutrition. They were administered through the Federal Department of Health (Brennan & O'Donnell 1986, p.19; Kelly 1982, pp.496-7).

In 1938 the kindergarten unions from all over Australia established a national 'umbrella' organisation, the Australian Association for Preschool Child Development which was asked by the Government to supervise and oversee the development of the Lady Gowrie centres.<sup>4</sup> The day nursery movement was effectively ignored and did not have any official role in relation to these centres (McNulty 1985, pp.10-12).

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<sup>4</sup> In 1954 the name was changed to the Australian Preschool Association (APA) and in 1979 to its current title, the Australian Early Childhood Association. (AECA).

Cox (1983, p.192) indicated that the lack of recognition given to the day nursery movement was tied to the fact that they

"...were not as successful in enlisting public support. They were seen as residual services, providing essentially for the non-coping parent ... 'charity' centres aimed at the woman who had to work due to extreme circumstances, and had no money to pay for childcare on the commercial market."

In contrast, the Australian Association for Preschool Child Development was actively involved with the Commonwealth government in decisions about these new centres, for example how they were designed, built and staffed (Kelly 1982, p.496). These centres were run on a sessional basis similar to the kindergartens and therefore placed the same limitations on working parents.

The funding by the Commonwealth of the Lady Gowrie Child Centres in many ways set the scene for the funding of preschool services for many years to come. The kindergarten movement was given the opportunity to secure for itself a role in this Commonwealth initiative. It also meant that the kindergarten lobby was well placed to take advantage of future Commonwealth activity its national body gave the kindergarten movement a common voice (Kelly 1982, p.495).

From the late 1930's the state governments gradually became active in establishing regulations to govern the operation of day care centres through state legislation. This began with New South Wales which passed licensing and registration legislation in 1939. The last state to pass such legislation was Tasmania in 1960 (Picton & Boss 1981, p.61). These regulations are discussed later in this Chapter.

### **1.3. During the Second World War**

During the second world war the Commonwealth Government was more responsive to the need for child care due to the unprecedented involvement of women in the workforce.

Women were an important part of the labour force at home which supported the efforts of those who went to war. The government actively encouraged women to enter the workforce and increased the availability of children's services for working women. This was coordinated through the Department of Labour and National Service and special grants were made to kindergartens and day nurseries to enable them to expand their services (Brennan & O'Donnell 1986, p.20; Cass 1983, p.193).

These grants funded an increase in both the number of child care places and the number of hours these services would operate. Kindergartens which had evolved as essentially a sessional service were extended to operate for a full day from 7 am to 7 pm (Spearritt 1979, p.23).

The Commonwealth response to the war placed the need for female labour above the need for women to be home with their children. In terms of social policy, it demonstrated support for the needs of working parents which far exceeded any previous Commonwealth support. However, this

was primarily a response to the war-created need for female labour rather than any philosophical shift towards a universal role for the Commonwealth in the provision of these services. This was evidenced by the fact that funding for these services dissipated at the end of the war (Brennan & O'Donnell 1986, p.20).

In 1944 the Victorian State Government decided that coordination of preschool services would be the responsibility of a preschool division of the Department of Health. It was decided to support the state wide expansion of kindergarten services and per capita grants were offered to approved kindergartens which met standards related to buildings, materials and staff (Victorian Post-Secondary Education Commission 1983, p.3; Brennan & O'Donnell 1986, p.20).

At this time it was debated whether kindergartens should be treated as an extension of the education system and placed in the same department as schools. Spearritt (1979, p.25) notes that the Department of Health was considered more appropriate because of the intention to grant a high degree of autonomy to kindergartens.

In 1942 the Commonwealth took responsibility for taxation and following a referendum four years later, had the power to legislate on a range of family allowances. These allowances, such as child endowment, were a mechanism of Commonwealth support for all families not solely a means of welfare assistance for the needy (Mellor 1990, pp.76, 136). This also had the effect of entrenching a role for the Commonwealth in providing universal support for families and set the scene for further government involvement in child care service provision.

## **1.4. After World War 2.**

Although the Commonwealth funding for both kindergartens and child care centres was dramatically reduced after the war there was still a demand for these services continued. In Victoria there was an expansion of kindergarten services due to support of the State Government and the activity of various church and charity organisations (Spearritt 1979, p.24).

Despite the temporary nature of the expansion of services during the war, more parents had used and appreciated the value of kindergartens and day nurseries. Even though many women ceased their employment and returned to the responsibility of bringing up their children

"... the idea of the kindergarten being of benefit to all children was gaining acceptance. The well-to-do had seen for themselves the ... benefits of kindergartens and wanted them for their own children. They were willing, and of course able, to pay for what they wanted. There was a ground swell of interest which led to a huge increase in the number of kindergartens set up towards the end and after World War 2, especially in Victoria." (Lever 1988, pp.11-2).

In a similar manner day nurseries began to be seen in a different light and move away from the perception of a welfare service for needy women who were required to work.

"It can be argued that wartime centres contributed to the gradual change in public perceptions about day care; they certainly set an important precedent. If government valued women's labour and wished to facilitate their return to the workforce, then government would have to take an active role in providing day care for their children." (Mellor 1990, p.99).

The willingness of the Victorian government to act in the area of children's services resulted in a decision in 1949 to make substantial operational subsidies available to some day nurseries run by voluntary organisations (Victorian Post-Secondary Education Commission 1983, p.3). This reflected the first substantial commitment by the Victorian government to day care centres.

The funding commitment of state governments to kindergartens varied substantially, for example by 1972-3 the Victorian government had the greatest commitment, in excess of \$5 million, next highest was Queensland with \$2.26 million and the lowest was New South Wales at around \$800,000 out of a total funding by all states in excess of \$14 million. By comparison, the funding by the states of day care services totalled only \$1.2 million for this same period and this was almost exclusively paid by New South Wales with \$760,346 and Victoria with \$412,641 (Australian Pre-schools Committee 1974, p.8).

In Victoria much of the growth in services for working women after the war occurred due to the expansion of commercial child care centres which run as small businesses and aim to make a profit. It was difficult to determine the exact number of commercial centres in operation as many centres were unregistered (Spearritt 1979, p.35). The Victorian Post-Secondary Education Commission (1983, p.3; 14-5) reported it was unlikely that commercial centres existed in any numbers at all in Victoria before the 1950's, and yet by 1965 there were 165 functioning centres. This report went on to estimate that by 1980 there were 126 government funded full day care centres in Victoria and 223 commercial centres.

A substantial growth in commercial day care services occurred nationally. Spearritt (1979, p.34) estimates that in 1969 there were 515 commercial centres in operation throughout Australia and by 1975 there were 1,119 such centres. The total number of non commercial day centres at this time was listed as 182. There can be no doubt that commercial centres became an important provider of child care for working parents.

This growth was however greeted with a mixed reaction and in some cases antagonism. A debate evolved about whether child care services should be provided at all by commercial operators given that profit was undoubtedly a key part of the motive for providing the service. There were those who felt this created a conflict of interest and the attempt to make a reasonable level of profit would be at the expense of the quality of service provided for children.

There was the philosophical issue of whether



"...children's services should be provided as a basic service for all families and should not be run for private gain." (Brennan 1983, p37).

This debate intensified in the 1960's and those who strongly advocated child care provision as a state responsibility saw little or no role for commercial child care operators, and

"...began to press the view that child care was not just an educational service or a workplace facility. Rather it was a fundamental social requirement which was necessary if any serious challenge was to be made to the current unequal sexual division of labour and income." (Brennan & O'Donnell 1986, p.22).

The debate about commercial child care centres was complicated by the fact they continued to expand and provide care for a substantial number of children. A very high level of funding would be required to implement a policy of government funding for all children's services. It was not possible to force the closure of commercial centres unless the government expanded its funding commitment; this would disadvantage the very women that the child care was meant to benefit.

Private centres were criticised for reducing their operating costs by not catering for babies and toddlers in any great numbers. Children of this age required a greater proportion of staff to provide care and private centres could cut costs by refusing to accept these children (Brennan 1989, p.7).<sup>5</sup>

Pressure continued to mount through out the 1960's for the Commonwealth to increase its funding commitment to children's services which would be available for working parents.

"Lobbying of the Federal government by various parent organisations increased and a revitalised women's movement began pressing the view that child care was not only a fundamental right for children but essential for their parents too." (Lever 1988, p.12).

Child care was becoming an issue of prominence.

## 1.5. Moving into the 1970's

The increased interest in child care for working women during the 1960's also extended into the union movement. Child care was being promoted as an issue of importance for workers and it was stressed that the costs of child care had a real impact on take home pay. The issue was promoted as part of union activity to improve living standards (Hargreaves 1982, p.256).

The Commonwealth Department of Labour and National Services gathered data in the late 1960's about the number of women in the workforce and the availability of child care places. This led to the first Australian survey, conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, into child care use in 1969. It found that a lack of available child care existed for the children of working parents and concluded that

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<sup>5</sup> The higher staff to child ratio was determined by the regulations governing the operation of centres, which are outlined later in this Chapter.

"The dearth of centres operating with state or local government assistance was particularly apparent." (Social Welfare Commission 1974, p.11).

Day care was still perceived by many to have primarily a welfare or crisis care role. This was tied to "... the prevailing attitudes of Government and indeed the wider community, who viewed child care as a private family responsibility rather than a public or community concern." (Sebastian 1985, p.46).

In the 1970's the federal Coalition Government considered that preschool care was a state government responsibility (Brennan & O'Donnell 1986, p.22). This meant that kindergartens had to obtain state funding, an activity that brought different results in different states. Whereas 52 percent of eligible children attended kindergartens in the ACT, it was 29 percent in Victoria, 17 percent in South Australia, 13 percent in Queensland, Western Australia, Tasmania and only 3 percent in New South Wales (Spearritt 1979, p.27).

In 1966 the Commonwealth funded 80 trainees to attend preschool teachers colleges as a part of the Advanced Education Scholarships scheme, and by 1972 there were 272 trainees receiving assistance.<sup>6</sup> This indicated a willingness of the Commonwealth to support the expansion of kindergartens and in 1968 the States Grants (Preschool Teachers Colleges) Act granted \$2,500,000 the states for capital works to establish preschool teachers colleges (Australian Pre-schools Committee 1974, p.7).

Early in the 1970's the child care needs of working parents became a national issue and this was closely tied to the significant increase that had occurred in female employment (Baldock 1983, p.27). In the 1970 election campaign the Liberal government promised to establish a network of joint preschool and child care services for working parents to

"... improve employee morale, reduce absenteeism and help productivity. The dominant rationale for this scheme was to benefit industry by making it easier for employers to attract and retain female labour." (Brennan & O'Donnell 1986, p.22).

A clear link existed between the needs of the employer for labour and the desire to attract women, many of them married with children, back into the workforce to meet the demand for labour. The Coalition Government subsequently passed the 1972 Child Care Act to allow for Commonwealth funding for non profit child care services which catered for the needs of working parents (Picton & Boss 1981, p.63). This was the turning point for the development of children's services in Australia. Five million dollars was allocated for the establishment of programs under the Act to fund capital and recurrent costs (Lever 1988, p.14).

There was no government planning mechanism to allocate resources according to need or what services should expand in order to best meet the needs of both the children and the parents. Groups

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<sup>6</sup> It is worth noting that the vast majority of preschool staff were women, and it was not until the mid 1970's that the first male was trained in Melbourne. In the mid 1980's kindergarten teaching was still almost entirely a female occupation. (Victorian Post-Secondary Education Commission 1983, p 2).

and organisations applied for funding through submissions and the funding was allocated as a result of these submissions. This resulted in an inequitable distribution of resources.

The differences that had built up between kindergartens and child care centres came into the open once again.

"Early childhood personnel became embroiled in a bitter debate as to whether the main thrust of government initiatives should go to expanding the traditional preschool services or creating more child care places." (Mellor 1990, p.138).

The Labor opposition objected to the submission model of funding (Brennan & O'Donnell 1986, p.23). However, they did not have a policy in support of child care services for women with children who were in, or wanted to return to the workforce. Their principal children's policy was to fund a year of preschool free of cost for every Australian child (Cox 1983, p.195).

Although heralding a greater Commonwealth role in the funding of child care services, the Act did not encourage the entry of women into the workforce. It allocated funding for services considered necessary because employers had actively recruited married women due to labour shortages. Some features were aimed at discouraging women with young children from entering the workforce.

"... Research was to be carried out into the reasons why women work and into ways of discouraging them from doing so. Moreover, conditions attached to grants would oblige centre directors to provide 'family counselling ... where parents ... are seeking to place very young children in centres.'" (Brennan & O'Donnell 1986, p.23).

The Act was only a qualified victory for those who desired for child care services to be established for working parents. The Act was more pragmatic acknowledgment that some services should be available because women had to work.

At this time a new children's service evolved in Australia, family day care. This new child care service began as a result, primarily, of activities in inner suburban areas of Melbourne. The decision to build high rise flats in Fitzroy resulted in a large increase in population which placed a drain on the already limited community resources and places in the local day care nursery were quickly filled.

"... there were literally hundreds on the waiting list. Something had to be done and quickly." (Lever 1988, p.12-3).

In 1969 a standing committee of the Victorian Council of Social Service examined the possibility of small group care for working women, and single parents. Their report recommended a

"...range of services including the provision of 'day foster care' described as care where children from 0 - 6 years may be cared for in a home environment rather than an institutional environment."(Brennan & O'Donnell 1986, p.27).

The principle behind family day care was to coordinate the needs of two different groups in order to satisfy both. Those women who had to, or wanted to, work had the problem of who would look after

their children. These women could be matched with those who wanted some paid work yet wished to remain at home. The program was based on the notion that mothers with experience in raising their own children would provide care for other children. Unlike informal arrangements, a responsible agency such as the Brotherhood of St. Laurence played an important intermediary role between parents and caregivers.

The Brotherhood of St. Laurence played a key role in the establishment of an experimental program in Melbourne in October 1971. In analysing the progress of the program the report of the Brotherhood of St. Laurence (1972, p.ii) found

" The main conclusions at this point are that the mobility and financial vulnerability of the residents of the district in general make it difficult to establish stable placements ... However, certain ... children appear to have benefited considerably from family day care, particularly the infants...".

The Commonwealth provided funding to support the establishment of the trial program (Lever 1988, pp.13-4). Family day care programs rapidly expanded and at least part of the reason was that establishment and running costs were much lower than those of child care centres.

### **1972 Labor elected**

The funding arrangements for the 1972 Child Care Act had not been initiated before the Labor government took office in 1972 (Lever 1988, p.14). The Labor Party had campaigned

"... on a platform of broad social reform in which the role of education as an instrument for the promotion of equality was strongly emphasised." (Brennan & O'Donnell 1986, p.24).

The new government embarked on a review of children's services which took two years, and three separate reviews. During this time the money allocated under the Act was being spent. As a result, some services increased rapidly at the same time as the Government was actually determining its policy priorities for the allocation of funding to children's services (Lever 1988, p.14).

The first review was undertaken by the Australian Pre-schools Committee (1974) also known as the Fry Report (1974). This Committee was to advise the Government on a range of child care and preschool issues including access to preschool education and consideration of child care services needed by working parents and underprivileged families. It was specifically

"... to report on the means whereby, within a period of about six years, all children could have access to one year of pre-school education." (Social Welfare Commission 1974, p.12).

In its report the Australian Pre-schools Committee (1974, p.11) noted that the number of places available in kindergartens at that time far exceeded those available in child care centres and acknowledged that

"... preschool education and day care services suffer from the lack of a national plan which provides for adequate funding and recognised standards. Only the initiatives taken by voluntary agencies and community groups, in some cases assisted by government authorities, have allowed the present level of services to be achieved and maintained." .

It recommended that by the end of the 1970's sessional kindergartens would cater

"... for up to 70 percent of the one year age group before normal school entry age ... (and) day care services for up to 10 percent of the children of preschool age."  
(Australian Pre-schools Committee 1974, p.136).

It also recommended an expansion of family day care programs, in addition to child care centres, to help cater for the child care needs of working parents. The release of the report was met

"...with loud public criticism. For those who had been advocating the extension of services for the working parent, it was seen as a capitulation to the preschool movement." (Cox 1983, p.195).

This criticism centred on the perception that kindergartens would be allocated a far greater proportion of resources than those needed by working parents. However the validity of this criticism needs to be viewed within the content of the terms of reference. given to the Committee.

The proposal to have a substantial expansion of preschool places only reflected this mandate. There was no necessary nexus between the level of funding for kindergartens and that required for other services such as child care centres. The criticism of the funding proposed for kindergartens was rather misdirected. What lay behind these criticisms was the more relevant attitude that child care services for working parents were not adequately addressed in the Fry Report. This was a separate issue to the level of funding kindergartens should receive. The level of funding needed for each service could only be measured against the demand for that service. It was not unreasonable for the Government to desire to implement its policy of kindergarten for all children. Those advocating for the needs of working parents were entitled to claim that the Fry Report had failed to address the level of demand for these services.

This also raises the fundamental issue of why these services were established as distinct and separate programs. A co-operative approach could have been proposed where 'multipurpose' type centres were developed to cater for both preschool and child care needs. Benefits would have flowed from such an approach starting with obvious cost savings from sharing buildings and facilities. Working parents would have been spared the need to transport children between different services in different locations. In addition, daily activities could have developed as joint and sequential programs acknowledging a transition of children between services and there was substantial scope for cooperation.

Such a co-operative approach would have harnessed the capacity of each service to jointly pressure for adequate levels of funding and ensure that the needs of parents were addressed. Instead the

polarisation between the services continued and many seemed to believe that adequate funding for services needed by working parents could only be achieved if there was less funding for kindergartens. They did not seem to focus on the possibility that the total level of funding should be increased so that all child care needs could be met.

The recommendation to expand family day care also brought criticism.

"... It was difficult for critics to avoid the conclusion that the main reason for favouring family day care over centre-based care was that this scheme could be run extremely cheaply, thus freeing the bulk of funds for preschoolers." (Brennan & O'Donnell 1986, p.27).

In 1972 the Federal Government established a Special Committee on Teacher Education which recommended the Government fund preschool teachers colleges. These proposals were adopted and resulted in preschool teachers colleges operating as autonomous institutions, funded by the Commonwealth as Colleges of Advanced Education. In addition a scholarship scheme was established to support the training of preschool teachers by providing allowances to students. This scheme developed quickly and by 1974 there were 1,233 students receiving assistance in the form of fee subsidies and a living allowance (Australian Pre-schools Committee 1974, p.7).

The ALP National Conference in 1973 expanded the child care policy of the ALP and supported the notion that

"...a comprehensive child care service should be established ... government sponsored and community based ... to provide community support for women to participate more fully in society." (Brennan 1982, p.5).

This was a substantial change and in part it resulted from the work of the Labor Women's Organisation which had lobbied for policy changes to address the child care needs of working women (Brennan & O'Donnell 1986, p.25).

The new policy took a broad view of the needs of women and this included the needs of those women who wished to participate in the workforce. In this sense, the change in policy placed the needs of women in the spotlight whilst the review of the Australian Pre-schools Committee was still under way. This had the effect of broadening the agenda of the Commonwealth Labor Government, pre-empting the need for a comprehensive range of services to be developed so that women, including working women, could participate more fully in society.

The strong criticism of the Fry report resulted in the government establishing a further review which was undertaken by the Social Welfare Commission (Spearritt 1979, p.31). This review resulted in the report *Project Care*, finalised later in 1974, which.

"... presented a different picture, one that was much more likely to commend itself to the champions of working mothers and advocates of community development..." (Picton & Boss 1981, p.65).

The Social Welfare Commission (1974, p.176) recommended an expansion to the range of children's services sponsored by the Commonwealth, and in addition to kindergartens and child care centres, it supported the creation of services such as play groups and toddler groups. *Project Care* did not deny the importance of kindergartens, however, it acknowledged the importance of providing a wide range of children's services to meet the needs within each community.

Communities were to be involved in the social planning process and the aim was for communities to determine their own child care needs so that suitable programs could be established. Funding would occur through local government from block grants disbursed at the local level depending on how each locality saw their needs (Social Welfare Commission 1974, pp.1-2; 60).

An important role was envisaged for parents in the operation of programs.

"Parental participation in services was to be a high priority and Project Care suggested many ways of involving both employed and non-employed parents." (Brennan & O'Donnell 1986, p31).

Picton & Boss (1981, p.67) noted that the *Project Care* report was based on an approach which

"...conforms with the institutionalist-universalist model but with priority given to selected groups ... reflects the positive discrimination principle to which the Labor government was committed."

The report was a departure from the concept of child care as a supplement or service for the needy and recognised that children's services could have a support role for all families.

Once the report of the Social Welfare Commission had been received, the government referred the two quite different reports to the Priorities Review Staff which recommended the creation of varied and integrated children's services based on community need. Funding of kindergartens was to be cut from 100 to 75 percent and they were to expand programs beyond half day sessions. Reservations were expressed about localised funding due to the variation in capability of different municipalities. It proposed the creation of a Children's Commission. The Government acted on the recommendations of the Priorities Review Staff and an Interim Committee for the Children's Commission was established (Spearritt 1979, pp.31-2).

Following the change in ALP policy at the 1973 conference, in the May 1974 election campaign Labor promised a new child care program with free preschool education and child care services where parents paid according to their means. The Government would encourage industry to create child care centres and school holiday programs in response to needs of their employees. This was important new concept, for the Government proposed a role for employers in the provision of child care services. After being re-elected Labor acknowledged that the child care commitment had attracted women's votes (Brennan & O'Donnell 1986, p.32).

However the Labor Government was removed from office in November 1975 before their child care policies were implemented; the Children's Commission was never formed (Mellor 1990, p.140).

Despite its ultimate decision to support a range of different child care services most of the funds spent during Labor's time in office went to kindergartens (Cox 1983, p.198). For example, of federal government expenditure on children's services in the year 1974-5, a total 82 percent went to kindergartens, 10 percent to day care centres, 1 percent to family day care, 1 percent to out of school hours care and 6 percent to other forms of care (Brennan 1982, p.10).

Kindergartens obtained the lion share of funding primarily because the submission model of funding favoured groups that were well organised. While community groups were involved in the process of submission preparation many kindergartens were able to quickly prepare submissions due to their already active parent groups. As a result,

"... vehement criticism was made of the submission model ...(and it) became seen as a tool for middle class groups to take advantage of available funds, at the expense of the less articulate groups." (Sweeney 1987, p.25).

The kindergarten's management or parent committees were well placed to act promptly.

Nonetheless, the Labor Government placed child care firmly on the agenda of the Commonwealth. Child care moved from being seen as a welfare service to assist those in need towards a universal support for all families. The funding of children's services was now far closer to a model of social investment where the government shared responsibility for raising children (Picton & Boss 1981, p.19).

This shift in philosophy was reflected in the Royal Commission on Human Relationships, *Report Volume 4* (1977, p.37), cited by Picton & Boss (1981, p.55).

"We believe that early child care services should be available for all parents to supplement and complement the care they can provide for their own children. These services should not be seen as welfare services, nor as a crisis service but as a right to serve the needs of the child and parents just as education is available to the school age child."

However, the election of a Liberal-Country Party Government changed the policy and direction of children's services in Australia.



## 1.6. Election of a Coalition Government: a shift in policy

Instead of the Children's Commission the Coalition Government established an Office of Child Care was in the Department of Social Security

"...a clear signal that it regarded child care as an aspect of welfare and not as an everyday service..." (Brennan 1983, p.10).

The growth in children's services slowed due to the Federal Coalition Government cut in funding to children's services.

"From 1974 until 1982 the situation worsened. Expenditure was pegged at much lower levels than was promised ... " (Cox 1983, p.198).

Yet there was still pressure on low income families to enter the workforce in order to obtain sufficient income to survive. Parents who were forced into the workforce for primarily economic reasons had to deal with the issue of who would care for their children and the attitude of the Coalition Government was that

"... the role of government should be to create an environment in which individuals could find private solutions to their problems." (Brennan & O'Donnell 1986, p.39).

In 1977 the Commonwealth changed the funding of children's services and introduced block grants where each state government was given responsibility for the distribution of funds. The Commonwealth gradually reduced the real value of the block grants by freezing the level of the grant. The states had to allow preschool facilities to be used by the general community in order to continue to obtain funding (Brennan & O'Donnell 1986, p.42).

In the mid 1980's the Commonwealth ceased the block grants and this left responsibility for funding with the state governments. Some State Governments substantially increased their own funding levels in order to offset the cut by the Commonwealth. For example, in Victoria the state government increased its funding by 100 percent, in Western Australian there was an increase of 150 percent and by 200 percent in South Australia (Mellor 1990, p.185).

During the years of the Fraser Government the proportion of Commonwealth funding allocated to kindergartens was reduced. By their final year in office, 1983, kindergartens received less than a third of the children's services budget. The majority of funds were directed to day care centres, multipurpose centres and family day care programs (Mellor 1990, p.158).

Despite the reduction in federal funding the Fraser years saw substantial growth in programs such as playgroups and toddler groups, but the greatest expansion was in funding for family day care programs. This shift in the direction of funding towards support for family day care was closely related

"... to the fact that it is quicker and more commercial to meet the demand for places by funding family day care schemes than it is to build new centres." (Halliwell, McLean & Piscitelle 1989, p.17).

## **Victorian developments**

In 1973 an inquiry into children's services by the Consultative Council of Pre-school Child Development (1973) was chaired by McCloskey. The McCloskey report made a number of recommendations about the need for services such as maternal and child health centres and it proposed the Victorian government support a range of services such as family day care, child care centres and extended hours care. It also recommended the government fund preschool services for all children so that 80 percent of children could attend in the year before starting school.

This report had an influence on the Victorian Government and a number of the recommendations were subsequently acted upon. For example, in 1975 a Standing Committee on Pre-School Child Development was created, a unit was established in the Department of Health in 1976 to administer early childhood services and fifteen Early Childhood Development Programs were established by 1983. In 1976 the State Government adopted as official policy the objective of every child attending a year of preschool prior to starting school (Victorian Post-Secondary Education Commission 1983, pp.33-4).

During the 1970's in Victoria the priority was an expansion of preschool services. Services for working parents such as child care centres and family day care programs did not receive the same level of support, and by the end of 1970's the Victorian government

"... subsidised over 1,000 pre-school centres run by parent committees, the Free Kindergarten Union, various church organisations and local government. Most of these centres provided half-day sessional programs." (Mellor 1990, p.186).

## **1.7. The trade union movement in the 1970's**

In the mid 1970's the Australian Council of Trade Unions supported a community based approach to the child care needs of working parents, where needs would be met through an expansion of such services (Working Women's Centre 1975, p.2). The Australian Council of Trade Unions did not have a specific child care policy and did not advocate for an expansion of workbased child care services, rather that the focus of the union movement was to pressure employers to provide alternative working patterns such as part-time work or flexitime in addition to maternity and parental leave (Working Women's Centre 1975, p.2).

The union movement was pressured to take a more active role in supporting the child care needs of working women, primarily due to the activities of the Working Women's Centre and women's groups particularly feminist groups. This was a substantial amount of activity in the women's movement within trade unions.

"...they began to insist on rights and policies ... which set down key issues such as child care; sharing domestic work ... elimination of sexual stereotypes ... introduction of maternity leave... and full participation of women in trade unions. The underlying

principle ... was the right of every woman to paid work and to realise her full potential on the job and in society generally." (Hargreaves 1982, p.11-2).

The issue of child care and its impact on working parents gathered momentum in the union movement during the mid to late 1970's. Some unions investigated the child care needs of their membership. One of the first surveys was conducted by the Electrical Trades Union and *Electrical Trades Union Working Mothers And Their Children* (1974, pp.66-71) reported on the experiences of just under 800 female members with children aged under 15 years. Informal arrangements accounted for the majority of all preschool and school aged child care arrangements. The report found that mothers often stayed home to care for their children when they were sick and concluded that existing child care services were inadequate. It proposed the expansion of a range of services such as kindergartens, centres located near the workplace, family day care, after school care and school holiday care and recommended the need for more flexible hours of work so that parents could tailor their hours to suit their needs. The report recommended the Electrical Trades Union act on the child care issue and encourage the development of services.

In addition

"A large majority of the women approved of the concept of the government paying a wage for mothers to stay home and care for their children." (Electrical Trades Union 1974, p.66).

In 1976 the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association Victorian Branch conducted a survey of its female membership on a range of issues impacting on women. The report, *Women Workers In The Retail Industry* (unpub. c. 1976, ) commented on the responses of approximately 1000 shop assistants.

Like the Electrical Trades Union report, it found that most women placed their children in an informal care arrangement such as a relative or neighbour and there was little use of formal care. The report supported the development of community based services (Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association unpub. c. 1976, p.84).

Most mothers were found to work due to economic necessity and the report recommended the government provide financial assistance to remove the need for both parents to work. In the meantime the government was urged to increase funding and ensure care was affordable.

Attempts by the Vehicle Builders Employees Federation of Australia to have a child care centre to be established and paid for by employers was ruled against by the Arbitration Commission in 1976. It found the claim for a centre, in the form presented, was not an industrial matter and it was not a desirable economic climate in which to pressure employers. The Commission instead suggested the union movement approach the government and demand increased funding for child care services needed by working parents (Working Women's Centre 1977, p.1).

At its 1977 National Congress the Australian Council of Trade Unions adopted a policy in relation to child care for working parents as part its new *Charter for Working Women*, which would allow "... the right to paid work for all who want to work ..." (Australian Council of Trade Unions 1989c, p.10).

This policy, as noted below, committed the union movement to:

"... strive for trade union activity and campaign for acceptable child care facilities and for support by Government and Local Government bodies. Trade Unions should participate in the management of such centres which should be at low cost to the parent. The services to be located in areas of need with flexible hours available for shift workers. Particular attention be given to before-school, after-school and school holiday child care.

Unions should be involved in the establishment of community based child care facilities, and also employer or industry based child care facilities where the environment is conducive to such establishment.

Child care facilities located at workplaces should be under the control of a Union Committee on the job elected by workers concerned, so that this service is not used in any way to intimidate workers.

Fees paid for the care of pre-school children, regardless of their age, should be tax deductible." (Australian Council of Trade Unions 1989c, pp.10-11).

Centres located near the workplace were viewed with some caution as care was needed to ensure employers did not intimidate workers and use the child care service as a tool to pressure or manipulate employees. Sebastian (1988, p.10) recognised the capacity of employers to have a negative influence in the operation of workbased centres and urged early childhood workers to be vigilant so that the quality of care did not suffer.

The union movement at this time supported the tax deductibility of child care expenses for working parents with pre-school children. However by 1992 the National Executive of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (1992c, p.3) opposed tax deductibility of child care because

- higher income earners receive a greater benefit than those on lower incomes,
- it doesn't address the problem of an insufficient number of child care places for working parents, and
- a tax return at the end of the financial year doesn't provide assistance as needed during the year.

The Australian Council of Trade Unions Working Women's Centre published five main discussion papers between 1975 and 1980 about issues related to the child care needs of working parents. The general thrust of these discussions papers is outlined below as they indicate the evolution of support for child care, and in particular workbased services, within the union movement.

The first of these papers, in 1975, referred to child care as a general responsibility of the community which would be supported by Commonwealth funding. References to workbased child care concentrated on the need for worker control of services, and noted that

"Childcare on the job does have serious disadvantages, particularly as it is generally tied to the mother's job. Employers are only interested in maintaining a supply of cheap labour and women will stay in an underpaid job through fear of losing the childcare facilities provided by the employer." (Working Women's Centre 1975, p.2).

The paper called for unions to push for increased Government spending on community based child care. It was considered important for workers to be given greater flexibility in their working hours as well as an award entitlement for both maternity and paternity leave.

The second discussion paper, in 1977, noted the inability of existing child care facilities to meet demand. It recognised that

" The availability of childcare is the most important factor in determining whether a mother with young children can join the workforce." (Working Women's Centre 1977, p.2).

Child care co-operatives were proposed where services would be subsidised by employers and/or the government but control would rest with the co-operative. The attitude to employer involvement reflected the position taken by the Arbitration Commission as noted above.

"It may not be feasible - or even desirable - in the present economic climate to demand that employers provide childcare centres but unions, if they would use their combined muscle, could demand that the government make more money available for a whole range of childcare facilities." (Working Women's Centre 1977, p.4).

The third paper, Working Women's Centre (1978) addressed the right of married women to work. It supported the participation of married women in the workforce as opposed to the role of a full time homemaker, because married women contributed to the economy and in many cases lifted the income of the family above the poverty line. The paper supported the right of married women to work and argued against the proposition that married women were displacing school leavers. Unions were called upon to

"... make public statements answering the criticism of married women working." (Working Women's Centre 1978, p.5).

The fourth discussion paper, Working Women's Centre (1979, pp.2-5) debated various issues of concern to working parents. It recognised the value of workbased child care but acknowledged the existence of concerns such as employer intimidation and the limited range of services in comparison to community based centres. An alternative to workbased care was proposed, the concept of work related child care, which was considered to be a method of overcoming these concerns. Work related care was defined as services located near the workplace, which are available

to employees, however they are still accessible by the local community and operate at an arms length from the possible negative influence of employers.

The paper acknowledged that few employers contribute towards the cost of child care for their employees and that unions should encourage employer involvement. The child care needs of working parents required earnest attention because

"... child care is one of the most important issues facing the trade union movement in its struggle to win equality for women in the workforce and in society at large. Its importance was recognised by the ACTU Executive when it adopted child care as one of the three priority areas for implementation of the ACTU Charter for Working Women." (Working Women's Centre 1979, p.1).

In the fifth paper, Henderson (1980, p.5) presented a philosophical argument on the right of women to work and their subsequent need for child care. It argued that any attempt to restrict the involvement of married women in the workforce should be resisted. Unions needed to ensure that women were not pushed out of the workforce due to inadequate child care. The provision of child care facilities for women was fundamental to their participation in the workforce and unions were urged

"To protect the rights of their female members to a place in the workforce and in order to establish full and adequate children's services unions should demand that these be seen as a public responsibility in the way that education is now accepted as a public responsibility."

A sense of urgency was expressed about the need for action and that child care was an industrial issue affecting all workers.

These papers reveal the emergence of child care as an issue within the trade union movement and the increased attention paid to the needs of working women. However, there was not unanimity within the union movement about how the issue of child care should be treated. There were those who believed child care services should be provided for all women so they could exercise their right to work. Others however opposed this policy because of a belief that child care was primarily a mother's responsibility (Picton and Boss 1981, p.58).

For example the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association (1984, p.1) believed

"The role of government in the area of child care funding is to provide assistance to those in economic need, or with special needs who could not otherwise obtain good quality care...The government does not have a responsibility to finance the capital and/or recurrent costs of child care facilities for parents who can afford to pay their own child care costs. It may be necessary for the government to establish child care centres for children with special needs which cannot be met elsewhere..."

In spite of the debate about the role of child care services, the Australian Council of Trade Unions was able to improve the support available for working parents. The claim for maternity leave as an

award entitlement was achieved in 1979 when working women were granted an award entitlement of up to 12 months of unpaid maternity leave (Dolan & Forbath 1983, p.7).

This was a mile stone for the union movement as working women had the right to take leave from their employer and then return to the same employer at the expiration of their unpaid leave. Women could plan to have children secure in the knowledge that their employment would be protected whilst they took leave to care for their child.

The union movement aimed to improve the rights of working parents by inserting leave provisions in all awards, attaining parental leave, influencing government policy, providing child care for workers to attend union meetings and improving care available for sick children (Dolan & Forbath 1983, p.7-8).

Forbath (1983, pp.36-8) noted some examples of union involvement in the establishment of child care services which could be used by working parents and also members of the local community. Most examples involved substantial Commonwealth funding of establishment costs. For example, in 1976 the Coburg child care project was established in Victoria after a four year battle by migrant women and five separate trade unions. Some individual unions made a direct financial contribution to the establishment of this service. The Tempe child care project in Sydney was a community based 24 hour centre, created opposite the Tempe Bus Depot able to be used by those employed at the Bus Depot. In Sydney in 1982 the ABC Staff Association purchased a building which it converted into a child care centre as a joint union and community venture. In 1981 a centre opened in Moorabbin to operate from 7 am to 6 pm. Some private hospitals, educational institutions and public hospitals also established child care services.

In general however employers did not respond to the attempts by the union movement to involve them in the establishment of child care services for workers. Some of the limited examples of private employer action were: the Marquise company who provided some support for a nearby commercial child care centre which was also open to community use; the Eden Park and Warriewood child care centres built by developers which allowed use by children of workers (Dolan & Forbath 1983, p.6).

Through the 1980's issues related to the family and welfare of children continued to be prominent and in 1980 the Australian Institute of Family Studies was established as a result of the Family Law Act 1975, to research issues of importance to families in Australia (Byrne 1984, p.54).

An Australian Bureau of Statistics survey of Child Care Arrangements in 1980 showed that 5.5 percent of children under school age attended a child care centre or family day care, and that 12.5 percent attended kindergartens. The majority of care, about 44 percent, were arrangements provided by relatives, friends and neighbours (Brennan & O'Donnell 1986, p.2).

In 1981 the Coalition Government introduced a pilot program for commercial child care centres which made them eligible for government support including the right to fee relief for parents. New

funding guidelines for day care were announced and the Special Economic Needs Subsidy was introduced to distribute funds according to need. This reflected an intention of the Coalition Government to base the provision of child care services on the degree of need or disadvantage among users (Sweeney 1982, p.615).

By the early 1980's there was still no uniform system of funding for early childhood services in Australia and the extent of services varied from state to state. Child care services remained fragmented and the lack of national planning prompted calls that

"... a national planning body is urgently required to develop a long term forward plan for a children's services program." (Luxton 1984, p.115).

As the 1983 federal election approached the Labor Opposition platform on child care was

"Access to community care is a right ... should be federally funded and community based ... planning model based on needs ... moving towards a program based on multi-purpose centres." (Brennan 1983, p.53).

The Australian Labor Party was returned to government in this election. While in opposition they had strongly opposed the decision of the Coalition Government to establish a pilot program of subsidies to commercial child care centres and these were quickly halted (Philippou 1988, p.4).

Once elected, Labor embarked on a major expansion in the number of child care places in fulfilment of its election promises (Australian Council of Trade Unions 1989c, p.177). The Commonwealth changed the approach to children's services developed by the Coalition Government and placed the Office of Child Care in the new Department of Community Services to

".. consolidate the image of child care as a normal social service, not something which is reserved for those who can prove their 'neediness' or inability to cope." (Brennan & O'Donnell 1986, p.55).

The issue of child care was arousing public interest. A child care conference conducted in July 1983, by the National Association of Community Based Child Care, had over six hundred participants who discussed a range of issues. The conference brought together the various 'factions' in the child care debate. In this sense the

"...size and nature of this conference are a sign that community attitudes to child care have changed significantly over the last ten years...Parents no longer are content to accept total responsibility for rearing of children without serious and sensitive backup from government funded facilities." (National Association of Community Based Child Care 1983, p.1).

Cox (1983, p.3) expressed support for child care as a service which would benefit all children.

"... all children should be given the option of care services because these services are good for them.... we should be working towards the universal access." .



There were those within the Trade Union movement who echoed similar sentiments, and recognised the need for an expansion of child care services for working parents to enable

"...the right of women to participate in the paid workforce... society has a collective responsibility for the care of young children and thereby working towards the establishment of universal access to publicly funded child care services for all parents wishing to use them." (Dolan & Forbath 1983, p.4).

The pressure for increased child care services for working women was occurring both within the trade union movement and the broader community. The push by trade unions for an increased role by both the Commonwealth and employers was aimed at increasing the support available for working parents who had to balance their roles of a worker and parent.

Brennan & O'Donnell (1986, p.x) identified the controversial nature of the discussion about child care services.

"... Child care is an intrinsically political issue. It concerns the distribution of power, resources and opportunities within families and within society." (Brennan & O'Donnell 1986, p.x).

In 1984 the Australian Council of Trade Unions supported the need for workbased child care services because:

- children are located near their parents;
- these services assist women to return to the workforce after maternity leave;
- the specific child care needs of workers are addressed;
- working parents can be involved in the management of services;
- parents can be easily contacted in case of an emergency;
- women can continue breastfeeding (Forbath 1987, p.15).

As part of a consultation process to determine a new fee relief system the Labor Government involved the Australian Council of Trade Unions in a consultation process. From July 1984 maximum fee relief was allocated to those considered most in need. These were changed in April 1986 to reflect a strong level of support for the needs of working parents, and priority was to provide

"... providing access in the first instance to the children of working parents and those training for or seeking work and then to children with disabilities, children at risk of neglect or abuse and children of parents at home..." (Hurford 1987, p.3).

Present priority of access guidelines continue to give priority to working parents as outlined by the Department of Employment, Education and Training (1990, p.45).

- "1. Children of workforce participants or those seeking employment or studying/training for employment.
2. Children of parents with a continuing disability or incapacity.

3. Children at risk of serious abuse or neglect.

4. Parents at home with more than one child below school age, and single parents."

The 1985 National Australian Council of Trade Unions Congress reinforced its commitment to an action program aimed at meeting the needs of working women.

"The fact that women's employment was one of the key issues chosen for the 1985 ACTU agenda indicated the high priority now given to women... ACTU has made a determined effort ... to bring issues relating to women's employment into the mainstream of union activities ... for example child care and parental leave."

(Australian Council of Trade Unions 1986, p.3).

This Congress noted the successful achievement in 1985 of adoption leave as an award entitlement for workers in Australia. Other forms of unpaid leave for workers with family commitments were also under consideration, such as parental leave and paternity leave for men, the need for leave to care for children when they are sick or in an emergency, and extended forms of leave so parents could take leave from their employment for a number of years.

The Australian Council of Trade Unions continued to work at increasing the number of workbased child care centres that were available to working parents, and at this stage

"... had established seven union sponsored child care centres throughout Australia. A further five were due to open within twelve months." (Australian Council of Trade Unions 1986, p.3).

As part of its original Charter for Working Women, the Australian Council of Trade Unions believed that workers should be in control of services located at the workplace and elected committees to be involved in the management, planning and development of child care services (Forbath 1987, p.17).

From November 1985 a new funding system was introduced which based the operational subsidy on the number of children in care, and removed the ceiling on fees charged by the centres. These changes had the effect of reducing the operational subsidy payable by the Commonwealth by about 50 percent and the intention was to make centres far more accountable for their financial operation (White 1986, pp.38-9).

As a consequence, the link between subsidies and the employment of qualified staff was terminated, and parents were responsible for any gap between fee relief ceiling of a maximum of \$80 and the centre cost. Parents who were not eligible for fee relief would be required to pay the full cost of the higher fees charged by the centres. These changes were estimated to increase parents fees by between \$15 and \$25 per week (Farrar 1986, pp.6-8).

Centres had to review and reduce costs by, for example, employing less qualified and cheaper staff. There was opposition to these changes

"...The real implication being that, more and more, the quality of child care services will reflect the parents' capacity to pay." (Lever 1988, p.16).

In the 1985-6 budget the Federal government created 20,000 new places over 3 years:

- 12,000 in over 300 long day care centres
- 3,000 in occasional care
- 40 new family day care schemes (Sweeney 1987, p.22).

Hurford (1987, pp.4-6) noted the strategy was to expand child care places through co-operative arrangements between the Federal and all State and Territory governments who would contribute towards costs. The Government was favourably disposed to locating child care services near the workplaces and aimed to cooperate with private sector employers in the expansion of child care services.<sup>7</sup>

Employers could reserve places in a particular centre provided this did not exceed 30 percent of the capacity of the centre. The employer would pay the full cost of the reserved places including capital and recurrent costs. The Commonwealth Government expansion of child care services reflected its priority for work related care and it increased the number of child care centres funded by the Commonwealth from 548 in 1983 to 970 by 1986 (Hurford 1987, p.6).

The changes to children's services in 1986 included a withdrawal by the Commonwealth of its funding for preschool services and responsibility was passed on to the states. This meant an annual saving of \$33 million to the Commonwealth and placed preschool funding in the hands of State and Local government (Lever 1988, p.84). There were different responses from different states and the Labor Government in Victoria was one of the state governments to accept the challenge and increased its funding commitment to compensate for the federal reduction (Sweeney 1987, p.22).

There were different fee relief systems for family day care and child care centres which favoured those who used centres. By 1989 a substantial gap existed between the two levels of fee relief:

- for centre based long day care a maximum of \$92.50 per week, and
- for family day care a maximum of \$68 per week (Wangmann 1989, p.19).

Despite the expansion of child care services there was still a situation of under supply (Hurford 1987, p.6).

The 1987 Australian Council of Trade Unions National Congress continued to give priority to the needs of working parents. Services were a priority for low to middle income working parents and an aim was for employers to contribute to the maximum feasible extent towards the costs of services used by their employees (Australian Council of Trade Unions 1989a, p.17).

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<sup>7</sup> The joint venture services had to be located in an area of high need for work related care, open to use by the local community and function as a non profit service.

The 1988 Budget committed the federal government to the creation of a further 30,000 places: 4,000 places in centres, 4,000 in family day care, 2,000 in occasional care and 20,000 in after school care. Of the 4,000 places in child care centres there were 1,000 earmarked for the new Industry Initiative Program which aimed to provide facilities through co-operation between employers and the government. Employers would provide the

"... cost of establishing and equipping a new child care centre for employees .... There is no capital or equipment contribution from the Commonwealth." (Department of Community Services and Health 1989, p.9).

This program was based on an Australian Council of Trade Unions (1988a, p.1) submission to the Commonwealth government in support of employer involvement in child care

"... we (Australian Council of Trade Unions) have asserted the need for a program of expansion of high quality child care places over the 3 year period commencing July 1, 1988. We have also emphasised that a significant number of new places should be allocated to employer supported, work related care".

As an encouragement for employers, the Commonwealth allowed employers to claim their financial contributions towards child care services for their employees as legitimate business expenses and therefore tax deductible (Department of Community Services and Health 1989, p.4). Workers were to be involved in the management of the services. The Federal government decision to introduce fee relief for out of school hours care and the create 20,000 new places meant that out of school hours care was

"...brought into the spotlight ... child care for school aged children has long been neglected and its importance largely unrecognised by the community. Approximately 2 percent of school aged children have access to a funded OOSH centre." (Finlayson 1988-9, p.12).

A formal mechanism now existed for employers to become involved in supporting the child care needs of their employees through an expansion of child care places.

## 1.8. Developments in Victoria in the 1980's

The election of a Labor government in Victoria in 1983 resulted in the Early Childhood Review Services Committee (1983) report on children's services. The release of the report caused controversy when six of the seventeen members released a dissenting report which questioned a number of proposals including: administrative reforms; the proposed method of community development for devolution of responsibility to local government; and the proposed level of parental involvement in services.

The Committee of Review of Early Childhood Services (1983, p.1)

"... concluded that the development of children's services has been fragmented by the absence of coherent policies and the absence of the inter-relationship of the needs of children, families and communities ... the result has seen the growth of services, many of a high standard, which do not work well together...."

The Committee of Review of Early Childhood Services (1983, p.2) outlined the direction for the development of children's services such as ensuring developmental opportunities existed for children; services based on the developmental needs of the children; universal provision of services; effective parental participation; programs that were culturally relevant, flexible and responsive to the needs of children; quality child care located according to need; integration of services; and operated in the context of the local community.

A working party of the Victorian Post Secondary Education Commission was asked to

"...advise the Commission on the training needs of staff for work in early childhood education and care services." (Victorian Post-Secondary Education Commission 1983, p.5).

The working party was primarily concerned with organised child care services such as centres, family day care and kindergartens. It made a strong connection between the provision of quality child care services and the adequacy of staff training and asserted that the

"...effectiveness of a care service in assisting the children's development is mainly dependent on the quality and expertise of the staff." (Victorian Post-Secondary Education Commission 1983, p.6).

The Victorian Post-Secondary Education Commission (1983, pp.91-103) recommended the collection of statistical data, creation of a central authority, increased government involvement and more stringent regulations.

In 1984 the Victorian government expanded child care services in co-operation with the Commonwealth.

"Forty-four new child care centres will open in Victoria by mid-1985 and 38 new out-of-school hours services will begin operation at the beginning of the 1986 school year." (Brennan & O'Donnell 1986, p.66).

By 1985 the most common form of children's services available were kindergartens, and over 1200 operated throughout Victoria. Most were run by parent committees as sessional kindergartens where children attended four sessions a week of around 2 and a half hours. At the same time state funding for child care centres was relatively small and there were no signs of this level being increased. The Victorian Government, since 1940

"... has been funding a small number of day nurseries, at present thirty-six." (Brennan & O'Donnell 1986, p.66).

In 1985 responsibility for children's services moved from the Department of Health to the Department of Community Services (Committee to Review the Child Minding Regulations 1986, p.1).

### **Child care regulations in Victoria**

Child care regulations which are enforceable by government in Victoria date back to 1951 when the Preschool Centres Building Regulations were gazetted. These covered building matters in premises where five or more preschool children received care: this included kindergartens and child care centres.

In 1964 seven children died as a result of a fire in an unregistered private centre. The devastating nature of this disaster caused an immediate response by the government and regulations were enacted requiring commercial centres for the first time to meet specific standards and conditions in the 1964 Health (Child Minding) Act.

Non profit day care centres were covered by the Child Minding Centres (Health Act) Regulations 1965 and kindergartens by the Preschool Centres Building Regulations 1951 and Health Act 1958. The regulations for both kindergartens and all day care centres were administered by the Victoria Health Department (Victoria Post-Secondary Education Commission 1983, p.3)

The report of the Committee to Review the Child Minding Regulations (1986) proposed one set of regulations for all centre based services with the exception of out of school hours care. The new regulations covered minimum staff levels including qualified staff; staff to child ratios; regulations covering administration; requirements for the management and operational functions; health and safety standards and so on. There were two kinds of centres: class 1 centres which include kindergartens and class 2 centres for children in care no longer than 3 hours a day or 10 hours a week.

"The Children's Services Centres Regulations came into operation on 1 February, 1989 requiring services providing care or education for five or more children under six years of age away from their parents to be registered." (Zachariak 1990, pp.2-3).

The regulations which had been monitored by the Regulations Unit in Community Welfare Services, moved to be part of the new Office of Preschool and Child Care. This set in place the regulations which presently govern the operation of child care services in Victoria.

Despite the introduction of legislation, there was a lack of coordination of regulations governing children's services. Zachariak (1990, p.2) noted

"... the often inconsistent and outdated standards that were applied to young children in care away from their parents."

An array of regulations operated in the various states around Australia, all controlled by different state laws. These laws varied in detail on many of the aspects including the key area of staff to child ratios and the proportion of trained and untrained staff required to be in attendance (Lever 1988, p.61). For example, the ratio of staff to children aged between three and four years in Tasmania is one to seven, one to ten in New South Wales, one to fifteen in Victoria and one to sixteen in Queensland (Department of Community Services and Health 1990a, pp.20-7).

The regulations play an important role in providing protection for children in care. This was acknowledged when the Children's Services Centres Regulations were introduced in Victoria in 1988.

"Experiences in the early childhood years ... are critical in terms of the child's future educational development, health and growth, values and aspirations. It is with this recognition that new Children's Services Centres Regulations are proposed to provide all children in such centres with adequate and consistent protection of their health and well-being " (Community Services Victoria 1988, p.10).

The federal government is attempting to establish a national child care standards agreement with each of the states in order to standardise the quality of child care offered in child care centres throughout Australia by 1996. The agreements will cover areas such as building design and structure, safety issues, equipment, space requirements and staffing levels. The Victorian government supported all of the minimum standards except those relating to the staffing levels because it would have required a change from one staff member per fifteen children to one for every eleven children aged over three. Neales (1993, p.5) notes this opposition relates to the additional staff costs involved if the proposed staffing levels were implemented.

## 1.9. The union movement into the 1990's

The union movement continued to support and push for employer involvement in child care provision as well as pressuring the Federal Government to increase its level of funding. The Australian Council of Trade Unions, *Children's Services Strategy* (1989b, pp.1-2) while noting Federal Government initiatives, called for an increase in the number of child care places. It supported the development of national standards for children's services and a national accreditation system.

The union movement aimed to improve the wages and conditions of child care workers, including family day care workers.

"For too long the viability of family day care has very much hinged on the cheap labour costs and poor working conditions of its providers, home-based child care workers..." (Comans 1989, p.5).

A new career structure, with substantial pay increases, was obtained for child care workers (Australian Council of Trade Unions 1991a, p.3). The union movement continues to pursue improvements for family day care workers, and their success in this action has implications for the long term viability of family day care. Higher wages would probably be passed on as fee increases and this could impact on the affordability of services.

The Federal Labor government, in its 1989/90 budget, made a substantial change in direction when it decided that

"...fee relief will be extended to existing non-profit centres not funded by the Children's Services Program ... and to accredited commercial centres... for the first time, commercial and employer provided centres will have access to training and management support activities which will help achieve consistent quality across services. ... these initiatives represent the biggest expansion of child care in Australia's history. As a result of them, by mid-1996, there will be a quarter of a million child care places in Australia." (O'Donohue 1990, p.9).

This removed the anomaly that users of commercial long day care centres had been excluded from obtaining fee relief subsidies. Trade unions had been opposed to federal funding of commercial child care centres for a number of years because the belief that children's services

"...should operate on a non-profit basis because of the inevitable conflict of interest between the profit motive and child's best interests and well being..." (Forbath 1987, p.15).

Part the decision was to establish a national system of accreditation so that commercial services would ultimately have to gain accreditation by demonstrating a required level of quality in service provision in order to receive funding. An Interim National Child Care Accreditation Council (1992a, 1992b) was created in December 1991 which included representation from unions, employers and parents. A national consultation process was established and involved a series of



seminars throughout Australia. Accreditation would not replace existing state government regulations, rather ensure centres receiving fee relief demonstrated quality of care (Interim National Child Care Accreditation Council 1992b, pp.8-12).

The Australian Council of Trade Unions (1992a, pp.1-3) proposed a mandatory link between fee relief and accreditation to ensure compliance. It proposed that the focus be on programs provided by services as present state regulations covered many of the operational and organisational standards.

In 1990 the federal government improved assistance available to low and middle income families by indexing fee relief subsidies to maintain their real value. The level of assessed family income was increased to allowed more parents to receive benefits (Wangmann 1989, p.19). From 1 October 1990 families received some fee relief until, for those with one child, their assessed weekly family income was above \$1048, or \$1260 if they had two children (Department of Community Services and Health 1990a, p.18).<sup>8</sup>

Shop assistants on award wages would be eligible for a substantial amount of fee relief. For example, in 1990 two parents working full time as adult shop assistants would have a combined family income of about \$725 per week. If they have two children in full time child care the ceiling for fee relief is \$200 and they would have to pay about \$82, or 41 percent, of the full fee.

The minimum fee according to government guidelines was \$15 per week and as no maximum fee was applicable parents remained responsible for any gap between the Commonwealth ceiling and the actual fee. In an attempt to assess the actual costs of using a child care centre, a phone poll was conducted as part of this research into the fee levels charged by child care centres. A total of 38 centres were contacted, and these included both profit and non-profit centres around Melbourne<sup>9</sup>.

**Table 1:      Summary of fees charged in child care centres from phone survey of 38 centres.**

Fee Level	Cost per week in dollars
Highest fee charged	\$157
Lowest Fee charged	\$85
Average fee for 38 centres	\$117

This phone poll reveals parents pay on average \$17 per week above the government fee ceiling. Parents receiving maximum fee relief must still pay this cost in addition to the \$15 minimum fee, taking their total average additional cost to \$32 per week. This increases to a weekly cost of \$72 for those who were paying the highest fee of \$157 revealed in the phone poll. Clearly parents can be forced to pay substantially above the fee ceiling set by the Commonwealth. Where demand outweighs supply, fee levels are effectively at the mercy of the centres themselves.

On 30 March 1990 the Federal government ratified the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 156 which committed the government to develop policies to ensure equal opportunity

<sup>8</sup> The assessed family income is determined by deducting a \$30 allowance for each dependant child.  
<sup>9</sup> Information as to services contacted during the phone poll is contained in Appendix 3.

in the treatment of those workers with family responsibilities. The Commonwealth government created a Work and Family Unit within the Department of Industrial Relations to work with unions and employers to address the needs of working parents. Ratification of this convention

".... requires member countries to aim for national policies which enable people to work without conflict between employment and family responsibilities." (Department of Employment, Education and Training 1990, p.1).

In 1990 The Australian Council of Trade Unions won its parental leave test case, giving both fathers and mothers a right to 52 weeks of unpaid leave to care for their child after birth or adoption. This included a right for permanent part-time work, if employers consented, until the child's second birthday (Australian Council of Trade Unions 1990, p.1).

### **Growth in child care services**

In 1990 the Federal Government announced the creation of a further 78,000 places: 10,000 in centres, 10,000 in family day care, 30,000 in out of school hours care including school holiday care, and 28,000 in commercial centres and employer supported care. The fee relief ceiling was raised, the income threshold increased and more generous withdrawal rates introduced. As a result a greater number of families would receive full and partial benefits (Department of Community Services and Health 1990a, p.2).

The Industry Initiative Program was changed to allow the involvement of public sector employers who were previously excluded from participation. As a further encouragement to employers, payments to secure priority of access in commercial centres were exempted from Fringe Benefits Tax and employer contributions towards operating costs were regarded as normal business expenses and therefore fully tax deductible (Department of Community Services and Health 1990a, pp.1-3).

Despite the Commonwealth's expansion of child care services there remained a substantial level of unmet demand for child care services. A survey conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in November 1990 found that 124,000 Victorian children aged under 12 had inadequate access to child care including family day care, centre based care, after school care or kindergartens. Nationally there were 514,000 children, or 17 percent of Australian children, for whom suitable child care could not be found.

"... in 61 percent of cases the main reason families could not find child care was that it did not exist in their area. Cost was another big problem: 34 percent of survey respondents claimed even if child care was available it was too expensive to use." (Neales 1992, p.3).

The greatest unmet demand for care was for children who were two or three years old. Of all children in care 80 percent was provided by informal arrangements, the most common being a relative. It also found

"The lower the average income, the less likely the family is to use formal care for their children." (Neales 1992, p.3).

As an indication of the growth in child care services available for working parents, the following table lists the number of child care places that existed in Australia in 1982, 1991 and 1993.

**Table 2: Growth in child care places in Australia by service type.**

Type of care	1982	1991	1993
Long day care	18,568	41,086	43,227
Family day care	15,100	42,950	48,245
Occasional care	(a)	5,131	3980
Outside school hours care	7,910	44,974	52,455
Fee relief only centres	nil	36,700	62,150
Total	41,578	170,841	210,057

Notes: (a) in 1982 occasional care was included in long day care  
(b) fee relief only centres are primarily commercial centres.

Sources: Department of Health, Housing and Community Services 1991, p.69; Department of Health, Housing, Local Government and Community Services 1993, pp.1-2.

This reveals the expansion in outside school hours care, family day care and long day care. The most substantial increase was in fee relief only services which are predominantly commercial child care centres and to a much lesser extent some employer funded programs. For example, in Victoria as at 1993 there were 12,280 places funded as fee relief only centres. These were made up of

- not for profit services a total of 2,185 places,
- commercially operated services, 9,668 places, and
- employer provided services a total of 427 places.<sup>10</sup>

## 1.10. Child care into the 1990's

The Labor Premier of Victoria initiated a study on the child care needs of school aged children culminating in a report by the Victorian Women's Consultative Council (1990, p.3) which recommended

"... increasing the provision of school aged care through negotiations with the Commonwealth, and through direct funding; the improved placement of services through greater cooperation at a planning level; the need for adequate funding to ensure a quality service; and the training of workers as a major component of quality care .... minimum standards be regulated and that fee scales, including fee relief to low income earners, be consistent."

There are still no regulations or mechanism to control quality of care for school aged children.

The Federal Government was the major source of funding for before and after school programs, and funding is allocated to organisations such as local councils, school councils and community groups.

<sup>10</sup> Source: Department of Health, Housing and Community Services 1993.

Vacation care was funded by a block grant to each state government. In addition to administering these federal funds, the Victorian Government funded before and after school care programs solely through school councils and, unlike Commonwealth programs, provided fee relief for those on lower incomes (Victorian Women's Consultative Council 1990, p.15-8).

Most care for school aged children, irrespective of whether it was before school, after school or during vacations was provided by the mother. Out of school hours programs rated fourth highest provider of care after a spouse and friend/relative. The report noted that the majority of women lacked access to formal school aged care programs; for example the 9,930 places available in before and after school programs catered for only four percent of all school aged children. The Commonwealth expansion in the next four years would increase this to only 6.5 percent. While the Victorian Women's Consultative Council (1990, p.30)

"... does not oppose the idea of free, quality and universally available child care it does not see universally, free child care as being an option at present, or as a priority over wider provision..."

Other states were also responding to the needs of working parents. For example, in the 1989-90 budget, the New South Wales government allocated \$4 million to child care, part of which was for joint venture projects with industry, for the purpose of

"...providing one-off capital/equipment funding to establish child care centres near the workplace ..between three to eight new child care centres will be constructed."

(Department of Employment, Education and Training 1990, p.30).

A report for the New South Wales Department of Employment, Education and Training considered the role of local Government in child care provision in the context of planning regulations. The report encouraged local government to support the establishment of child care services, including commercial child care centres, through local planning requirements. The report noted that in 1988 there was an

"... estimated unsatisfied demand across Australia for 125,000 long day care places for 0 to 5 year olds. ... Until recently the majority of child care centres have been located in residential areas, but there is an increasing demand for child care facilities located at or near the workplace." (Lang & Edmondson 1991, p.1).

The report recognised local government was in a good position to push for child care services to be established near the workplace, and a growing number of councils were becoming directly in funding services. It proposed that local government establish planning requirements for the provision of child care services within the municipality and this could be justified because of their responsibility for social planning (Lang & Edmondson 1991, p.15).

A 1992 survey was conducted in Victoria by the Office of Pre-School and Child Care of 1018 households with children of up to 13 years and found that parents faced long delays when trying to place their children in child-care centres and kindergartens.

"The survey's preliminary findings showed that parents were caught up in a frustrating and time-consuming chase to get care for their children. Many inspected five centres before choosing one that they were satisfied with. But 20 percent of parents had to put their children in a centre that was not their first choice." (Milburn 1992, p.3).

It also found that the operating hours of centres and kindergartens did not meet the needs of many parents, particularly shift workers, and that their hours should be extended. The frustration of finding child care was more acute for casual workers due to the fact that their working hours could vary from day to day or week to week (Milburn 1992, p.3). This is particularly relevant to the retail industry given the number of workers employed on evenings and weekends and the high level of casual employment.<sup>11</sup>

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs (1992, pp.84-6) reported on issues related to the equality of opportunity for Australian women and recommended

"...employers, unions and professional bodies ... allow for flexible working hours for workers, particularly those with family responsibilities....more flexible leave provisions be included in awards ... allow workers to take special leave to care for sick children or elderly relatives, without risking career prospects or job security."

In 1991 as part of the Australian Institute of Family Studies Early Childhood Study working mothers were asked about their experiences and attitudes in caring for sick children. This revealed that mothers provide most of the care for sick children and more than half of the mothers surveyed had taken time off work for this reason. When asked how it could be made easier to care for a sick child, the two most common suggestions were the right to have leave and the flexibility in the workplace (Ochiltree 1991c, p.30).

### **Employer support for child care in the 1990's**

Early in 1989 the Victorian Department of Labour established the Workbased Child Care Unit in the Women's Employment Branch to focus attention on the child care needs of working parents. The role of this Unit, the first of its kind in any state in Australia, was to provide expertise and support which could be utilised by employers, government departments, community groups and so on. A feasibility fund was established as a practical means of support to employers, where they received financial assistance to undertake a review of their employees child care needs (Department of Employment, Education and Training 1990, p.17).

By September 1990 only 18 employers in private industry and 48 in the public sector throughout Australia, 7 and 14 respectively in Victoria, were actively involved in financially supporting long day care or vacation care programs for their employees (Biggs 1990, p.4).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The nature of the retail industry is discussed further in Chapter 2.

<sup>12</sup> Tertiary education institutions are not included.

In the public sector most employer activity was in hospitals or statutory bodies and in private industry it mainly involved the financial or service sectors. A number of tertiary education institutions also provided child care for staff and students. One of the few examples of Victorian private industry employer involvement was KPMG Peat Marwick, an accounting firm which purchased 20 places in an existing centre (Biggs 1990, p.2). The company considered this was a good investment as it allowed them to support, and therefore retain, employees who were working parents. In addition the company benefited from publicity.

"We have had a very favourable response by all the media from print to television. If one costed the publicity alone, we would have recouped our investment" (Pople 1990, p.7).

The 1991 national congress of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (1991b, p.23) included among its priorities: a test case on five days of unpaid special family leave for working parents available reasons such as caring for a sick child; a review of the concept of paid maternity leave; encouraging domestic responsibilities to be shared more equitably between men and women; the availability of a comprehensive range of children's services, the achievement of a national accreditation system and location of services near workplaces, schools or residential communities. It also recognised the immediate need for an increase in child care places and supported,

"... as a long term objective the provision of universal delivery, free of charge. In the short-term fees provided by parents should be income related ... in order to provide maximum assistance to low income families." (Australian Council of Trade Unions 1991b, p.24).

The congress listed only twenty two companies in Australia who had developed child care programs for their employees in the last two years which included programs for employees which were not necessarily related to the creation of child care places (Australian Council of Trade Unions 1991a, pp1-3). Few employers cooperated in joint projects and one of the limited examples of joint employer activity in Victoria was a 30 place school holiday program established by four companies in the banking and financial sector located in Melbourne (Department of Employment, Education and Training 1990, p.14).

Overall employers had been slow to act in taking up the option of support available under the Industry Initiative Program. The Department of Health, Housing and Community Services (1991, p.170) stated

"Employers had been reluctant to sponsor child care for their employees often believing that costs would be high and benefits minimal."

The union movement was increasingly supporting an industrial relations system based on the development of enterprise agreements relevant to specific workplaces rather than continuing to rely solely on a centralised award system. As a result, in response to the low level of employer

involvement in supporting the child care needs of employees, the union movement moved to recommend the placement of

"... work and family issues on union agendas in enterprise negotiations .... to include employer subsidised child care, time off for workers to meet family emergencies, parental leave, career breaks ..." (Australian Council of Trade Unions 1991a, p.5).

The disadvantage of such a process was that it would take a long time to develop agreements as unions moved from employer to employer. Subsequently the President of the Australian Council of Trade Unions acknowledged that the ability to obtain agreements on child care issues in enterprise bargaining was a slower process than had been hoped (Newsletter Information Services 1992a, p.1).

There are only a limited number of examples, and most are in the banking or finance sector, of enterprise agreements which contain provisions relevant to the needs of working parents. Some examples are the 3 days paid leave was available from 1992 for National Australia Bank employees to care for dependent children in a child care emergency (Finance Sector Union of Australia 1992, p.1). In October 1993 an enterprise agreement with the ANZ Bank provided leave for employees to care for sick children. In addition workers could take as little as two hours of leave, instead of a full day, if they needed to arrange child care at short notice. Similar agreements were reached with National Australia Bank, the Commonwealth Bank, Shell, Ericsson, Esso and ICI (Norington 1993, p.3).

An agreement with National Mutual provided a more flexible roster arrangement where workers and management could determine the hours to be worked over a four week cycle, and three days of special family leave were introduced. Some part time employees expressed concern that they would be rostered when and where the company wanted, irrespective of their family commitments (Backhouse and Boreham 1993, p.3).

The Work and Child Care Advisory Service (1993, p.1) noted that employers who entered such agreements tended to introduce these changes as part of a process of change aimed at ensuring employees worked more productively. The intention was to develop an environment where worker needs were understood and accommodated. Companies could maintain a competitive advantage for

"Losing valued employees because workplaces are too rigid to accommodate different and changing needs is a cost companies can ill afford." (Work and Child Care Advisory Service 1993, p.1).

Most expansion of workbased child care services in the early 1990's was in government departments or publicly funded agencies. For example in 1992 the Public Transport Corporation decided to establish a new workbased centre at the Clifton Hill bus depot and it would be the first to open for 20 hours each day. Melbourne Water entered into a joint venture with the City of Nunawading to provide ten places for employees in a new 45 place centre and the Victorian State Government funded the costs involved in establishing five pilot workbased centres (Newsletter Information Services 1992a, p.1; 1992b, p.1).

By 1993 there were only about 19 companies in Australia who funded child care centres for their employees. In 1993, to further encourage employer involvement, the Federal Government enabled a partnership arrangement to be developed where the Government would provide interest free loan to employers for half of the establishment costs, up to a maximum of \$6,000 per place. In addition, support would be made available to employers who addressed the need for care of sick children, and the fringe benefits tax exemption was extended to include employer support for family day care, outside school hours care and vacation care (Work and Child Care Advisory Service 1993, p.6).

There were still however no employers in the retail industry in Victoria who were actively involved in funding child care services for their employees.

### **Election of a new Victorian Government**

The election of a Liberal-National Party Coalition Government in Victoria in 1992 heralded major reductions in government spending on children's services which had a substantial impact on both kindergartens and child care centres. This government withdrew the operational subsidy for 34 day nurseries and gave as justification the belief that child care was a Commonwealth responsibility and other states did not pay an operational subsidy to centres (Pearce 1992, p.16).

However, the Federal government did not agree and so the day nurseries themselves had to respond to the problem of a funding shortfall, at least in the short term, or be forced to close. The Victorian Government also made substantial cuts of \$11.5 in funding for kindergartens. The aim of the Government was for kindergarten teachers to increase their contact hours and the number of sessions to be increased (Crawford 1993, p.17).

Many opposed to the reductions argued that fee levels will have to be increased and this will force many parents to stop sending their children to these services (Dunlevy 1993, p.7). It was also considered that kindergartens could not effectively undertake the new roles and still adequately prepare children for school (Crawford 1993, p.17).

Manne (1993, p.17) reported that the intention of the Government was to make kindergartens more relevant to the needs of working parents by making them a one stop shop which also provided long day care. However, few resources were made available to facilitate the development of integrated child care and preschool services. Consequently there is no practical demonstration of a Government commitment to an integration of these services in the interest of working parents.

The outcome of these proposed changes is unclear, as a number of issues remain unresolved. For example, kindergarten teachers are attempting to gain Federal award coverage to protect their existing working conditions. It is not possible to view the Kennett government changes as a genuine step towards integration of existing kindergartens and child care centres.

In a separate development, the Victorian government attacked the working conditions of workers when in 1992 it changed the industrial relations legislation to abolished state awards and replace them with voluntary agreements. Employees wages and conditions would be negotiated with their



employees as part of an individual or collective agreement and only a few minimum requirements such as annual leave, sick leave and an hourly rate of pay were set by legislation (Bone 1992, p.13). All other conditions were open for negotiation.

These changes tend to place employers in a position of power for existing conditions be attacked, and the likelihood of workers negotiating new and improved family leave provisions is reduced. The union movement sought to protect all workers covered by state awards by moving them onto federal awards. Special industrial legislation was passed in the Federal parliament but at the time of writing the issue was not finally resolved as the State government has threatened court action in an attempt to reverse the impact of the Federal legislation (Messina 1993, p.6).

The 1993 Federal election saw the return of a Labor government. In the election campaign both the Labor party and the Coalition Government campaigned on the child care needs of working parents. The Labor government was committed to a continued expansion of child care places the introduction of a child care rebate to make assistance available to parents, irrespective of their income levels. From July 1994 families where the mother is in the workforce, training or seeking employment would pay the first \$16 of child care per week and then claim a rebate of 30 percent of child care costs for children aged under 12 years, up to a maximum of \$28.20 for one child or \$61.20 for two or more children each week. It could be claimed for costs incurred using child care centres, family day care outside school hours or private care arrangements (Buckley 1993, p.2).

It allows parents, even if they use private or informal care arrangements, to receive financial assistance towards their child care costs. This received some criticism as providing an unnecessary benefit to the wealthy because all parents, irrespective of income, were eligible. The Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association (1992, p.1) opposed the rebate and the increased funding of children's services, because of its belief that

"The government should not slant its child care support towards parents who need it solely for work-related purposes while neglecting parents who need child care for other reasons."

This stance was strongly attacked by those who considered the male dominated leadership of the union was out of contact with the needs of its predominantly female membership. Backhouse (1993, p.6) reported on a number of unions who supported the government initiatives and rejected the position taken by the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association; it was attacked for being in a time warp.

Neales (1993, p.22) noted that in its 1993 budget the Federal Government again committed to expand the number of child care places particularly for out of school hours care.

The following Chapter will place this research in the context of the nature and structure of the retail industry in Victoria.

## Chapter 2: Women, Work and Retail.

This chapter deals with a number of the factors pertaining to the employment of women, the retail industry and the workforce in general. Particular reference is made to developments and structural issues surrounding the operation of the retail industry. In order to place the practical field research in context, attention is given to a number of developments which occurred at and prior to the implementation of the practical research component.

### 2.1. Nature of the Retail Industry

The retail industry in Victoria is varied in its nature and location. There are large employment sites such as the department stores like Myer and David Jones which require a vast number of employees. A substantial feature of the retail industry is, however, the regional shopping centre which houses many retail stores effectively under one roof. These centres provided off street parking for customers, so that shoppers can select from a vast range of retail outlets. These contain all forms of retail stores such as clothing, jewellery, food stalls, shops which cater for take-away or sit down meals as well as fresh food markets. Some also have cinema centres which provide entertainment.<sup>13</sup>

Another form of retail outlet is the strip shopping area such as Camberwell or Sydney Road Brunswick. While there are a number of stores in close proximity, they frequently do not have the same level of shopping convenience or level of variety as in the regional shopping centres.

In addition, there are some free standing stores, where normally one or two larger retailers operated on their own. For example, Coles New World and KMart have free standing retail operations in East Burwood and Broadmeadows. There are also many hardware stores which are located on their own.

In many ways these different types of shopping areas operate in competition with each other. The nature of retailing throughout the 1980's and the early 1990's changed as the number and size of regional centres grew. For example, during this period regional centres such as Highpoint West increased substantially in size as did Northland, Chadstone, Forest Hill, Frankston, Brandon Park and Knox City. There were new centres built in locations such as Werribee Plaza, Rowville, a substantial upgrade in Cranbourne and major changes in Dandenong.

In addition to the retail outlets, many companies have their own warehouses or distribution centres. There are a lesser number of staff employed in these warehouses. For example, smaller retail chains such as Spotlight, Just Jeans or Lincraft have a small warehouse to supply their stores. Other warehouses are quite large and have hundreds of employees at the one location, such as with

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<sup>13</sup> There are numerous examples throughout the metropolitan and country areas such as Southland, Eastland, Highpoint West, Northland, Brandon Park, Glen Waverley, Werribee Plaza, Altona Gate, Frankston and Knox City.

Safeway or Coles supermarkets. Proportionately, the vast majority of employees in these companies are located in retail stores. The award provisions, including rates of pay, can vary between warehouses of different companies. In general warehouse employees receive higher rates of pay and better award provisions than do shops employees.

Most retail workers are covered by four main retail awards<sup>14</sup>:

- Clothing and Footwear Shops Award,
- Electrical, Furniture and Hardware Shops Award,
- Food Shops Award, and
- General Shops Award.

Three main employment classifications exist in these four awards:

- Shop Manager,
- Department Manager,
- Shop Assistant.

As the award provisions are essentially the same in each of the awards, most of the discussion about award provisions relates to the General Shops Award No. 2 of 1990 Case No. 90/0548. Each of the above classifications are covered by the same award provisions except that the rates of pay for management are higher. Neither the wage structure for management nor shop assistants contains incremental increases based on length of service. The awards set down the minimums which are permissible and it is up to employers whether they provide over award benefits such as higher wages to reward length of service or competence. Awards contain junior proportionate rates of pay and adult wages are payable at age 21.

The awards set down the terms and conditions for each type of employment. A full-time employee is defined as someone who works a maximum of 38 hours on average per week, in accordance with to certain rosters which determine their daily hours of work for example a nineteen day four week cycle with one rostered day off in each cycle or work on five days of every week.

Part-time employees are defined by the award as those who are not able to work full time, but who agree to work a lesser number of hours. Once agreement is reached with the employer as to the number of hours the employer provides a roster for these hours. Part-time employees are to have a regular pattern of work and in general receive the same conditions as full timers, which include the possibility of evenings and/or Saturday work.

Under the award casual employment is based on the hours of work offered by the employer. The same number of hours do not have to be offered each week, nor at the same time. A penalty loading

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<sup>14</sup> These awards were in place at the time the research was undertaken. As noted in Chapter 1 they were removed by the Victorian State Government, however existing employees had the right to retain their award provisions in full unless they reached agreement on a new employment contract.

is applicable for casual employment, and a number of award provisions which apply to full and part time employees do not apply to casuals: for example, overtime and public holidays.

The award provisions do not allow leave from work for reasons related to the care of children. For example, a parent who needs to have time off work to care for a sick child or find a new child care arrangement is not covered by the terms and conditions of employment. The sick leave provisions are specifically for the illness of the worker themselves. The lack of relevant award provisions means employers have the right to grant or refuse such leave as they see fit.

A feature of the retail industry is that many employees work of an evening or on Saturdays. An increasing number of employees now work on Sundays due to legalised Sunday trading in tourist areas of Victoria, the introduction of ten days of Sunday trading in the early 1990's and the decision of the State Government in 1992 to allow seven day trading in the central business district all year.

Trading in most parts of the retail industry is of a seasonal nature. For example, in the weeks leading up to Easter and Christmas trading increases substantially for those retailers providing relevant goods or services. This seasonal nature also has implications for the staffing levels required at these times, and it means some flexibility in employment is needed during these periods. For example, the awards allow employers to engage temporary full timers for a period of up to six weeks over Christmas and they can increase or decrease hours of casuals and possibly part timers.

Trading also varies throughout the week. In many parts of the retail industry, a substantial proportion of sales occurs on Thursday or Friday evenings and Saturdays. Many stores engage junior staff during these periods. It was difficult to obtain evidence to confirm these trends as retailers are guarded in the publication of such information. An indication of the trading patterns is evident in information presented by the Retail Traders Association of Victoria to the Industrial Relations Commission in 1987 following the extension of Saturday trading from 1 pm to 5 pm.

**Table 1: Sales for Myer Stores after the extension of Saturday trading from 1 pm to 5 pm.**

Day	Current Sales Percent	Future Sales Percent
Monday	14	12
Tuesday	14	12
Wednesday	15	13
Thursday	8	8
Thursday nights	12	12
Friday	9	9
Friday night	16	12
Saturday	12	22
Total	100	100

Source: Industrial Relations Commission of Victoria 1987.

Prior to the extension of Saturday trading, 40 per cent of the Myer company trading occurred on the late nights or Saturdays until 1 pm. With the advent of Saturday afternoon trading, the proportion of

trading predicted to occur on late nights and all day Saturday was 46 per cent. On Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, when there was no late night trading, a combined reduction of 6 per cent in sales was predicted.

The concentration of sales during late nights and Saturdays is evident from a comparison of sales and weekly trading hours. At this time most Victorian Myer stores traded from 9 am to 5.45 pm Monday to Wednesday, 9 am to 9 pm Thursday or Friday and 9 am to 5 pm on Saturday.

**Table 2:      Proportion of Myer sales**

Trading Period	Number of Trading Hours	Proportion of Trading Hours	Proportion of Sales
	Hours	Percent	Percent
Monday to Friday, Not late nights	44.25	76	54
Thursday and Friday nights plus Saturday	14	24	46
Total	58.25	100	100

Source:          Industrial Relations Commission of Victoria 1987.

The importance of evening and weekend trading is clearly evident from the fact that 46 percent of sales occur during this period and it accounts for only 24 percent of trading hours. Many retail companies have such a trading pattern as that listed for the Myer company and experience a similar concentration of sales during the late nights and Saturdays. This would at least in part be linked to the fact that they are the times when most people would be available to shop, as they are not at work.

Part of the nature of the retail industry relates to the employment structure implemented by various companies. As an example of the different structures in place, Appendix 4 contains information obtained from the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association, Victorian Branch as to union membership in Coles supermarkets and Myer Stores. Coles supermarkets rely substantially on casuals: 46 percent of union members employed with Coles are casuals aged between 15 and 19 years. This results in an overall company structure in Coles supermarkets of:

- 17 percent are full-timers,
- 10 percent are part-timers, and
- 73 percent of casuals.

A very different structure exists in the Myer company. Firstly, the overall company structure is far less reliant upon casuals.

- 23 percent are full-timers,
- 30 percent are part-timers, and
- 47 percent are casuals.

In contrast to Coles, 53 percent of union members employed with Myer are either full or part-time employees. Secondly the vast majority, 78 percent, are between 20 and 49 years of age.

Under the four shops awards noted above, employees can be rostered to work late nights and Saturdays as a part of their normal working week. For full and part time employees, there are some restrictions as to how often they can be required to work at these times and only casuals can be called in to work when required. Award provisions provide a penalty loading to weekly employees, that is full or part timers, who work evenings or Saturdays as part of their roster. For example, if they work a late night, they receive their ordinary time payment plus a 25 per cent loading for a minimum of three hours.<sup>15</sup>

In 1990 when the field research was conducted, casuals were paid a loading of 33 1/3 per cent for each hour they worked, whether this is during the day or during Thursday or Friday evenings. After 9 pm, all employees moved on to overtime rates of pay. On Saturdays, all employees, whether full-time, part-time or casual received a loading of 50 per cent for all time worked.<sup>16</sup>

Listed below are some examples of how this penalty rate structure has a tangible impact on the wage level for those who work evenings or Saturdays. The rates of pay listed are those applicable for an adult shop assistant as at 30 November, 1990.

**Example One: Full time adult shop assistant working 38 hours comprising one late night per week and 7.5 hours on Saturday as part of their normal roster.**

Weekly Rate:	\$362.30
Additional Late Night Loading (3 hour minimum)	\$7.20
Additional Saturday Loading (7.5 hours)	\$35.80
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$405.30</b>

Note:            Figures are rounded up to the nearest 10 cents.  
Source:        Industrial Relations Commission of Victoria 1990, *General Shops Award*.

Employment on a late night and Saturday resulted in additional weekly loadings which totalling \$43 which represents an increase of 11.9 percent in the weekly rate of pay.

<sup>15</sup> The impact of the three hour minimum payment for the loading is that employers roster weekly staff from 6 pm through to 9 pm.  
<sup>16</sup> For casuals, this was calculated at a 50 percent loading on top of the part time hourly rate.

**Example Two: Part time adult shop assistant working 18 hours during the week, plus three hours on a late night and 7.5 hours on Saturday. This is a total of 28.5 hours per week.**

Weekly Rate, 28.5 hours	\$271.80
Additional Late Night Loading (3 hour minimum)	\$7.20
Additional Saturday Loading (7.5 hours)	\$35.80
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$314.80</b>

Note:           Figures are rounded up to the nearest 10 cents.

Source:       Industrial Relations Commission of Victoria 1990, *General Shops Award*.

A part time shop assistant who works this roster has an increase in pay of \$43 per week, or 15.8 percent, due to the additional loadings.

The nature of the award provisions makes it possible for both full and part time employees to substantially increase their level of pay if they work evenings or Saturdays. This of course depends on their ability to work these hours as well as the capacity of employers to roster them at these times.

One consideration for employers in determining who they roster in these penalty rate areas relates to the impact of junior rates of pay. For example, a sixteen year old is paid 50 percent of the adult rate. There is an obvious financial incentive for employers to roster junior employees during penalty rate periods in order to reduce their wage costs. There is little difficulty in employers finding junior labour as they can call upon secondary or tertiary students during these periods. Some companies, in spite of the labour costs, prefer to employ their senior staff at these times due to their level of skill and experience. Employers have to balance the lower wage costs against whether junior staff could generate the same level of sales as older and more experienced staff. Consequently employers play a major role in determining the nature of employment within the retail industry.

**2.2. Wage levels in the Retail Industry.**

As a part of an analysis of employment in the retail industry, it is necessary to compare the wages actually paid to retail employees with the minimum rates set out in the retail awards. That is, whether shop assistants receive additional income from over award payments such as commission on sales, bonuses or increments to reward experience and service.

Research occurred in 1988 into the level of over award payments in the retail industry for workers covered by the four awards outlined above. This was undertaken by the Statistical Consulting Centre at Melbourne University under the auspices of the State Industrial Relations Commission as part of a wage case conducted under the principle of supplementary payments. Wage increases were possible for those employees covered by awards where few workers received over award payments. A survey of a wide range of shop keepers was completed and responses obtained as to the wage levels of 2797 employees covered by these awards.

Jarrett (1988a, p.14-17) reported that most shop managers or department managers were engaged full time. Most shop managers, dependent upon the type and size of store, received substantially above the award rate of pay. Department managers, again dependent upon the nature of the store, received over award payments on average of up to 10 percent. However, shop and department managers represent only a small proportion of all employees covered by the awards. Around two thirds of all employees were shop assistants.

Full time shop assistants, other than those covered by the Electrical, Furniture and Hardware award, generally received over award payments of less than 5 percent. A higher level of over award payment existed for those employed under the Electrical, Furniture and Hardware award, ranging between 11 and 25 percent. The main reason for these payments was commission paid on sales.

The situation was worse for those employed on a part time basis as there was a very small level of over award payment. Part time employees averaged a weekly income of around \$100 gross per week and received on average only an additional one percent above the award, mainly for reasons related to service or merit. Overall few shop assistants covered by the four awards were found to receive over award payments in excess of 5 percent (Jarrett 1988a, p.24).

Even with the over award increase included, most full time adult shop assistants at the time the practical field research was completed would average less than \$380 per week. Those employed under the Electrical, Furniture and Hardware Award would receive on average between \$400 and \$450 per week. These rates do not include additional loadings referred to above.

## 2.3. Employment Growth in the 1980's.

There were changes in the nature of the workforce during the 1980's. One feature during this period was the relative increase in female employment, including married women, as a proportion of the Australian workforce. The increased participation of married women had a direct impact on the way in which families arranged their lives (for example, see Wolcott, 1991; Mumford, 1989).

Australian Bureau of Statistics data in *The Labour Force*, December 1980 to December 1990, reveals that between 1980 and 1990 there was an increase of 1,551,700 persons, or 24.3 percent, in the size of the workforce.<sup>17</sup> This was made up of increases in the following categories:

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<sup>17</sup> The definitions used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics for full-time and part-time employment are as follows:

- full-time workers are those persons usually employed for 35 or more hours each week;
- part-time workers are those persons usually employed for less than 35 hours a week.

The part-time category includes both part-time and casual employees. Married women include those living in a defacto relationship; and the not married category includes persons who never married, were separated, widowed or divorced. These definitions are consistently used, for example, the Labour Force Status and other characteristics of Families, Australia June 1990, Catalogue No. 6224.0



- the number of married females increased by 593,300 or 42.3 per cent,
- all females by 996,400 or 43.2 per cent, and
- males by 555,200 or 13.6 per cent.<sup>18</sup>

By 1990 women comprised 41.6 percent of the Australian workforce. The fact that for every male who entered the workforce there were almost two women who did so was linked to the comparative change in full and part time employment. Part-time employment for the entire workforce by 65.2 percent whereas full time employment increased by only 16.5 percent. <sup>19</sup>

The following table lists the number of employees who work part time, and indicates what proportion they represent of the total number of employees for both 1980 and 1990.

**Table 3:      Proportion of the workforce in part time employment.**

Employment Category	1980		1990	
Part time workers	Number employed part time	Proportion of each category working part time	Number employed part time	Proportion of each category working part time
	(000's)	Percent	(000's)	Percent
Males	219.8	5.4	372.4	8.0
Married Females	614.0	43.8	914.7	45.8
Non Married Females	187.3	20.7	399.8	30.5
All Females	801.3	34.7	1314.5	39.8
All Persons	1021.1	16.0	1686.8	21.2

Source:          Australian Bureau of Statistics 1980 to 1990, *The Labour Force*, Cat. no. 6203.0

This data shows the substantial increase in part time employment for women. Of the additional 665,700 part time employees who entered the workforce between 1980 and 1990, women accounted for 513,200, or 77.1 percent, of this growth. Despite the increase in male part time employment, by 1990 still only 8 percent of all employed males worked part time in comparison to the far greater proportion of both married and non married females.

The structure of the Victorian workforce is similar to that outlined for Australia as a whole. The proportion employed on a part time basis was 8.1 percent for males, 38.4 percent for all females and 20.9 percent of the total workforce. This is almost identical to the proportions noted above for the

<sup>18</sup> Details are contained in Appendix 5.  
<sup>19</sup> Details are contained in Appendix 5.

Australian workforce. Similarly, women comprised 42.1 percent of the Victoria workforce (Department of Labour, Women's Employment Branch 1991, p.3).

The increase in part time employment during the 1980's is a major factor in the reduction of males as a proportion of the total workforce. In 1980 males accounted for 63.9 percent of the workforce, but by 1990 this decreased to 58.4 percent. Whereas in 1980 full time males represented 60.4 percent of the workforce, by 1990 this reduced to 53.7 percent. Yet there was substantial growth in both full time and part time employment for married females from 1980 to 1990. There was an increase of 37.1 percent in the number of married females working full time and a 49 per cent increase in those employed on a part time basis. Despite the increase in part time employment, by 1990 there was still a greater proportion of both married and non married females in full time employment, 54.2 percent and 69.5 percent respectively (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1980 to 1990, *The Labour Force*).

As far as the Australian workforce is concerned, Lewis (1990, p.6) notes almost half of those employed on a part time basis work in either the retail industry or community services. The retail industry is a key provider of part time employment, particularly for women.

Lewis (1990, pp.34-40) reports there are both supply and demand factors which account for the relative increase in part time employment. On the demand side, are factors such as structural changes in the economy and labour market, and the impact of new technology on employment. In relation to supply, there is the availability of labour from those workers who prefer part time employment, particularly for married women with children. Importantly, employers would only support an expansion of part time employment where it is profitable to do so.

"It would be fairly safe to assume, however, that the rapid growth in part time and casual work over the past decade has been largely a result of structural shifts in the economy and changing economic conditions which have increased the relative advantages of part time work to employers." (Lewis 1990, p.39).

The increased participation rate of married women working part time has been matched by employer demand for their labour.

"Employers see them (married women) as more skilled, experienced and reliable than the teenagers; and if so, who can blame them for selecting the best workers."  
(Colebatch 1992, p.1,15).

Likewise, in Victoria a greater proportion of women with dependant children are employed part time in preference to full time. Of those women without dependant children, 69.1 percent work full time. Yet for those with dependant children, 57. 2 percent work part time (Department of Labour, Women's Employment Branch 1991, p.12).

Many married women due to their family commitments want to work less than full time hours, and for retailers who want part time employees, married women are an obvious choice (Walker 1993, p.3).

Part time employment provides a compromise for women who want, or need to work, and who desire to balance this against the role they play as mother and homemaker.

"The difficulty in juggling work and family commitments is one reason why women with children prefer part-time work" (Wolcott 1990, p.33).

For these women, the opportunity for part time employment is

"... a reasonable way of balancing competing demands in their lives, particularly the need to be with their child at the same time as the need to earn some income" (Wulff 1987, p.17).

The importance of part-time work for married women is noted in a research project conducted by the Swinburne Institute of Technology's Centre for Women's Studies during 1986.

"All the women interviewed are asked about their plans for returning to work when their maternity leave period had expired. Overall, three-fifths of the women anticipated returning, but of these the majority are hoping to do so on a part-time basis (Wulff 1987, p.15).

Consequently, there are implications for the provision of child care services which stem from the fact that there is a substantial number of married women in the workforce, many with dependent children. For example, as at August 1990 in Victoria

- 58.1 per cent of women with dependent children were in the workforce, and
- of the total female population aged 15 and over, 61.8 per cent of women with dependent children participated in the labour force and 48.9 percent of those without dependent children did so (Department of Labour, Women's Employment Branch 1991).

Between 1980 and 1990 married women had the greatest increase as a proportion of the total workforce; from 21.9 to 25.1 percent, non married females from 14.2 to 16.5 percent, while males fell from 63.9 to 58.4 percent. The most substantial growth for married women was in those aged 35 to 44 years: whereas in 1980 they comprised 6.6 percent of the workforce, by 1990 this grew to 9 percent. In addition, those married women aged 25 to 34 years increased from 6.8 percent in 1980 to 7.1 in 1990, and those aged 45 to 54 years increased from 4.4 to 5.4 percent. These are all ages at which married women could have dependent children (Australian Bureau of Statistics *The Labour Force*).

A similar growth existed for married women in both full and part time employment during this period. Between 1980 and 1990, there was an increase in employment

- for those aged 25 to 34 years in full time employment by 31.0 percent, and part time by 30.8 percent;
- for those 35 to 44 years, by 63.7 and 76.2 percent respectively, and
- for those 45 to 54 years by 53.9 and 51.5 percent (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1980 to 1990, *The Labour Force*).

Information as at November 1990 from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (1990c) reveals that the retail industry employs 14.6 percent of the Australian workforce. There is a greater proportion of female employment in the retail industry than in the workforce as a whole: a total of 41.6 percent of the national workforce were female in comparison to 51.7 percent of the retail workforce.

This could translate to a greater proportionate need for child care in the retail industry than in the workforce as a whole. Married women comprised a substantial 27.2 percent of the entire retail industry, a fact that would also impact strongly on the issue of child care needs.

There is some overlap between the retail and wholesale industries, and the Australian Bureau of Statistics uses this as a combined industry category. A number of retail employees could be classified as part of the wholesale trade given the distribution systems used to supply retail outlets. For example there are wholesale and retail distribution centres which supply retail outlets, as well as wholesale distributors. Information on the combined wholesale and retail industry is provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (1990c) and notably, this combined industry employs 20.8 percent of the Australian workforce and is the largest industry in Australia. Next highest is community services with 18 per cent of the workforce.

Married women are also a substantial proportion of the combined wholesale and retail industry, some 411,300 or 25.2 percent, out of the 1,633,200 person industry. The Women's Employment Branch, Department of Labour, (1991, p.3) contains information as to occupational groupings for both males and females in the Victorian workforce. Most retail employees are classified as Sales/Personal Service workers under the Australian Bureau of Statistics classifications. The third highest occupational grouping in Victoria is that of Sales/Personal Service Workers at 15.1 percent, behind Trade persons with 16 per cent and Clerks with 15.7 percent. As with the national data, a considerable proportion of the Sales/Personal Service workers, 63 percent, are women. The employment status of these workers is outlined below.

**Table 4: Employment status of Sales and Personal Service Workers in Victoria as at 1990**

Employment Status	Females	Males	Total	Percent
Full Time	83,289	91,677	174,966	55.9
Part Time	113,611	24,223	137,834	44.1

Source: Department of Labour, Women's Employment Branch 1991, p.12

While a greater proportion of all Sales and Personal Service Workers are employed full time, of those who are female 57.7 percent of work part time compared to only 20.9 percent of males.

As a result of its size, significant developments in the structure of the retail industry would be expected to have an impact on the nature of the Australian workforce. Any national response to the issue of child care for working parents would need to address the needs of those employed in the retail industry.

The substantial proportion of married women with dependents in the workforce means that, for many, the need for child care would be a by product of their workforce participation. The

Department of Labour, Women's Employment Branch (1991, p.11) details the married women in the Victorian workforce according to whether they have dependant children. It is not surprising that the majority of married women aged 24 or under did not have dependent children. This is tied to the age at which women have their first child, discussed later in this Chapter. By contrast, of married women aged 25 to 34 years in the workforce, there are 66.4 percent who have dependent children and an even greater proportion, 82.4 percent, of those aged 35 to 44 years have children. It is this age group of 25 to 44 years which is regarded as the main child bearing years for women and clearly many of these women are in employment.

The need for child care will in part be influenced by the employment status of the spouse. In cases where both parents with dependent children are in the labour force, there is a restricted capacity for them to provide the child care needed while they work.

The participation rate for married women with dependents is provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (1990d) in cases where their husband is in the labour force. It is evident that where the husband is in the paid workforce, in the majority of cases so is the married woman. For example, of married women aged 15 to 34 years a total of 52.8 percent are in the workforce; this increases to 72.5 percent for those aged 35 to 44 years and is 65.4 percent for those aged 45 and over. In the majority of married couple households with dependants where the husband is in the labour force so too is the married woman. This data also impacts on the perception of the 'traditional' family: that is, cases where the husband is the full time wage earner and the mother remains at home full time caring for their children. This particular family unit is in the minority in Australia.

In considering the possible impact of labour force participation on the need for child care, it is also important to review the workforce participation of single parents. There is an increasing number of single parent families in Australia. McDonald (1993, p.2) notes that in the 20 years from 1974 the proportion of single parent families increased from 9.2 percent to 16.6 percent.

Firstly, single parent families are far more likely to have a female parent than a male parent, 87.1 percent and 12.9 percent respectively. Secondly, the majority of single parents are part of the paid workforce:

- In the labour force, 200,700 or 55.6 percent,
- Not in the labour force, 160,400 or 44.4 percent.

There are a greater proportion of male single parents in employment, 78 percent to 52.3 percent. However they only represent a small proportion of all single parents in the workforce as 82 percent are female (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1990d).

The child care needs of a single parent would be anticipated to be more acute than those of two parent families. Whereas in two parent families there may be the opportunity for both parents to share in the child care responsibilities, this would not usually be the case for single parents.

This brief analysis of the labour force leads to the conclusion that the increased involvement of married women in the workforce, the participation of single parents in employment and the increase of part time employment mean that many parents would need to address issues related to the care of their children as a result of their workforce participation.

It is of no great surprise that Wolcott (1991, p.33) reports

"... most surveys of workers with family responsibilities conclude that a significant proportion of women and some men have difficulty balancing the demands of work and family life."

The age at which women are likely to experience child care as an issue is related to the age at which women give birth to their first child. In Australia throughout the 1980s, there was a trend for women to delay the age at which they had their children as evidenced by the age at which women gave birth to their first child. Between 1971 and 1990 the median age at which married women gave birth to their first child increased from 23.2 to 27.6 years (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1990b). This trend is also evident from the birth rate statistics for all women between 1981 and 1990 listed below.

**Table 5:      Change in Australian birth rates per 1000 women between 1981 and 1990**

Age group	1981	1990	Percentage
	('000)	('000)	Change
15 to 19 years	28	22	(21)
20 to 24 years	108	80	(26)
25 to 29 years	145	139	(4)
30 to 34 years	77	102	33
35 to 39 years	25	35	40
40 & over years	5	6	20

Note:            figures in brackets indicate negative growth.

Source:        Australian Bureau of Statistics 1990b.

There was a reduction in birth rates for women aged between 15 and 29 years. This was accompanied by an increase in birth rates for women aged 30 years and over. The trend for women to delay their child bearing age gives them the opportunity to remain in the workforce for longer periods before starting a family. This also means that women, would be aged in their forties before their children reached secondary school age, that is, an age when children could be expected to take increased responsibility for their own care. However, the delay in having children does not reduce the need for child care.

One of the important factors in determining access to child care is the economic circumstances of the family. The table below contains information about the average weekly earnings for the workforce in Australia and Victoria.

**Table 6: Average Weekly Earnings for Victoria and Australia as at November 1990.**

<b>Persons</b>	<b>Australia</b>	<b>Victoria</b>
	\$ per week	\$ per week
All Males	578.20	572.40
All Females	377.90	383.50
All employees	490.60	488.20

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 1990g.

The average weekly earnings listed in this table for both Victoria and Australia are similar and both reveal higher earning for males above females. Two of the key reasons behind the lower level of female earnings are that a higher proportion of women are employed less than full time and that women are generally in lower paying occupational categories.

A key factor in the continuing adequacy of family income relates to the impact of inflation. Where wage levels do not keep pace with inflation, pressure can increase on the family to find additional income. From the end of 1980 to the end of 1990 the rate of inflation for all capital cities and Melbourne was quite similar, and the effective increase in the Consumer Price Index over this period was:

- Cumulative increase for capital cities: 117.2 percent
- Cumulative increase for Melbourne: 119.2 percent (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1980 to 1990, *Consumer Price Index*).

This resulted in an effective average annual inflation rate for this period in excess of 10 percent, marking the 1980's as years of high inflation.

Data provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics 1980 to 1990, *Average Weekly Earnings, States and Australia* indicated the growth in average weekly earnings for workers in Victoria. Due to a change in the method of estimating average weekly earnings, data could only be compared reliably after 1981 through to 1990. Over this period there was a 96 percent increase in the rate of average weekly earnings. This compares to an increase of 77.6 percent in the award rate of pay for full time shop assistants in Victoria during this period, notably lower than the growth in average weekly earnings.

In order to gain a comparison with another retail award a comparison was made with wage movements in the Industrial Relations Commission of Victoria 1990, *Hotels, Resorts and Hospitality Award*. This award is applicable for retail employees working in sandwich bars and food areas where food can be consumed on the premises. Wages are noted for those employed under this award who carry out a similar tasks to shop assistants, that is attendants, waitresses or waiters in snack or sandwich bars. Between 1981 and 1990, the full time award wage increased by 69.7 percent, also notably below the increase in average weekly earnings.

The following table compares the wage during this period, with movements in the consumer price index in order to determine relative wage growth.

**Table 7: Comparison between cost of living increases and wage movements, from the end of 1981 to the end of 1990.**

Type of Earnings	Wage rate (dollars)		Wage growth for this period	Wage rate (dollars) if adjusted for CPI (2)
	1981	1990		1990
Average weekly earnings	249.10	488.20	96.0	490.98
General shops award	204.00	362.30	77.6	402.08
Hotels & hospitality award	189.20	321.20	69.8	372.91

- Note 1:      The wage rate for the General Shops and Hospitality award, is that payable to full time workers.
- Note 2:      This is the real growth in the 1980 wage level after adjusting for an 97.1 percent increase in the Consumer Price Index, for Melbourne, from the end 1981 to the end of 1990.
- Sources:     Australian Bureau of Statistics 1980 to 1990, *Average Weekly Earnings, States and Australia*; Industrial Relations Commission of Victoria 1990, *General shops award, Hotels, resorts and hospitality industry Award*.

During the 1980's full time retail employees on award rates of pay endured a reduction in their real wage levels in comparison to the increase in inflation during the same period. Due to the impact of inflation, by 1990 those employed under the shops awards had their real wage level reduced by \$39.78 per week, or 11 percent. Over this same period, those under the Hotels & hospitality award suffered a reduction of \$51.71, or 16.1 percent, in real terms. Those employed as part time and casual workers, had a proportionate reduction given their rate of pay is based on the full time award wage.

As the majority of shop assistants are not in receipt of over award payments, they experienced a decline in real terms in their wage level during this period, even taking into account the small levels of over award payments noted above. Their wage level also reduced over this same period in comparison to average weekly earnings. Whereas in 1981 the award rate for a full time shop assistant represented 82 percent of average weekly earnings, by the end of 1990 this had fallen to 74.2 percent.

There was a greater reduction in real wages for those employed under the Hospitality Award; at the end of 1981 the full time rate represented 76 percent of average weekly earnings but by the end of 1990 this had fallen to 65.8 percent.

Taxation also has an impact on the relativity of wage growth and inflation over time. Even when wages and inflation increased by equal percentages, taxation on income would reduce take home pay by the marginal tax rate. Wage increases, whilst meeting the needs of workers to keep pace with inflation, can also push income earners into higher tax brackets. Taxation issues were addressed as a part of the Accord agreements between the Australian Council of Trade Unions and the Federal Labor government, to provide tax relief as part of this general wages agreement (Johnston 1993, p.7). It is not the scope of this research to undertake an analysis of taxation



measures, but rather to acknowledge the importance of a review of taxation levels as a factor in the maintenance of family income levels.

This real reduction in award rates of pay has an impact on those families where their income level is based on award wages. This has increased the burden on families to improve their income level by both parents working. This in turn has a tangible impact on the need for child care.

## 2.4. Women and work

The increased participation of married women in the workforce can be the result of a number of factors. Many women establish themselves in employment long before they have children. Employment in a particular occupation can be the result of a personal aspiration to seek employment in that area.

" attitudes, expectations, and in some cases, specific plans about work and family responsibilities develop long before people actually face such a situation, and the foundations may be laid down quite early in life." (Hartley 1991, p.37).

Many women enter into the workforce because they want to work and desire to have a career.

"... more and more women choose to establish a career before choosing to marry and/or to have children." (Edgar 1990, p.2).

The ability to exercise personal choice about employment can be affected by a number of factors. Many occupations require the attainment of a certain educational standard and there are also considerations such as the number and location of jobs or demand for employment in specific occupations.

Consideration of parenthood also effects decisions about workforce participation. Parenthood does involve decisions and choices related to balancing work and family commitments. These decisions and how equally responsibility is shared by the parents can have a substantial impact on employment opportunities. Where these responsibilities continue to fall predominantly on women there can be a substantial impact on the opportunity for workforce participation.

".. whatever a woman's self concept, how can she really pursue her own interests satisfactorily if she has children; or alternatively how can she spend the time she wishes to spend with her children if she is financially forced to work" (Curthoys 1988, p.10).

There are essentially three main reasons behind women's participation in the workforce, or return to the workforce after taking time off to raise children: financial, social and career.

Schwartz (1992, p.3) noted that the financial pressure on families to obtain a sufficient level of income was a factor which had pushed many women into the workforce. Ochiltree (1990a, p.55) also stated that financial need is a key factor in why mothers entered the paid workforce. A

maternity leave study by Glezer (1988a, p.11) found that women who remained in the workforce after having children did so primarily for financial reasons.

Whilst financial reasons are the most frequent response given to why mothers return to work, it is at its highest level for those with lower paid jobs, or occupational status.

"... there are significantly more women with low education, low occupational status and low paid jobs who return to work for financial reasons ..." (Glezer 1988a, p.31).

The significant effect that low income can have on families is outlined in by the Australian Government Commission of Inquiry into Poverty in the early 1970s, chaired by Professor Henderson.

"Low income means that families are placed under constant stress which makes them particularly vulnerable. Secondly, when trouble occurs, the effects are likely to be far reaching for the low income family which has fewer resources to resolve it ... The task of meeting the daily needs of a family requires considerable effort on the part of any parent but even greater effort and strain where a small income must be eked out to cover a multitude of demands" (Australian Government Commission of Inquiry into Poverty 1975, p.202).

As a result of the need to obtain a sufficient level of income, there can be a number of pressures which impact on the family.

"Low income can harm family life by creating stress, restricting opportunities and choices, and in particular, by placing pressure on parents to devote more time to earning." (Australian Government Commission of Inquiry into Poverty, 1975, p220).

Financial need can also have an effect on the ability of families to share the role and tasks associated with parenting within their family unit. In situations where the male in a working class family could earn a higher income than the female,

"... it is absurd for families to forego his wage in order that he undertake unpaid childcaring" (Curthoys 1988, p.58).

The converse is also true. However there is very real pressure on families to have two incomes. The Victorian Women's Consultative Council (1990, p.5) recognised:

"... that women work for a variety of reasons, including the frequently ignored fact that they are often the family breadwinner. The income earned by women in two parent families is often essential to the family's economic survival"

Rein (1980, p.14) referred to the value of a second income for many families.

"In general, wives earnings move their families not only out of poverty but also into higher standard of living levels".

Having to place the children in care in situations where parents work due to financial demands may create its own unique pressures for these parents. Wulff (1987, p.14-17) discusses the issue of

maternity leave with particular reference to a study conducted at Swinburne Institute of Technology. Of respondents who returned to work full time, for most the reasons were income related. It was also noted that many women who returned to employment after taking maternity leave found that

"... leaving their child is a wrench they had not foreseen and is particularly painful if what they viewed as satisfactory child care is hard to find."

In addition to the financial reasons for employment, there is also the motivation to work for more social reasons. Many forms of employment provide the opportunity for interaction or contact with a variety of people. In this sense, many different occupations have a social or interactive connotation. In some cases it is a by product of having a number of workers in close proximity, and in other situations it is an inherent part of the occupation itself.

Employment as a sales assistant in the retail industry is certainly one of the occupations in which the work itself involves contact with people. It is a form of employment that necessitates interaction with shoppers and often other workers as well. In fact, the ability to interact positively with customers is a skill of relevance to retail workers. There is an opportunity for sales assistants to develop relationships or friendships with many of the other retail employees often located nearby.

The retail industry also provides an opportunity for those who desire stimulation but do not want the demands of full time employment. Wulff (1987 p.16-17) found many women returned to part time work after taking maternity leave because of their ability to balance work and family commitments: it may allow them the opportunity to gain satisfaction and stimulation from work while leaving them time to respond to their children.

The role of being a full time caregiver may also inspire parents to participate in the paid workforce just to get out of the house for a while. Parenting responsibilities and the associated domestic duties can become routine or tedious: housekeeping, cleaning, cooking, washing, ironing and so on.

However, to be motivated to seek employment does not have to mean that other aspects of a persons life lack fulfilment. Part of the motivation for employment among some women with children is

"... because it gives a measure of independence, a sense of achievement and opportunities to interact with others ..." (Hartley 1991, p.39).

Employment also allows women to have some time on their own and have a break from their children.

"When housework is combined with the care of young children a woman's time and thoughts are not her own, although the tasks she is doing may not be particularly complicated or physically arduous." (Mackie and Pattullo 1977, p.22).

The degree to which the need for social interaction motivates people to seek employment, or particular forms of employment, varies from person to person. Whilst, as noted, financial

considerations can play a key role in the workforce participation of many married women with dependents, for other women it is as if

"... the money is almost a by-product of the even more important social and psychological gains from work, and therefore, is not essential to the choice of work."  
(Rein 1980, p.15).

For some women, therefore, the motivation for employment can be primarily tied to their desire for more social contact and interaction; the retail industry could be a serious option for those so motivated.

Some people are motivated to work because of their desire for a career. There is the opportunity to obtain some form of identity, social standing and a sense of personal achievement from particular careers. Work can be linked to the desire for fulfilment, or self worth.

"Many people who truly enjoy their work would rather work than play. Work often provides one of the most important aspects of a person's identity" (Hunter College Women's Studies Collective, 1983, p.480).

Thus employment can mean much more than just a job for which people are paid; it can be part of a person's life, part of them.

The status given to particular occupations can be a motivating factor in why people. Work is

"... one of the most important ways of establishing a person's social identity and position ..." (Hargreaves 1982, p.2).

The motivation to work for career reasons is thus tied to the opportunity for personal fulfilment, for establishment of self worth, and for personal achievement. For women who take time out of the workforce to raise a family, their ability to re-enter their particular career may suffer. The time out of the workforce raising children may not be valued by prospective employers as adding to their career skills. In addition those women who attempt to balance a career with parenthood have a reliance on the provision of suitable child care services.

"The availability of appropriate child care is a major factor in determining whether women with young children are able to remain in the workforce." (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Office of the Status of Women 1989, p.3).

Glezer (1988b, p.53) found career reasons did not play a major role in why women returned to work after taking maternity leave.

"... the main reason for returning to work was financial, and the next most important reason given was an enjoyment of work. Very few women said 'continuing a career' was the main reason for returning to work."

Wulff (1987, p.15-17) reported that many of those who took maternity leave were in jobs which provided little career advancement or promotional opportunity, consequently they were not motivated to return to work for career reasons. However, a number of professional women did

desire to return to work because of the importance they placed on having their job. Those women who are most likely to return to work after having children are in professional type careers, and those with the best career opportunities. These women place a personal importance on continuing in their career (Wulff 1987, p.15; Glezer 1988a, p.31).

Ochiltree (1990a, p.55) noted

"Some mothers work for career reasons for fear their skills will become out-of-date if they stay out of the workforce too long ... others again because they like the mental stimulation and the independence associated with earning their own money."

## **Work at home**

When women are in the traditional role of mother and homemaker, the concept of career is more vague. This homemaker role can be as fulfilling or rewarding as paid work. It is of course possible for women to obtain fulfilment without returning to the workforce. There are opportunities for involvement in a range of groups or organisations such as playgroups, first mother's groups, local community groups, recreational activities or voluntary organisations. However, work at home is not really regarded as work of a career. This is at least partially tied to the fact that it is unpaid.

"Many societies, including our own, judge the value of work in terms of economic rewards ... To ask the question, 'Do you work?' means for many people, 'Do you earn money?' That is why the idea that a housewife does not 'work' is prevalent in our society." (Hunter College Women's Studies Collective 1983, p.480).

The contribution made by women as homemakers is undervalued by society. The social status attached to employment does not exist for work within the home. A woman who moves from the paid workforce into the role of full time mother faces a change in the perception of her role.

"....child rearing, an activity which takes up many women hours, is not considered to have economic value ... Do we still think of paid workers as greater contributors to our society than unpaid workers and think of needing to minimise unpaid work so that we can all spend more time participation in real paid work?" (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs 1992, p.40).

The report of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs was criticised for not having made any recommendation in relation to the needs of women who remained at home to care for their children. The report

"....recommends expansion of child care services for those in paid employment and for students on campus but for home makers merely recommends ... 'reassess the criteria for fee relief for those not studying or involved in labour market related activities'. Home makers are defined negatively as 'not studying or involved in labour market related activities!' " (Endeavour Forum 1992, p.1).

Thus unpaid work within the home not only receives little recognition, but it can have a negative impact on the future career aspirations of women if they desire to return to the paid workforce. The fact that a woman has left the workforce to look after her children

".. can lead to a loss of labour market skills. If she later returns to the workforce, it is likely that she will return to lower status work at lower earnings. Her time out of the workforce will reduce earnings over the remainder of her working life". (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Office of the Status of Women 1989, p.3).

### **Work and family responsibilities**

An increasing number of families have both parents are in the workforce. This does not reduce the role that these parents have to play in relation to their children-it can make it harder. In a survey by the Australian Institute of Family Studies most parents considered it more difficult to raise children successfully when both parents work full time (VandenHeuvel 1991a, p.10).

Because of the competing demands of employment and parenthood, there is pressure for the responsibilities of parenthood to be shared by both parents, not to remain primarily a female role.

"Women have said that we want more social respect for the work of raising and caring for families, and that we want men to share the burdens and rewards of this work. "  
(Hunter College Women's Studies Collective 1983, p.525).

There are those who have argued that the sexual division of parenting roles would best be resolved by a change to the structure of the family itself. For example, Curthoys (1988, p.15) noted that the nuclear family could be replaced by alternative arrangements which allow women the opportunity to exercise greater choice about employment. Child care could be provided as a service to all parents who wish to have children and work. Within such a model, the government would be responsible to provide the child care services in much the same way as education is provided for children (Cox 1983, p.189).

The Australian Institute of Family Studies has taken the approach that in order to survive and function effectively, families need support from society itself, particularly in relation to the need for adequate income and child care.

"One of our central tenets is that the family cannot survive alone. As a social unit every family is linked with other social institutions and is shaped in part by how power and resources are allocated elsewhere. Every family needs support ..." (Edgar 1988, p.2).

The family provides an environment for children to grow into adults who will subsequently become active members of society. If the family is effective then society reaps the benefit of children who can grow up as competent individuals. Where the family fails, the cost to society can be high, such as children who exhibit antisocial, delinquent or criminal behaviour. Child care services can be seen as integral to the role of parents.

"Good quality early child care and education sets the right foundation for children's future development. It should be seen as complementary to what parents do for their

children, not as replacing them, for partnership is the only way we can enhance both home and out of home environment for children." (Edgar 1990, p.3).

In a broad sense, there are a range of child care services which could be available as a resource for all families, irrespective of the workforce status of the parents.

"... the services needed for families with children, particularly those with children under three, are varied. They include ... parenting programmes ... infant and toddler groups, a range of occasional, full and part-time programmes ... There is no one programme model, for in a diverse society, each community will have its own particular needs, and hence programmes must be developed which are responsive to these needs." (Sebastian 1988, p.10).

Decisions about workforce participation can also be effected by the relative financial gains. The taxation structure favours two income families, working parents receive priority of access in government funded child care centres, and fee relief is available for those on lower incomes. There is not the same level of support available for those who wish to care for their children on a full time basis and remain outside the paid workforce.

VandenHeuvel (1991b, p.47) researched the attitudes of women with preschool aged children who participated in the workforce and concluded it was likely young women, once they had children, would continue the trend towards increased participation in the workforce. Any post-birth change in employment preferences would favour a higher rather than a lesser involvement in the workforce, and

"This may be because once in the stage, there is a more realistic appreciation of the costs (financial and other) involved in staying home with young children; as a result preferences for work increase." (VandenHeuvel 1991b, p.48).

VandenHeuvel (1991b, pp.47-9) also compares the employment preferences of parents with preschool children and their actual employment experiences. Whereas only four percent preferred full-time work, thirteen percent of respondents worked full time. In addition, while sixty two percent preferred to stay at home only forty seven percent did so. The most common mismatch between preferences and employment is for those who preferred to remain at home and yet actually worked part time.

In addressing the reasons why those mothers with preschool children failed to fulfil their employment preferences, VandenHeuvel (1991b, p.49) suggested

"... financial concerns may force a mother to work ... Those preferring part-time work may not have been able to find a job with such hours .. The lack of suitable day care facilities, accessible transport or other such factors may have discouraged employment for some who desired it... the preferences of other family members may have encouraged the mother to act against her own preferred options ... "

Some women may consider a change to their existing family and/or work arrangements if other options were available to them. For example, mothers in the paid workforce for primarily financial reasons may prefer to opt out of the workforce if an acceptable allowance was available; others may prefer to enter the paid workforce if suitable child care was available.

It has been suggested that a carer's allowance could be paid to parents. For example, an allowance could be paid to all parents and those who desire to work could spend the allowance on child care costs while those who prefer to remain at home could use it as a supplement to their income. Another option is for a carer's allowance to be paid only to those who elect to care for their children on a full time basis. If the level of this payment is sufficient it would help remove the financial burden which pressures many women into the workforce.

The issue of a carer's allowance has gained increasing prominence in the early 1990's. As part of its report, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs (1992) refers to the needs of women at home who are fulfilling the role of caregivers. The report was criticised for only making recommendations in relation to the child care needs of working women and not those who are full time caregivers. For example, in response to the report, the Endeavour Forum (1992, p.1), suggests that parents should receive a payment to stay at home equal to what the government would pay to create a child care place if they were to work.

"Child care in government centres costs approximately \$176 per child per week. Low income parents pay between \$15 - \$30; the rest of the cost is borne by taxpayers. And herein lies the stupidity- many of these low income mothers are not in fulfilling careers but in ordinary jobs because they need the money. Given the fee relief directly as a child care allowance, many could opt out of paid employment, thus releasing jobs for those unemployed."

This same concept was also promoted by the Women's Action Alliance (1990, p.1) who believe

"... that every child has the right to the full-time care and love of a parent, and while we acknowledge that there will always be a need for some public child care, surely the choice should be returned to the family, by re-directing a large proportion of the money allocated to child care back to the families themselves."

The task for the Commonwealth is to fund children's services in such a way that there is a balanced approach to the needs of all parents. That is, sufficient support for those women with children who desire to enter the workforce and also support for those who wish to remain full time caregivers.

The campaign leading to the federal election of 1993 involved the issue of such a child care allowance. Prior to the election the Coalition in opposition reported on consultations with Australian women on social and economic policy issues. This paper noted that



"...some would like to see a child care payment go to all mothers so that they could exercise a real choice as to whether they would provide child care themselves, or hand over the payment as part of child care fees." (Hewson 1992, p.33).

The re-elected Labor government included in its campaign a proposal to cash out the dependent spouse rebate and pay it as an allowance to the spouse providing care. Following its re-election, the government announced its new package as part of the 1993 federal budget. The payment is set at a maximum of \$30 per week, \$3 per higher than the level of the spouse rebate. It would be paid to the primary caregiver, but will be phased out once their income reached \$6530 per year (Neales 1993, p.22).

Despite being called a child care allowance, in reality it is little more than a modified dependent spouse rebate. The level of the payment is not set at a level sufficient to replace the need for additional income for many working and middle class families. It has been acknowledged that the level of the child care allowance is well below what would be required as a homemakers wage (Kissane 1993, p.10).

The introduction of this carer's allowance also had its opponents. There are those who consider the allowance is a retrograde step which would push women back into the home, and back to more traditional roles which many women had fought to escape (Moodie, Carruthers & Wilson 1993, p.3).

It is evident that the retail industry is a substantial area of employment for women and the overall proportion of women in general, as well as women with dependants, has increased substantially. There will be different reasons behind the workforce participation of individual women however a consistent issue which faced by those with dependant children is who will look after their children. The following chapter deals with the different types of child care arrangements used by working parents.

## Chapter 3: Child care arrangements

This chapter presents a summary of the main types of child care arrangements which are used by working parents. There is a discussion about the nature and features of each type of care as well as the degree of use by parents of these types of care. There is a brief discussion of the needs of children of care and the lack of child care regulations to oversee informal care arrangements, family day care and out of school hours care. Finally consideration is given to the hours which child care centres and family day care programs are open during the week.

### 3.1.Types of Care Arrangements

There are two general types of care arrangements for children of working parents: formal or informal arrangements.

The formal care arrangements available for preschool children are:

- Child care centres, or long day care centres,
- Family day care programs,
- Occasional care centres,
- Kindergartens, or preschools.

It is important to note the inclusion of kindergartens as a form of child care may can be viewed by many as unusual, due to the perception it is more an educational service and therefore like school. However, its inclusion in the questionnaire as a form of child care is important as it provides an opportunity to determine the number of working parents who use kindergartens. In addition it is analysed as a type of care used by working parents in other research, and therefore is listed as a child care option for parents who complete the questionnaire.

For school aged children, the following additional types of formal care are available:

- Before or after school programs,
- School holiday programs.

Informal arrangements refer to child care which individual parents organise personally, and include, for both preschool and school aged children:

- friend or neighbour,
- relative,
- privately employed carer,
- parents care for them at work, and
- older brother or sister

Additionally for school aged children it is also possible that they care for themselves.

Each of these forms of care is briefly defined below.

## **3.2. Formal Care Arrangements.**

### **Child Care Centre**

Child care centres, or long day care centres, provide care for groups of children and operate either on a commercial basis or as non-profit organisations. Day care centres can also be either community based or workbased. Workbased centres give priority of access for working parents and there are two basic models for such centres: either the entire centre is for exclusive use for employees of an employer or group of employers, or the employer can reserve a number of places in an existing centre for use by their employees.

The Australian Council of Trade Unions (1988, p.2) considered that work-based child care centres would have certain attributes, such as:

- catering for the work community as distinct from the residential community,
- give priority of access or exclusive use to employees,
- be located close to the place of employment,
- be established by one employer or a group of employers, and
- be a joint venture between an employer or a group of employers and a child care centre.

Non profit child care centres are supervised by a committee of management, which usually consists of parents, staff and possibly some community members, or employer representatives in the case of workbased services. It is the responsibility of this management committee to oversee the operation of the centre.

Child care centres operate for at least eight hours a day and five days per week, normally Monday to Friday. They open at least 48 weeks of the year and must comply with relevant state or territory regulations. Fees are based on the amount of time children are in care, however they are normally payable for a full day as a minimum. Fee relief is available depending on the level of family income.

At present, there are no workbased child care centres in existence in Victoria in the retail industry.

### **Family Day Care Programs**

In this service children are cared for in the home of a family day care provider. Those who work as caregivers in the family day care program are usually mothers, and the children in care are normally of pre school age.

There are regulations in each state which determine the maximum number of preschool children who can be in the care of one person. This differs from state to state, but is usually a maximum of about four or five children, including the caregivers own children (Lever 1988, p.23). In Victoria

caregivers can look after a maximum of five children, thereafter they fall under the Children's Services Centres Regulations and must register as a child care centre (Department Of Labour, Workbased Childcare Unit, Women's Employment Branch, c. 1989, p.3).

In comparison to centres, there is more flexibility in family day care as the arrangements are determined between the caregiver and the parent themselves. Care can be provided at any time and for any duration that is mutually convenient. This can include evenings or weekends.

Each family day care program is required to have a sponsoring body and in Victoria this is usually a local council. The sponsoring body recruit caregivers, provide training and support and matches up caregivers and parents needing care. The care providers are supported by the sponsoring agency who monitor the program and provide staff to assist the caregivers with the provision of the day to day care (Halliwell, McLean & Piscitelli 1989, pp 17-8).

Fees are set where caregivers are paid according to the number of children and hours for which they provide care. Fee relief is available dependant upon the level of family income. The cost of family day care is normally lower than child care centres, which is primarily due to the comparatively lower rates of pay received by caregivers. Family day care programs do not have the costs of maintaining a centre and most care providers receive few award entitlements such as sick leave or annual leave (Lever 1988, p.71).

It is consequently cost effective for the government to provide this form of care, given the low level of overheads, and the fact that it provides working parents with the opportunity to have access to a flexible form of child care at a relatively lower cost.

It is not within the scope of this paper to argue the relative merits of the income caregivers should receive. However, the attempts by the union movement, noted in Chapter One, to improve wages and conditions for caregivers has implications for this service. Substantial improvements in employment conditions would result in cost increases and could mean higher costs for parents. This may make family day care a less attractive option than it is currently when compared to other forms of child care.

As far as children are concerned, there is a difference between the nature of family day care and a child care centre. Some children may be suited to the group care situation of child care centres whereas others may be more suited to the home environment of family day care.

### **Occasional Care**

Occasional care centres are similar in design and structure to child care centres. However the regulations which govern occasional care are less stringent than those for child care centres (Brennan & O'Donnell 1986, p.xv). They provide care for short periods and do not cater for regular full time care. Occasional care centres were established to

"... provide child care for limited periods for parents whose needs may be irregular and infrequent." (McCaughey & Sebastian 1977, p.27).

Occasional care centres would therefore not be suitable for working parents who need more permanent or regular care arrangements.

It may however prove suitable for parents who need short periods of care, for example due to a breakdown in their normal care arrangement. It may also be of assistance to casual employees who need child care on a more intermittent basis.

### **Kindergarten/pre-school**

Kindergartens provide an educational program for children in the year before they commence primary school. Most are structured on a half day, sessional basis, and children normally attend for three or four sessions per week. Many kindergartens operate two or three streams of programs so that they can cater for two or three separate groups of children.

As noted in Chapter One, the role of kindergartens is more of an educational or developmental role. They must comply with state regulations which control a range of issues such as staffing levels, building regulations, materials, equipment and so on (Lever 1988, p.83). In Victoria they are inspected annually as to the operation of their programs and their physical environment.

Some kindergartens offer extended care and some others provide a combined child care centre and preschool program at the one location. Most, however, operate on a sessional basis and this means working parents face

"...practical difficulties in organising other forms of care to fit in around kindergarten hours. " (Lever 1988, p.55).

Kindergartens are of limited support for working parents as other forms of child care need to be arranged around the times of the kindergarten sessions.

### **Outside school hours care**

There are two levels of involvement by government in the provision of outside school care. Firstly, the Federal Government through the Department of Community Services and Health provides funding for out of school hours programs; that is, either before school, after school or during school holidays. These are administered by each State or Territory government. The Victorian state government provides its own funding for these services. There are, however, separate funding systems in place for federal and state government funding.

Federal government funding is organised through the Out of School Hours Care Program. This operates on a submission funding model where a variety of sponsoring bodies apply for funding. These include:

"Parents and Citizens (P&C) Associations, School Councils, Church Groups, Local Government Councils, Community Organisations, Parent Groups. " (Department of Community Services and Health 1989, p.1)

The sponsoring body is responsible for running the program; this includes, selecting staff, advertising the program, obtaining equipment and running relevant and suitable activities. The Federal Government provides fee relief depending upon the income of parents, for before and after school care, but not school vacation programs. The sponsoring body determines the fee levels. Information provided by staff at the Office of Pre-school and Child Care indicated that fee levels vary, however in general the maximum daily fee was around \$10 to \$12 per day, per child.

Victorian Government funding for outside school hours care has primarily been for before and/or after school programs which are run mainly in schools.

### **3.3. Informal Care Arrangements.**

A substantial proportion of care for children of working parents occurs in informal care arrangements such as those listed below.

#### **Friend/Neighbour**

Parents can enter into a personal arrangement with friends or neighbours in order to provide care for their children. The nature of these arrangements can vary significantly. Parents may pay their friend or neighbour to provide care, there may be a token payment or no cost at all. Alternatively, there could be some form of reciprocal arrangement where care is provided to cater for the needs of each parent.

Care may occur either in the friend's home or in the child's home. Brennan and O'Donnell (1988 p.xv) note that no regulations apply to any such care as they are by their very nature informal and unlicensed arrangements. There are no controls on quality and issues would need to be addressed between the parties concerned. The entire range of terms and conditions of any such arrangements are the responsibility of both parties to resolve.

Parents can use informal care arrangements for preschool children as well as to provide care for school aged children before and after school or during school holidays. Informal arrangements can also be used as back up or emergency care.

There is no funding support available to parents who make informal arrangements, although this will change in 1994 with the introduction of the child care rebate.

#### **Relative**

A variation to care by friends or neighbours, is that provided by a relative. The only real difference is the 'blood' tie that exists between the working parents and the relative concerned. The relative may be a grandparent of the child, an aunt or uncle and so on.

As with friends or neighbours, the entire range of issues involved in the care arrangement are the responsibility of the parties to resolve. This includes issues such as payment, if any, for the care provided; the hours and days of such care; any form of reciprocal arrangement or favour to be given

in return and whether the care will be in the child's home or that of the relative. It is also possible for relatives to provide care for both preschool and school children.

As with all informal care arrangements, no regulations or standards apply in relation to the care or the environment in which the care is provided.

### **Privately employed carer**

This refers to a slightly more formalised personal care arrangement. It is regarded as informal in that no regulations apply, and all terms or conditions are subject to agreement between the working parents and the caregivers. Care may occur either in the child's home or in the home of the caregiver. For example, many parents have traditionally employed babysitters to care for their children. On occasions this is arranged to allow parents the opportunity to plan more social events or activities of an evening or weekend without their children. Parents paying babysitters to provide care for their children is a very common form of care and a prime example of parents employing their own caregivers.

The key difference between this and other informal care arrangements is that it is based on a principle of payment for service. The privately employed caregiver is paid in return for the care they provide. The other types of informal care have no pre-requisite in terms of financial remuneration.

The amount that would be paid to employ a private carer would depend entirely on what both parties considered appropriate and acceptable. One implication is that some form of employer and employee relationship exists. There may subsequently be issues to be addressed by the working parents entering into these arrangements, such as award conditions of employment, public liability, taxation and workers compensation (Lever 1988, p.24).

The arrangement is based on the ability of both parties to agree on matters relating to the nature of care to be provided. As this is an informal arrangement, no regulations or standards apply. These remain the responsibility of working parents and caregivers to address as they consider appropriate.

Parents could employ private carers to look after their school aged children, as well as those of preschool age. Working parent may opt for employing a private carer because it is

"... often more difficult to negotiate conditions clearly with friends or relatives." (Lever 1988, p.88).

An arrangement based primarily on friendship or favours may make it more difficult for parent to demand certain conditions to apply to the care of their child. Where there is a payment for service it may be easier for parents to request, or demand, that care be provided within particular guidelines.

## **Parents Care at Work**

This form of care received little, if any, attention in the various writings and research already undertaken in the child care area. Whilst unlikely to occur very often, there may be instances where parents take their children with them to work because they have no other option at that time.

There are a number of fairly obvious problems that arise for parents who attempt to take their children to work, including the response of employers. In the retail industry there may be occasions where parents working in, or near, a shopping complex, allow their children to spend time in these centres. A number of shopping centres have activities, events or entertainment during times such as school holidays.

## **Older Brother/Sister**

Children, whether preschool or school aged, can be cared for by an older brother or sister. The care would be expected to occur in the family home. There are no guidelines to recommend to parents at what age they could expect their children to care for younger siblings. It would depend substantially on the maturity of the child.

## **Children Care for Themselves**

Children can also be responsible for their own care and it is expected that this would be in their own home. One of the issues parents would determine, is at what age could a child be expected to care for themselves. As there are no particular guidelines to determine such an issue, it would be left with parents to make their own decision. There is also an issue of safety where one child is at home alone.

## **Spouse/Defacto**

Whilst not an external child care arrangement, it is possible that a spouse cares directly for their children whilst their partner is at work. For example, given the nature of the retail industry it is possible that one parent works during evenings or weekends when their spouse is able to provide child care. In fact, the employment situation may have been chosen for exactly that reason: so that there is no reliance on any form of child care external to the family.



### 3.4. Child Care Use

A study conducted by the Labour Market Research and Policy Branch of the Department of Labour in Victoria found that

"In 1987, approximately 38,000 Victorian families in which all parents were employed full-time used informal child care arrangements compared to only 9,000 using formal care" (Department of Labour 1989, p.47).

Many parents also use a combination of both formal and informal arrangements.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (1990f, pp.1-5) provides information about use of both formal and informal care for all children under 12 years of age. The survey found that 52 percent of children aged under 12 were involved in care arrangements, an increase from the 47 percent who did so in 1987. There were 18 percent of all children aged under 12 involved in formal child care and 42 percent in informal arrangements. This is summarised below.

**Table 1: Occurrences of both formal and informal care for children under 12 years of age, as at November 1990.**

Type of care	Occurrences	
	Number (000's)	Percent
<b>Formal Care</b>		
Kindergartens	267.2	13.7
Long Day Care	113.1	5.8
Family Day Care	78.1	4.0
Before/After School Care	44.0	2.3
Other Formal Care	57.4	2.9
<b>Total Formal Care</b>	<b>559.7</b>	<b>28.7</b>
<b>Informal Care</b>		
Care by relatives	781.1	40.1
Care by non-relatives	412.2	21.1
Care by siblings	196.5	10.1
<b>Total Informal Care</b>	<b>1,389.8</b>	<b>71.3</b>
<b>Total All Care</b>	<b>1,949.5</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 1990, *Child Care Australia*, Cat. no. 4402.0 pp.2-4, ABS, Canberra.

Of all occurrences of child care for children under 12 years of age, a substantial majority of care was provided through informal care arrangements. Relatives were the single most common form of care used and there were more occurrences of this care than all formal care combined.

### 3.5. Needs of children in care

Child development is a topic about which much has been written and it is not the purpose of this study to review this issue in detail. However, some general comments are made about the needs of children in care and the importance of quality care being provided that these needs can be met.

Caldwell (1986, p.11) noted that in the early years of their life,

"... children need families that care for them, shelter them, love and protect them, nurture them, and help them acquire the skills and attitudes that enable them to be reasonably healthy and happy during childhood and to function later as competent adults".

The developmental importance of these preschool years needs to be taken into account in the operation of child care centres and in their program design. Ochilree (1989, p.36) noted the significance of these years.

"The development of children physically, intellectually, socially and emotionally is greatest in the first five years of life ... the foundations are laid for literacy which is so important for success at school, and later for employment. From birth on children are learning all the time ... those around them are involved in this informal education process. It is important that children, whether at home or away from home, receive care which enables them to participate in a modern society which requires emotionally secure, literate and educated citizens."

The Committee of Review of Early Childhood Services (1983, p.32) noted children should have

"physical health ... basic nutrition, shelter and safe living conditions ... social and emotional well-being ... development of a personal identity ... basic, stable, familiar and caring relationships with responsive, trusting, approving adults are needed ... creative growth experiences ... intellectual and emotional solving of life problems ... meaningful work and play experiences ...".

Child care arrangements for working parents should also take into account the needs of the children for quality care. In determining the appropriateness of a particular form of care, parents attempt to select a form of care which is suitable for their child. However, as Rathus (1988, p.413) points out, it is not easy for parents to determine what is adequate or quality care. He raises a number of factors which parents can take into account as they attempt to make their decisions, such as:

- the ratio of children to caregivers,
- the qualifications of the caregivers,
- the safety of the care environment,
- the quality of the food,
- the ability of caregivers to relate to children, and
- the overall feel of the centre to the parents.

The complexity of the issues involved in determining quality of day care were identified by Murray (1986) in the report by the Australian Early Childhood Association for the Minister for Community Services, *Quality of long day child care in Australia*. In this report a total of eleven separate determinants were listed which cover each of the areas listed above as well as issues such as group size, administration, management, curriculum and evaluation.

In ensuring quality of service provision it is important that the programs specifically cater for the needs of the children who attend.

"Although the quality of an early childhood program may be affected by many factors, a major determinant of program quality is the extent to which knowledge of child development is applied in program practices - the degree to which the program is developmentally appropriate." (National Association for the Education of Young Children 1987, p.36).

Children can spend many hours each week in child care due to the employment of their parents. Phillips & Howes (1987, p.15) reported on the complexities of research into the effects of child care on children, and the difficulties in determining what is quality care. This included difficulties associated with choosing a measure for quality and being able to measure other factors that influence child development such as the family environment.

While it is difficult to determine what is quality child care, there are at least five key areas which have an impact on the quality of care provided. These are listed below as an indication of the issues involved in the provision of quality care, and is not intended as a comprehensive analysis.

## **Love and attention.**

All children need to be cared for in a loving manner.

"Whatever situation children are in, whether it be with the mother in the home or in an alternative care arrangement, children need warm, loving relationships ..."  
(McCaughey & Sebastian 1977, p.12).

Children have a right to be treated with love, and care and warmth, and with generosity in the amount of attention given to them. As a result these are key attributes for any person who works as a caregiver, whether in a formal or informal arrangement.

## **Age relevant**

National Association for the Education of Young Children (1987, p.37) note that an understanding of

"... typical development of children within the age span served by the program provides a framework from which teachers prepare the learning environment and plan appropriate experiences".

This understanding of a child's development provides a framework for programs to be planned that will assist individual children. As well as an understanding of developmental principles at particular ages, it is essential that children be allowed to grow and develop at the pace that suits them.

"Each child is a unique person with an individual pattern and timing of growth, as well as an individual personality, learning style and family background" (National Association for the Education of Young Children 1987, p.37).

Children of the same age do not necessarily have exactly the same needs.

## **Program composition**

A further factor in the provision of quality child care is that children do not just attend, basically entertain themselves and go home. While this may seem obvious, children can benefit from participating in a planned program. These programs should respond to the particular physical, emotional, social and cognitive needs of children.

"... children learn through active exploration and interaction with adults, other children and materials." (National Association for the Education of Young Children 1987, p.38).

Children need time to play, enjoy their activities and participate in a program which challenges and stimulates them.

## **Adult and child interaction**

A key indicator the provision of quality care centres around the interaction between the caregiver and the child. The ratio of children per caregiver has an impact on quality. Where too many children are in attendance, caregivers are forced to limit the contact they have with each child and interaction can be more superficial. Those working with children need to be aware of the needs of each child and then have the time to be able to respond appropriately.

Group size also has an impact on the interaction between children and their caregivers. Phillips and Howes (1987, p.6) states that larger groups are likely to have a negative impact on social stimulation. Smaller groups tended to be associated with more positive outcomes for children.

Children need positive feedback about their efforts and it is important they be treated with respect in order to encourage the self esteem and self image of children.

## **Relations between the parents and care service**

There is a role for parents to be involved in decisions which will have an impact on their children.

"Parents have both the right and the responsibility to share in decisions about their children's care ... (they) should be encouraged to observe and participate." (National Association for the Education of Young Children 1987, p.44).

One of the practical problems parents must face is that they would have a limited availability, due to employment, for involvement in the day to day care arrangement. For example, it may be difficult to just drop in to visit their child and see first hand how they are coping with their care arrangement.

Parents in a number of child care centres have the opportunity to be involved in a management committee. Working parents may again have limited time to attend meetings. The principal of parental involvement is therefore substantially influenced by whether parents have the time to be involved, given their attempt to balance the demands of work and home. However, it is important that parents take the time to communicate with staff about the progress of their child. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (1987, p.44) recommends there should be regular communication conferences between caregivers and family members.

### **3.6. Regulations and care**

One of the few controls over the operation of child care services is the existence of regulations which monitor the operation of services. The importance of regulations is that they provide minimum standards in relation to a substantial number of aspects of care. It is also important to acknowledge that there are many limitations to regulations as a mechanism of quality control as they do not cover fundamental issues such as programs or activities, with the possible exception of kindergartens.

However, at least the existence of regulations provides some basic mechanism of quality control. The reality is that regulations in Victoria are limited to situations where five or more children aged under 6 are in care such child care centres, kindergartens and occasional care programs. There are no regulations which govern informal care arrangements which means there are no controls over issues such as who can provide care, how the children are occupied or where care is provided. Issues will not be addressed unless individual parents and/or the care provider do so. In addition, there are no regulations to govern services such as family day care, before and after school care or school holiday care.

In regard to out of school hours care, the only existing mechanism to in some way regulate out of school hours care programs in Victoria is if funding bodies place restrictions or requirements on the allocation of funds. The Department of Labour, Women's Employment Branch (c.1989) provides sponsoring bodies with some guidelines covering areas such as staffing levels, the suitability of the premises, equipment which should be available and the need for varied activities. However, as these are only guidelines they have very limited scope for enforcement.

Likewise the Commonwealth Department of Community Services and Health exercises little real control over the functioning of the out of school hours programs which it funds. For example, in regard to before and after school programs, the mechanism to oversee programs is a contract between the government and the sponsoring body which stipulates the intention of the Department

"... to visit services at least once every two years to assess and monitor service provision and viability." (Department of Community Services and Health 1990b, p.6.4).

Consequently, both the Commonwealth and State Governments have only a very limited role in overseeing or supervising the manner in which out of school hours programs are run.

In relation to family day care there are also no regulations. However funding is organised through a sponsoring organisation is responsible for exercising control in relation to the quality of the family day care scheme. Family day care schemes may address issues even though no set of regulations exist. For example, sponsoring bodies have control over issues such as:

- the selection and training of caregivers, and
- support services for caregivers

In order to understand the practical operation of family day care schemes information was obtained from two coordinating staff involved in the Melbourne City Council scheme.

They considered that a key to quality provision is the selection of each caregiver. The sponsoring or coordinating body selects its caregivers and then parents are involved in a process of selecting a caregiver they consider appropriate for their children. Each of these processes of selection can have an impact on the functioning of the service. It is up to each family day care scheme to address how this will occur. One of the difficulties recognised early in the development of family day care was to accurately assess who will be a competent and appropriate caregiver (McCaughey & Sebastian 1977, p.25).

The Melbourne City Council scheme has developed its own process of selecting caregivers. This commences with a group information session of prospective carers. Each caregiver is provided with a number of papers, one of which, *Thoughts Before Becoming a Caregiver*, addresses a number of issues such as:

"Do I like young children enough to spend long hours with them - feeding, changing, talking, playing and meeting their emotional needs?

Have I thought about the limitations that looking after children may place on me? It may be more difficult to visit friends, shop...

Can I adequately accommodate extra children in my house/flat ...

Do I have a commitment to learning more about children's development and behaviour through attending playgroups, support groups and in service?" (Melbourne City Council unpub, pp.2-3).

Prospective caregivers then undertake a six week assessment program in order to be formally approved by the Melbourne City Council as a caregiver in the family day care program. As part of this assessment an Area Worker employed by Council visits once a week for the six weeks.

Attention focuses on the suitability of the applicant and their home. At the end of this period both the applicant and family day care staff must decide on suitability of the applicant.

Once accepted caregivers agree to take the children in their care to a playgroup each week. This is a key part of the program as it provides an opportunity for children, on a weekly basis, to interact with other children in an environment outside the home of the caregiver. A daily plan is developed between Area Worker and each caregiver and an agreement signed to cover the terms and conditions of their employment. Family day care staff then regularly visit caregivers to provide guidance, training and support.

There is, however, no formal requirement on any family day care programs to have a comprehensive selection or training process for caregivers, such as that demonstrated by the Melbourne City Council. Indeed there is no guarantee that all family day care programs have the resources or staff to develop effective selection and training programs.

Ongoing support also needs to be available for caregivers, especially because they function in isolation within their home. As an attempt to address this isolation, the Caregiver agreement signed in the Melbourne City Council program requires weekly attendance at playgroups because a support meeting of caregivers is run concurrently. These meetings are also the forum for regular in-service training covering areas such as the importance of play, safety and hygiene, daily planning and how to deal with illness or an infectious child. The support provided for caregivers varies according to the resources made available by the sponsoring organisation.

While there are no regulations which control the functioning of family day care schemes, it is possible for the sponsoring bodies to develop strategies aimed at ensuring quality care. However, out of school hours care services lack any genuine and structured mechanisms of addressing quality care issues.

**3.7. Hours of opening for preschool services**

At the completion of the practical field research, a phone poll of child care centres and family day care programs was undertaken of preschool services from different geographical locations. The intention was to determine the general hours of opening of these services and to establish whether any of these services catered for parents who needed evening or weekend care.<sup>20</sup>

Contact was made with thirty eight child care centres and twenty family day care programs. Of the child care centres, 20 were operated as commercial services and 18 were government funded centres. The funding is listed in the following table.

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<sup>20</sup> Details of the phone poll are provided in Chapter 4, in section 4.06.

**Table 2:      Summary of phone poll of child care centres and family day care programs.**

Region	Child Care Centres		Family Day Care Programs	
	Total Number	Number open evenings or weekend	Total Number	Number open evenings or weekend
Eastern	11	0	6	6
Western	7	0	2	2
Northern	6	0	4	4
Southern	10	0	5	4
Country	4	0	3	2
Total	38	0	20	18

Not one of the thirty eight child care centres operates on any evening of the week after 6 pm, or on Saturday or Sunday. Their hours of opening are very similar; most open at 7 am with only one centre opening at 6 am and two others at 6.30 am. Almost all centres closed at 6 pm, with only three exceptions, and they closed earlier. Given this trend, it is clear child care centres do not in general cater for employees who work evenings or weekends, irrespective whether they are government funded or private centres.

On the other hand, most family day care programs did provide the opportunity for care to be arranged both during evenings and on weekends. Only two of the twenty services did not provide this opportunity. In general, it was explained that any arrangement was possible so long as it suited both the caregiver and the parents concerned.

These different care arrangements provided information which was used in the practical field research. The details of the methodology for this research is contained in the following chapter.



## Chapter 4: Methodology and Research Design

The methodology adopted to investigate the child care needs of retail workers in Victoria involved several phases: interviews, group discussion, a questionnaire and phone polls.<sup>21</sup>

The first phase of the practical field research was a series of 76 interviews with parents who worked in the retail industry. As the final part of the interview process a group discussion was held with 25 shop stewards of the Shop, Distributive And Allied Employees' Association, Victorian Branch as representatives of those employed in particular workplaces. This group discussion was modelled on the interview proforma utilised during the interviews with working parents.

This interview process with working parents and shop stewards, although limited in number, provided its own valid data as well as background research to assist in the formulation of a questionnaire. These interviews, although smaller in number than the questionnaires, provided the opportunity to discuss issues in more detail with working parents.

A general summary of the interview findings is included as Appendix 6. However, some of the more important findings are reported in Chapter 5.

The second and more substantive phase of the research involved a questionnaire which was widely circulated amongst retail workers. The topics covered in the questionnaire were finalised as a result of the interviews and a review of other questionnaires which investigated the child care needs of working parents.

### 4.1. Interview phase

In order to obtain as broad a range of responses, given the limited size of the sample, working parents from as many different geographic locations and employers as possible were interviewed. Those interviewed worked either in the Melbourne metropolitan area or Geelong which was selected to allow input of parents who worked in a provincial country area.

Working parents were interviewed from within these stores according to their availability at the time the interviews were conducted. Most visits were arranged by the local area Organiser of the Shop, Distributive And Allied Employees' Association, Victorian Branch. They sought the initial cooperation of the store management and an agreed time was arranged for conduct of the interviews. In many cases the relevant area Organiser of the union personally attended the store to ensure appropriate arrangements were able to be made with Management. On arrival at the store, the Manager in charge, who was not necessarily the same person with whom the arrangements had

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<sup>21</sup> The design and methodology used in each of these processes was as per research techniques used in the social sciences. The various methods were used to maximise research data which could be utilised as a part of the research process. For this purpose the methods were refined taking into account various materials relevant to social science research techniques and methodology such as Monette, Sullivan & Dejong 1990; Patton 1990; de Vaus 1990.

been made, was asked to release one or more of their staff who were working parents, for an interview of around 30 minutes duration. The area Organisers did not attend the interviews.

In general the management were co-operative, but did not want to disrupt the running of their store. Most therefore indicated a desire to release someone who was either not too busy or more easily able to be replaced during the interview. Management were informed the interviews were related to the child care needs of working parents, and advised that either males or females were suitable, as long as they were working parents. Most management released female staff for the interviews, and out of the 76 parents interviewed, 75 were female.

This bias towards females could be related to a perception by management, in their choice of staff to release, that child care is primarily a women's issue and women are more likely to play a major role in child care matters. It would also be related to the fact that female staff tended to work in areas where other staff were more readily available to fill in. For example, in supermarkets most of those working on registers or in the delicatessen are women. In areas such as these, a greater number of staff were on hand to fill in while the interviews were being held.

The small proportion of males interviewed is also related to the fact that a greater of males are in management roles. Managers may have been reluctant to participate in an interview because they were arranged under the auspices of the Shop, Distributive And Allied Employees' Association, Victorian Branch. Management were informed that interviewees did not have to be union members, as long as they were working parents. Interviewees were not asked whether they were union members or in management.

However, the findings of the interviews are not negatively affected by the low number of males interviewed. It has already been established in Chapters One and Two that the issue of child care has tended to have a more immediate impact on women. In addition, whether particular working parents are members of a trade union does not negate or undermine their experiences as working parents as far as this research is concerned.

A proforma interview schedule was established in order to provide a structure to the interviews. This proforma was reviewed and slightly modified after the first ten interviews in order to provide a consistent flow of direction through the interviews. A copy of the interview proforma is contained in Appendix 8A. Each interview lasted between 20 minutes and 1 hour, with the average being around half an hour.

The group discussions conducted as part of the interview process, lasted for approximately two hours and a half hours. A total of 25 shop stewards participated in this discussion and they were from retail stores throughout Melbourne. The Shop, Distributive And Allied Employees' Association, Victorian Branch provided an opportunity for the group discussion to be held as part of a Shop Stewards training course. The group discussion was facilitated by the researcher and occurred during a three day course run by the union to train a group of longer serving shop stewards.

The group discussion was conducted as part of the interview phase in order to obtain input from those employees in the workplace, shop stewards, who often deal with employee problems. As the role of a shop steward is essentially to represent union members in their particular workplace, the aim was to draw on the collective experience of longer serving stewards in order to explore how child care issues impact on workers. Shop stewards are entitled, under the terms of the main shops awards, to attend up to five days of training each year. This particular course was chosen as it was a stage two course, meaning all participants had already attended a prior course. In this sense, these were more experienced stewards who could reasonably be expected to have experience in dealing with a broad range of issues, including child care problems or difficulties.

At the conclusion of the group interview, which lasted approximately two and a half hours, each of those present completed a proforma question sheet which was modelled on the interview schedule. A copy is contained in Appendix 8B.

## **4.2. Questionnaire design**

In order to obtain as many responses as possible, it was necessary to design a questionnaire which was concise and yet covered the most important issues. The desire to canvass as many issues as possible was balanced against the need for the questionnaire not to be too long or complex.

An important consideration was the length time it would take to complete a questionnaire and the aim was that it could be done in 10 to 15 minutes. The questionnaire was designed in this manner so that workers could complete a questionnaire during one of their breaks and hopefully they would then return it straight away.

The questionnaire was designed around maximising the use of multiple choice questions for the reasons noted above. The key issues included in the questionnaire were identified during the interview phase of the research as well as from a review of other child care surveys.

## **4.3. Pilot study**

A pilot questionnaire was prepared. The design reflected the intention to explore the child care experiences of those with children aged under 13 years, those intending to have children in the future as well as any other working parents who wished to comment on issues raised in the questionnaire. It was also structured into various sections which respondents would complete according to whether they had children aged under 13 years and whether they were of preschool or school age. All respondents would complete the first section which covered background information and move onto other sections according to their particular family situation.

The pilot study played a key role in determining how long it would take respondents to complete a questionnaire as well as determining the responses for multiple choice questions. It also allowed the

opportunity to identify and eliminate any confusing or ambiguous questions or instructions. It enabled a review of the overall structure of the questionnaire and specific issues to be covered.

The pilot questionnaire was completed by working parents not employed in the retail industry. It was worthwhile not to seek the input of retail workers just in case some would not bother to fill in the actual questionnaire.

Those who participated in the pilot were firstly asked to complete a questionnaire and then comment on its structure, the wording of questions, issues raised, inconsistencies and whether the multiple choice answers were sufficiently extensive. They were given an opportunity to make general comments in relation to all aspects of design and structure.

After changes were made to this draft, a modified questionnaire was distributed to a number of academic staff at the Victoria University of Technology to obtain further feedback about design and structural features. The final questionnaire was then prepared.

#### **4.4. Final draft of Questionnaire**

Two separate questionnaires were printed, one for retail shops and the other for retail warehouses or distribution centres. This was required due to the fact questionnaires would be distributed both in retail shops and retail warehouses or distribution centres. There was a need to change several questions due to differences primarily in regard to evening and weekend work. A copy of these questionnaires is contained in Appendix 7<sup>22</sup>.

Respondents were advised at the beginning of the questionnaire that their answers would remain totally confidential. For this reason, they were asked not to disclose their name or that of their employer. They were only asked to indicate in which suburbs they lived and worked.

The final questionnaire was divided into six sections:

- background information,
- child care for preschool children,
- child care for school aged children,
- cost of child care,
- problems with child care arrangements, and
- opinions about various issues

Those respondents without children, or who had children aged over 13 years, would complete the first and last sections.

So that the questionnaire could be distributed amongst those working in shops and those in warehouses, two different copies of the final questionnaire were used with changes to questions six

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<sup>22</sup> For ease of recognition, warehouse questionnaires were printed with a black stripe imprinted on the spine of the questionnaire.

and seven. These relate to evening and weekend work as those employed in warehouses or distribution centres do not have regular evening work as do retail stores on Thursday and Friday evenings. However a number of warehouses have shift workers on afternoon or night shift.

In addition, information provided by officials of the Shop, Distributive And Allied Employees' Association, Victorian Branch showed that very few warehouse workers are rostered to work on Saturdays. A number of warehouses operate more regularly on Sundays to enable retail companies to begin distribution to their stores early on Mondays in preparation for the weeks trading. A number of shift workers commence their rosters on Sundays.<sup>23</sup> The warehouse questionnaire asked respondents whether they worked day, afternoon or night shift and whether their roster involved Sunday work.

## 4.5. Distribution process

Detailed attention was given to the distribution process so the return of completed questionnaires could be maximised.

For this reason, most of the distribution occurred with the support and direct cooperation of the Shop, Distributive And Allied Employees' Association, Victorian Branch. This meant questionnaires were able to be circulated in workplaces throughout Melbourne and many country areas around Victoria. The active assistance of the union meant contact could be made in a short period of time with a substantial number of workplaces.

A three way distribution process was used. Firstly, the researcher visited retail stores and warehouses to distribute questionnaires. Secondly, Shop, Distributive And Allied Employees' Association, Victorian Branch organisers, as part of their regular visits to companies, distributed questionnaires to those working in these stores. Thirdly, shop stewards handed out the questionnaires in their store and then collected as many as possible back again.

The Shop, Distributive And Allied Employees' Association, Victorian Branch enabled the researcher to conduct separate meetings, prior to the circulation of questionnaires, with both full time union organisers and casual organisers who work in stores on evenings and weekends. At each of these meetings instructions were given as to the method of distribution to occur.

All organisers were advised the purpose of the questionnaire was to investigate the child care needs of retail workers. They were to circulate relevant questionnaires to workers in retail stores or warehouses and distribution centres. In order to assist this process, they should enlist the support of shop stewards or other contacts, to in order to encourage as many workers as possible to complete a questionnaire. This included all workers whether full time, part time or casual or if they worked during the day, on evenings or weekends.

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<sup>23</sup> This information was provided by research staff from Shop, Distributive And Allied Employees' Association, Victorian Branch who were responsible for industrial research matters in distribution centres.

Organisers were requested to enlist the support of their shop stewards or other contact people in the stores to encourage workers to complete and return a questionnaire. All organisers were given detailed information about the questionnaire distribution process, and this included requests to:

- utilise their shop stewards to assist; if there is no steward in a particular store, appoint a contact person to play the same role. The shop steward or contact person can play a key role in distributing questionnaires to workers, and encouraging their return;
- provide shop stewards or the contact person with detailed information;
- give particular attention to anyone with children aged under 13 years, or those intending to have children in the future;
- advise workers it would only take about 10 to 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire;
- people do not have to answer any question they feel uncomfortable with; it is far better they leave one or two questions unanswered and return the questionnaire;
- encourage as many workers as possible to complete the questionnaire immediately. Otherwise encourage them to fill it in at the workplace either before work, during rest periods or in meal breaks;
- ask them not to take the questionnaires home, if possible, as this may make it more difficult to get them back again. They are to place the questionnaires in the envelopes provided and return them directly to the shop steward or contact person. They can also post them into the union office at no cost.
- advise workers the questionnaire is totally confidential and they do not write down their names or addresses.

Each questionnaire was enclosed in an envelope, which also contained a reply paid envelope, so respondents could mail completed questionnaires directly into the union office.

To seek the cooperation of union members, the State Secretary of the Shop, Distributive And Allied Employees' Association, Victorian Branch enclosed a covering letter with the questionnaires. This letter encouraged them to complete and then return the questionnaire. A copy is included as Appendix 9.

It is possible that this distribution process, while structured to maximise the number of returns, resulted in a greater number of union members completing a questionnaire. While there may be a bias towards experiences of union members, this is not anticipated to negatively affect the findings of the research as the questionnaire deals with their experiences as working parents, and not their status as union members. Whether respondents are union members does not make their experiences as working parents any less valid.

In order to maximise the rate of return, questionnaires could be returned in one of three ways.

Firstly, there was encouragement for as many as possible to fill in a questionnaire immediately.

Secondly, they could be taken away and then returned via the same process in which they received

them. For example, they could hand them back to a shop steward. Or thirdly, they could be mailed free of charge in the envelope provided.

In addition, the cooperation of the Shop, Distributive And Allied Employees' Association, Victorian Branch meant that a substantial number of returns were obtained. The practical support of the union was demonstrated by the fact that they paid for the cost of any questionnaires which were returned by mail.

In order to obtain a representative sample, the aim was to collect between 800 and 1000 completed questionnaires. A total of 2,200 questionnaires were issued.

A substantial proportion of the statistical analysis was undertaken using the computer software Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.

For the purposes of the analysis regarding the questionnaires, percentages will be rounded to one decimal point.

## **4.6. Phone polls.**

On May 24, 1991 a phone poll was conducted of child care centres and family day care programs to determine their hours of operation, whether they could provide evening or weekend care and the cost for full time care. The intention was to contact approximately 20 private child care centres, 20 government funded centres and 20 family day care programs on the one day. The aim was to make contact with services from a range of different geographic locations. Contact was made by either the researcher or two assistants provided by the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association, Victorian Branch. These assistants were briefed by the researcher prior to the commencement of the phone poll.

A total of 58 different services were able to be contacted. There were 20 private child care centres, 18 government funded centres and 20 family day care programs. The centres were identified by initially ringing local government offices, and obtaining details about private and government funded child care centres and family day care programs operating in their municipality.

A second phone poll was conducted on 31 May, 1991 by the researcher and the same assistants from the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association, Victorian Branch. The purpose of this second phone poll was to investigate the comparative availability of care for part time and full time workers. Contact was made with seven government and seven private child care centres from among those contacted in the original poll. The assistants were briefed by the researcher prior to commencement.

A summary of the services contacted is contained in Appendix 3.

## **4.7. Information access**

A comprehensive literature review was conducted at the commencement of this research as well as regular reviews of new publications. However, some information was not available in published form at the time it was needed. There were three different interviews undertaken by the researcher in order to obtain specialised information.

The first of these was a discussion with research staff at the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association, Victorian Branch. The purpose was to obtain information about industrial issues pertaining to the retail industry. In addition to this information, the researcher has been able to draw upon his own practical industrial experience which was accumulated over nine years of industrial work within the retail industry.

Secondly was a meeting held with staff of the Office of Preschool and Child Care in order to gain an insight into the operation of child care programs. In particular, information was sought in a personal meeting between the researcher and some staff involved with children's services programs. Specific information was obtained as to funding arrangements, funding levels, participation rates and program planning pertaining to programs for both preschool and school aged children.

Thirdly was a meeting with staff involved in the coordination of the City of Melbourne family day care program. These staff supplied the researcher with detailed information about the functioning of this program.

The following chapter presents a summary of the main findings from the interview phase of this research.



## Chapter 5: General findings from the Interview Process

In presenting a summary of the main findings from the interview process of this research, this chapter gives an understanding of the more personal experiences of a number of retail workers which resulted from their attempt to balance their work and family responsibilities.

### 5.1. Some interviews

An understanding of the impact of child care on working parents was obtained through the interview process and for this reason six interviews are summarised below. They build an understanding of some of the different ways child care can affect the lives of working parents in the retail industry in Victoria. In order to ensure confidentiality fictitious names have been used.

#### Julie

Julie and her husband both work full-time and they have a young child who is at school. Julie works at Target from 8.45 am until 5.45 pm Monday to Friday. Both parents work full-time for financial reasons. As with many young families, they are saving to buy their first home, and rent a house in an outer eastern suburb.

Their son commenced school shortly before the interview. Prior to this he was cared for by Julie's mother. Julie would drop him off on the way to work at 7 am and pick him up again at 6.00 pm. This meant a total of about 55 hours in his grandmother's care each week. This care arrangement was chosen because there were no direct child care costs.

Now that their child is at school, the same basic child care arrangement continues. Julie's mother takes her son to and from school. Julie picks up her son at around 6.00 pm. The grandmother provides care for about 20-25 hours each week at no cost.

Overall, the care situation works well, but some problems arise. These are mainly due to some different attitudes between Julie and her mother about raising children. At times this results in one set of rules at home and another at grandma's, leading to complaints from her son that "grandma lets me do it, why won't you".

Julie does not find it easy to address these issues with her mother, after all she is providing the care free of any cost.

A frustration is that neither parent has much time during the week to spend with their son. Time must be found for the many mundane house keeping tasks which have to be done.

Julie feels they cope with most of their problems, despite the frustration of both working full-time, primarily because their child was happy with grandma. Nonetheless, as parents they felt guilty one

of them was not around more often for their child. Julie resigns herself to the fact that there is no other option available for them at this point of their lives.

### **Connie**

Connie is a part time employee at a Coles supermarket. She is married and has two children aged 7 and 9 years. Her husband works full-time on night shift, and she works Monday to Friday between 9.30 am and 2 pm. Connie works primarily for financial reasons because her husband does not earn a high income. She also finds work to be personally rewarding as it gives her the opportunity to get out of the house and not be at home all the time.

This working arrangement evolved from their desire to care directly for their children rather than rely on external care. From the time their children were born, Connie's husband worked night shift so that he could care for their children when she worked during the day.

This results in sacrifices to their lifestyle. Her husband compromises his sleep pattern in order to look after his children. He survived for a number of years sleeping at two separate times. Before the children reached school age he had a short period of sleep when he came home in the morning. When Connie left for work he would care for the children until she returned, when he would go to sleep again. As a result, Connie and her husband did not have much time to be able to spend together.

Connie said that living and working in this manner had brought with it very difficult life pressures. She has had to accept the consequence of spending nights alone because her husband works.

When their children reached school age the situation did improve. Her husband goes to sleep after taking the children to school and because Connie picks them up he can have an unbroken sleep during the day.

During some school holidays Connie takes either paid or unpaid leave to care for her children. At other times, and particularly in the Christmas holidays, her husband provides the care during the day and reverts to the sleeping pattern he used when their children were younger.

There are problems with child care in situations where the children are sick. The only options available are for Connie to take time off work or for her husband to go without a significant period of sleep.

### **Louise**

Louise is married and her spouse works full-time. When her child was a preschooler Louise also worked full-time. She wanted her son to be cared for in a group situation and sent him to a child care centre. Initially her son was happy at the centre and was quite outgoing and sociable.

For some unknown reason, things changed and Louise's child became unsettled and unhappy.

Louise eventually decided to reduce her hours to part-time and reduce the number of hours her son

spent in care. This led to an improvement in the situation. Louise summarised her feelings in a way that many parents spoke about during the interviews.

"If my child is happy, then I am happy. If my child is upset, then I am upset. If my child remains unhappy, things have to change."

When her son started school Louise again altered her hours of work so that she could take him to school and be home in time to collect him in the afternoon. She also decided to work on Saturdays to increase her level of income but work at a time when her husband could care for their son.

There was no doubt for Louise that child care is a very important issue in a working woman's life. She believes a woman might have to change her whole career and working life if the child care didn't work out.

### **John**

John worked full time in the retail industry for two years before his son was born. He works for Myer Melbourne on a two week roster involving late nights and Saturday work. That is, Monday to Thursday from 9 am to 5.45 pm then Friday between 9 am and 9 pm. The alternate week he works Wednesday from 8.30 am to 5.45 pm, Thursday from 9 am to 9 pm, Friday from 9 am to 6 pm and Saturday between 9 am and 5 pm.

His wife worked full-time with a life insurance company in a clerical position until the birth of their child. She returned to work full-time after a year of unpaid maternity leave and worked from 9 am to 5 pm from Monday to Friday.

John's mother-in-law provided child care at no cost for about 45 hours each week. After about six months both John and his wife felt tired and they were not enjoying their life. Even though the grandmother provided good care they wanted to spend more time with their child. They decided John's wife would cease employment and care for their child full time.

It is now very difficult, according to John, to support a family on a shop assistant's income. They have cut their cost of living in order to survive. For example, they sold their car. Decisions such as this reflect the importance John and his wife attach to her being able to care for their son full-time. She will not return to work until their child is older.

They believe it is their responsibility to look after their children when they are young even though it imposes financial burdens on the family. John said they made some hard decisions so they could do what they believe is important.

### **Fay**

Fay is 39 years of age, married and has two children aged 9 and 11 years. Her husband works full-time. She remained at home looking after her children full-time until they reached school age. As a mother Fay considered it her role to remain at home until the youngest child reached school age.

Fay also said she may have returned to work earlier if suitable child care had been available. She would only have considered a personal care arrangement with a relative, friend or neighbour. She was reluctant to use a child care centre or family day care as she wanted to leave her children with someone she knew and trusted.

Fay sought employment in the retail industry and her part time hours of employment suit her perfectly. She has a permanent roster of hours working from 10 am to 2 pm, Monday to Friday. Fay is able to drop her children at school herself and then pick them up again after school. If one of her children is sick she takes time off work to care for them.

School holidays pose a dilemma. In addition to her four weeks of leave, Fay relies upon neighbours or relatives to provide child care. She is generally happy with the arrangements but they are a hassle.

Fay recently increased her hours and finishes work at 3 pm. She now considers that at the ages of 9 and 11 years they are old enough to care for themselves after school for an hour until she gets home. If she feels her children are unhappy with the arrangements she would change her hours or even stop working.

## **Ann**

Ann is married and her husband works full-time. She worked part-time at a supermarket for financial reasons after her child was one year old, four days each week from 10 am to 3 pm.

Ann aimed to minimise the cost of her care arrangements in order to make her employment worthwhile. One day her child was cared for by a relative, another by her mother in law and two days by her own mother, all at minimal cost.

Eventually problems surfaced. Those who were providing the care began to get sick of it and Ann's child wanted to stay with her grandmother rather than be at home. This hurt Ann.

Ann decided to stay at home during the day until her child reached school age. As an additional income was still necessary, she decided to work during the evening when her husband could provide most of the care. Her employer agreed to a change so that she could be rostered only of an evening. This resolved her child care problems as her husband was able to care for their child when Ann worked.

Now her child is at school, Ann has returned to work during the day after again obtaining the agreement of her employer. Her hours of work mean that Ann can take her child to and from school.

School holidays pose a problem. Both Ann and her husband take separate periods of annual leave and she also calls on a number of different people such as grandparents, relatives or friends. Ann does not like these arrangements because there is little opportunity for a family holiday.

## 5.2. General comments about the interviews

Through the interview process, it has been possible to develop a more comprehensive understanding of how child care needs impact on families. These more personal experiences cannot hope to be captured through a questionnaire.

It is also evident that child care needs can change substantially as children move from preschool age to kindergarten, and then on to school. These changes can require substantial adaptation by working parents and in particular the mother.

The case studies give a concrete indication as to the many changes parents are willing to make in response to what they consider are the needs of their children.

## 5.3. Some general findings from the interviews

The interviews provided an opportunity to discuss the feelings and attitudes of the workers in some detail. For this reason a synopsis of major findings and issues is presented below, and a more substantial summary of the findings is contained in Appendix 6.<sup>24</sup>

- there were a total of 76 parents interviewed and between them they had a total of 134 children. Of these 106, or 80 percent, were aged 12 years or under;
- of the 76 parents, 75 were women;
- there were 32 parents employed full-time, 29 as part-timers and 11 were casuals;
- the single most commonly used form of child care was carried out by relatives of the parents irrespective of when the care was needed;
- different forms of care were used at different times; for example, between Monday and Friday, relatives and child care centres were most commonly used; after school and on Saturdays most common arrangements were care by a relation, the child looked after themselves, or the spouse provided care; on school holidays most care was undertaken by relatives and school holiday programs;
- during school holidays many parents, 39 percent, relied upon multiple arrangements to provide the care they needed, and these were also often combined with parents taking either paid or unpaid leave from their employment.

### Workplace location

The workplace locations of those interviewed are listed below.

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<sup>24</sup> Unless stated, the comments refer to the data generated from the interviews with the 76 parents. The data generated from discussion with shop stewards is primarily used in an analysis of the issues canvassed.

**Table 1:      Workplace location of those interviewed**

Workplace Location	Number	Percent
Melbourne, City	9	12
Highpoint	14	19
Geelong	5	7
Camberwell	8	10
Northland	6	8
Southland	8	10
Chadstone	10	13
Frankston Area	7	9
Gladstone Park or Sunbury	9	12
Total	76	100

Visits were made to a number of different companies and included supermarkets, clothing and fashion stores, department stores, discount stores, small employers and large retail chains. Working parents were interviewed from a total of thirteen different companies, as noted below.

**Table 2:      Employers of those interviewed**

Employer	Number	Percent
Myer	26	34
Coles New World	5	7
Franklins	8	11
Target	13	17
Katies	1	1
K. Mart	2	3
McEwans	2	3
Safeway	10	13
Priceline	2	3
Big W	4	5
Venture	1	1
Tresurway	1	1
Tuckertag	1	1
Total	76	100

**Age of children.**

There were 80 percent of the children of those interviewed aged 13 years or under. It was decided, as a result of the interviews and a study of other research, to concentrate on the child care needs of children aged 13 or under, that is, those children who are of preschool age or are in primary school. These children would generally require adult supervision in the absence of their parents. Children aged over 13 years are anticipated to progressively take on more responsibility and are increasingly able to care for themselves.

**Roster changes**

Those interviewed did not seem to have any child care problems resulting from constantly changing days and hours of work. It was anticipated that casual workers in particular, could have difficulty with their care arrangements due to constantly changing hours of work. Yet of those interviewed, 98

percent worked the same hours in each roster cycle. However, as only 11 percent of those interviewed were casuals, it was necessary to raise this issue again in the broader questionnaire in order to assess the extent of this issue.

### **Rosters and hours of work**

A number of those with school aged children referred to the advantage of working during the same hours their children attended school. This tended to involve starting work after 9.00 am and then ceasing work before 3.30 pm. Of those interviewed, 35 percent worked mainly during school hours.

Parents identified the advantage of this 'school hours' roster as the ability to minimise their need for child care. They spoke about an attempt to fit their hours of work around their family responsibilities, so they could maximise the time they could have with their children.

### **Reasons for choosing care arrangements**

There were many reasons why parents chose their particular form of child care. The most frequent reply, accounting for 20 percent of responses, was the desire of parents to choose a person or service to care for their child that they knew and trusted.

Parents made comments such as:

- "I needed to have confidence in the person who would be caring for my child",
- "I didn't want a stranger to be caring for my child",
- "I chose a person that I know and trust".

The next most frequent reason related to the importance of child care costs being low. If the cost of child care was too high, parents indicated it would not be worth their while to work.

Thirdly, 15 percent of responses were that parents had little choice due to only a limited number of child care options being available to them.

The fourth most frequent response was the desire to have their child cared for in a home environment (12 percent of responses).

A number of parents indicated a desire to, as far as possible, to make regular and ongoing care arrangements for their children in order to establish a sense of continuity. They considered this assisted their children settle into the care arrangements. Parents spoke of the difficulties they could encounter when trying to cover any short term gaps in care. For example, there were times when the person providing care was sick or unavailable.

### **Satisfaction with care arrangements**

Most parents, 81 percent, stated they were either very happy or happy with their care arrangement. The most common reason for this level of parental happiness, with 27 percent of responses, was the child liked this particular form of care. The most common problem referred to by the 29 percent

who considered their child was unhappy, was their child would prefer their parents to look after them instead of working.

From the interviews, it became evident few parents were happy to leave their children in a particular form of care when their child was unhappy. It also became apparent many parents work through an informal process in situations where their child is unhappy.

Initially they would attempt to resolve issues within the existing child care situation. If this did not resolve the problem, they would look for another child care arrangement. If their child still remained unhappy after changing care, and this may occur more than once, parents would consider a change in their work pattern or even give up work if this was possible. Some parents indicated their economic situation meant they could not cease work and they would therefore find the best of the available options.

### **Needs of children in care**

In determining what children need in a care situation, 32 percent of parents identified the importance of care providers giving their personal attention to each child of the children in their care. Irrespective of the particular form of care, caregivers should be 'loving' in their treatment of the children and respond to them on a personal basis.

The second most common response, with 20 percent, was the need for children to be 110 in an environment where they were safe and secure.

### **Separating from children**

Only 28 percent of parents did not find it difficult to leave their child in care. A number of parents found it difficult to leave their child even if they knew their child was happy in the care arrangement. Some indicated it was not easy to go to work and perform in their job after facing the separation from their child.

There were 66 percent of parents who considered it was possible to prepare in some way for the separation. Their suggestions are summarised as follows.

- a) If possible the child should have a planned and gradual introduction to the care environment. In this way the child could get to know their child care environment before they would attend on a regular basis. Parents could also spend some time with their child in their new arrangement to help them to become familiar and confident with the care arrangement.
- b) Parents identified the need for their child to become confident with being away from their parents. This also involved building up confidence that their parents would return to get them. It was suggested that before the children were placed in their new care arrangement, it was helpful for parents to leave their child with someone so they would get used to being away from their parents.



- c) It was also considered helpful to progressively increase the number of hours of care, so that children could build up their confidence about being left in their new care arrangement.
- d) Parents also commented about the value of discussing with their child what was happening with the child care arrangement from the very beginning of the separation process. It was also considered valuable to continue such discussions on an ongoing basis even after the child was attending their care arrangement.

Even where the separation went quite smoothly, some parents still commented that "it was always hard to leave their child".

### **Problems arising from use of child care**

There were only 7 percent of parents who did not have any problems arising from placing their child in care and going to work. The most common problem, accounting for 27 percent of responses, was caring for sick children. Many parents said they had few options open to them when their child was sick, and it was not easy to make alternative arrangements at short notice which was normally the case with illness. Parents said it was not uncommon for them to take time off work either as a paid sick day or without pay, in order to care for their child themselves. This could cause problems at work, particularly if it was a lengthy illness, or a child who was regularly sick.

Some of the other problems were an increase in pressure within family (15 percent), feeling pressured or under stress personally (7 percent), finding it difficult to cope during school holidays (7 percent) and dealing with their guilt about placing their child in care (7 percent).

Parents spoke about the pressure of balancing all the commitments that result from being a working parent, for example it could be a major hassle getting organised in the morning, preparing meals and finding time for other domestic tasks.

### **Affects of child care on work**

Most parents, 95 percent, believed problems or difficulties with their child care would affect them at work. Many commented they could not just 'turn off' at work and perform up to their normal standard (52 percent of responses). Parents made comments such as:

- "the problems are always on my mind",
- "my concentration is affected and it's difficult keeping my mind on the job",
- "it's hard at times not to blow up at customers",
- "my mind is on my kids and what is happening to them".

In the discussion with shop stewards there was also general agreement that child care problems did affect the way many parents performed at work. Whilst some workmates were sympathetic, they commented that others were resentful as they may have a greater load to carry.

A total of 21 percent of problems related to taking time off work as a direct result of child care difficulties, and the most substantial of these was caring for a child who was sick. As noted in Chapter 2, absence from work due to child related reasons is not covered by the terms and conditions of employment. The lack of any suitable provisions to allow parents time off work for child care reasons means it is left for each employer to decide whether they will firstly allow the time off work, and secondly if they will pay wages for this time off.

While a number of parents mentioned their employers were co-operative, others said they were not able to obtain time off when they had requested it. As a result, some decided to take time off work but not declare the real reason for the absence and indicate it was due to their own illness.

It was considered important in the questionnaire to attempt to quantify the amount of time working parents took off work for specific child care reasons: to care for a sick child, to cope with a breakdown in care arrangements and leave taken during school holidays in addition to annual leave.

### **Why parents work**

Most parents said they worked primarily for financial reasons (69 percent of responses). A lesser number of responses, 21 percent, related to the desire to work for social contact and to get out of the house.

### **Opinions about workbased child care**

There were 92 percent of parents and shop stewards who considered the provision of workbased child care services was a good idea. The most common reasons were transport arrangements would be easier and the ease of access to their children (31 and 30 percent of responses respectively).

### **Employers and child care**

Many, 84 percent, believed employers would benefit from having child care services located near the workplace. Parents felt this would result in less time off work and better work performance due to the improved parental access to children. A total of 78 percent of respondents considered employers should provide some form of child care support for their employees, including options such as support for a child care centre and providing financial support.

When asked their opinion about specific forms of assistance, 66 percent supported employers paying a significant part of the cost of building a centre; 65 percent that they pay part of the ongoing running costs of a centre and 91 percent that employers provide information about what child care is available for their employees.

There was little support, 6 percent, for employers having the main say in how a workbased child care centre would run on a day to day basis. On the other hand, 90 percent felt employers should have a company policy which was supportive of the needs of working parents. In addition, 91 percent considered employers should allow employees some flexibility to work at times when child care is available.

## **Role of the union**

Most parents and shop stewards, 79 percent, thought unions should be involved in the child care issue. There was strong support for unions to:

- encourage employers to build child care centres ( 89 percent),
- provide information about the availability of child care (93 percent), and
- encourage employers to develop policies which are supportive of the needs of working parents (89 percent).

## **Role of shop stewards**

Shop stewards considered they could be of support to working parents primarily through assisting members with problems and providing them with information.

Attention will now focus on the principal quantitative form of research, the retail industry workers survey.

## Chapter 6: Retail Industry Workers Survey: The Sample

This research is the first of its kind in that it investigates child care issues relating to a specific section of the workforce: the retail industry in Victoria. Consequently, it provides an indication of the experiences and needs of working parents employed in this industry. As noted in Chapter 4, it is possible that many of those who completed a questionnaire are members of the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association, Victorian Branch.

The structure of the membership of the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association, Victorian Branch is therefore relevant to the nature of the sample. A comparison of the retail industry with the membership of this union reveals that, if anything, this research will understate the child care needs of the retail workforce as a whole.

This is evident in the following table which compares the age the retail workforce with that of those who are members of this union.

**Table 1: Comparison of the membership of the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association, Victorian Branch with the retail industry in general.**

Age group	Membership of the SDA		Retail Industry in Australia	
Years	Number	Percent	Number (000's)	Percent
15 to 19	21775	42.0	252.1	22.4
20 to 24	12832	24.8	172.7	15.4
25 to 34	7431	14.3	249.0	22.2
35 to 44	5444	10.5	230.1	20.5
45 and over	4335	8.4	219.3	19.5
Total	51817	100	1,123.2	100

Sources: Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association, Victorian Branch records as at 1 March 1992, and Australian Bureau of Statistics, *The Labour Force Australia*.

This reveals a greater proportion of the membership of the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association, Victorian Branch are aged 15 to 19 years, and therefore unlikely to have children. It is likely, therefore, that this union will contain a lesser proportion of working parents when compared to the retail workforce.

One of the prime reasons for this difference in age relates to the structure of membership agreements which exist between retail companies and the union. While these agreements encourage or require eligible workers to join the union, they exclude most of the management from union membership<sup>25</sup>. This is a reflection of the nature of trade union membership in general, where only a small proportion of management would be unionised. As only a small proportion of management

<sup>25</sup> In this sense eligibility refers to employees undertaking duties which entitle them to join the union under the terms of the union charter.

are junior employees, it is a major reason why the union's membership has a bias towards younger workers.

Another difference, the smaller proportion of males in the union, is also related to the smaller number of management who are in the union. As many management are male, there is a higher proportion of female membership when compared to the retail industry as a whole. In the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association, Victorian Branch there were 33630, or 64.9 percent, female members and 18187, or 35.1 percent, who were male. This compares to 49.6 percent of the Australian workforce who were male and 50.4 percent female. In relation to Victorian data, there are a total of 63 percent who are women in the relevant occupational grouping for retail workers, Sales and Personal Service Workers. <sup>26</sup>

The proportion of females is even higher in certain areas of the retail industry. For example, employment information provided by Myer Stores in a case before the Industrial Relations Commission in Victoria during 1987, reveals the following information about their retail employees.

**Table 2:      Retail employees in Myer Stores by sex.**

Sex	Number	Percent
Female	4717	78
Male	1335	22
Total	6052	100

Source:          Industrial Relations Commission of Victoria 1987.

As the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association, Victorian Branch actively supported the distribution of questionnaires, it is possible that the survey sample is more a reflection of their membership than the retail industry as a whole. Consequently, it is possible the sample contains an under representation of management. However, rather than a weakness, any under representation of management opinion would only help ensure the attitudes of the workers themselves are represented in this research.

A synopsis of the data obtained from the questionnaire is contained in Appendix 10. This contains the responses to each question, but does not include the raw data of all comparisons and statistical analyses which are undertaken as part of this report. The appropriate statistical information is provided as part of the relevant discussion.

At times there are small differences in the data contained in crosstabulations which is due to the fact that some respondents have not answered all questions. In such instances the missing data is excluded from the particular comparison.

<sup>26</sup> This is referred to in Chapter 2.

## 6.1. Rate of Returns.

A total of 893 questionnaires were returned, and of these:

- 713, or 79.8 per cent have children aged 13 years or under, and
- 180, or 20.2 per cent did not.

The overall response rate is 40.6 percent.

There are 114 respondents, or 12.8 percent, from warehouses or distribution centres.

## 6.2. Number of children.

Of the 713 respondents with children,

- 232 parents have children aged under 3 years,
- 201 parents have children aged 3-5 years and not at school, and
- 476 parents have children aged 5-12 years and at school.

As a number of respondents have children in more than one age grouping there is at times a variation in the numbers reported in a particular analysis depending, for example, on whether calculations are a proportion of all children or all parents.

There are more respondents with children of school age than preschool age. Parents have a total of 1192 children, and of these 250 are aged under 3, there are 219 in the 3 to 5 year age group and a further 723 are aged 5 to 12 years and at school. As 60.7 percent are children of school age, this indicates respondents will have a greater numerical demand for places in out of school hours care.

Of those respondents who have two or more children, the vast majority are school age children: there are 17 parents with two or more children aged under 3, 18 with two or more aged 3 to 5 years and 212 with two or more children aged 5 to 12 years. One of the principal reasons for this is the tendency of many women to delay their re-entry to the workforce when they have young children.

The following table lists the number of parents with children in each age group.

**Table 3: Parents with children in each age group:**

Age group, In years	Number	Percent
<b>Preschool Children Only</b>		
Only 0 to 3	139	19.5
Only 3 to 5	55	7.7
Both 0 to 3, and 3 to 5	43	6.1
<b>School Aged Children Only</b>		
Only 5 to 12	341	47.8
<b>Preschool and School Aged Children</b>		
Both 0 to 3, and 5 to 12	32	4.5
Both 3 to 5, and 5 to 12	85	11.9
All of 0 to 3, 3 to 5 and 5 to 12	18	2.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>713</b>	<b>100</b>

Clearly the majority of parents, 47.8 percent, only have children of school age and a further 33.3 percent only have preschool children. The remaining 18.9 percent have both preschool and school aged children. The complexities of making care arrangements may well be increased for those parents with two or more children, and in particular those with both preschool and school aged children. Where more than one care arrangement is necessary, parents have to deal with practical concerns such as transporting children to and from the care arrangements, in addition to getting to and from work.

It is also important to note child care is not a static issue. As children grow older their needs, and child care needs, can change. As a result, care arrangements which suit parents and children at a particular time may need modification as their children get older.

### **6.3. Family structures.**

There are six main family types evident in the questionnaire data.

- Family type 1: Two parent families with children aged under 13 years, where both parents are in full time employment. There are 155, or 17.4 per cent of all respondents, in this category.
- Family type 2: Two parent families with children aged under 13 years where the respondent is employed full time and their spouse is non waged, for example homeduties or unemployed. A total of 36, or 4.0 per cent, of all respondents, are in this category This includes 13 families where the female works full time and their spouse is at home
- Family type 3: Two parent families with children aged under 13 years, with one parent in full time employment and the other part time or casual. There are 365, or 40.9 percent of all respondents, with this type of family unit.
- Family type 4: Single parent families with children aged under 13 years, where the respondent is employed on either full time, part time or casual basis. The 113 single parents in this category represent 12.7 per cent of all respondents.
- Family type 5: Married or defacto couple without children aged under 13 years; there are a total of 103, or 11.5 per cent in this category.
- Family type 6: Respondents who are not married/defacto and do not have children aged under 13 years; there are total of 70, or 7.8 percent in this category.

The more traditional family unit, family type 2, represents a very small proportion of all families with children. There are in fact only 23 families, or 2.6 percent of all respondents, where the male is employed full time and his spouse is a full time homemaker. In the vast majority of families, both or the single parent are in the workforce. The largest family grouping are those families where one parent is employed full time and their spouse or partner is also employed either on a part time or casual basis.

## 6.4. Age of respondents.

The age groupings of respondents are outlined in the table below.

**Table 4:      Age of respondents**

Age group Years	Number	Percent
15 to 19	28	3.2
20 to 24	113	13.1
25 to 34	431	49.9
35 to 44	264	30.6
45 and over	27	3.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>863</b>	<b>100</b>

The greatest proportion of respondents, 80.5 percent, are aged 25 to 44 years, which is substantially different to the proportions noted above for both the retail industry and the membership of the union. However, this is clearly related to the fact that this research deals with child care issues, and many working parents who have children aged under 13 years will themselves be aged between 25 and 44 years.

The mean age for respondents is:

- all respondents, 31.7 years,
- respondents with children, 32.7 years,
- respondents with no children, 27.6 years.

## 6.5. Employment status

There are more full time respondents, 44.6 percent, than either part time or casual, 36.1 and 19.3 percent respectively. This represents a slightly lower level of full time employment than noted in Chapter 2 for the Sales and Personal Service Workers in Victoria, at 55.9 percent.

It was also noted that women in this occupational grouping are more likely to work part time or casual in comparison to males: 57.7 percent and 20.9 percent respectively. There is an even greater divergence for questionnaire respondents, as outlined in the following table.

**Table 5:      Comparison of employment status by sex of respondents.**

Employment Status	Female		Male	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Full Time	304	39.1	79	88.8
Part Time	310	39.8	5	5.6
Casual	164	21.1	5	5.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>778</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>100</b>



Males are far more likely to work full time (chi square = 0.0000)<sup>27</sup> and conversely, 60.9 percent of females are employed on a part time or casual basis compared to only 11.2 percent of males. In regard to non full time employment it is evident that a greater proportion of female respondents work part time in preference to casually.

**Table 6: Comparison of employment status by whether respondents have children aged 13 or under.**

Employment Status	Have Children aged 13 or under		No children aged 13 or under	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Full Time	262	37.2	128	74.9
Part Time	292	41.5	24	14.0
Casual	150	21.3	19	11.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>704</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents without children aged under 13 years are far more likely to work full time, 74.9 percent compared to only 37.2 percent for those who do have children, and conversely the vast majority of non full time workers have children aged under 13 years; out of the 485 respondents who do not work full time, 442 or 91.1 percent have children ( see table 6 above: chi square=0.0000<sup>28</sup>).

It is far more likely that respondents with children aged under 13 years will be employed on a non full time basis, and the majority of these as part timers. This could be influenced by factors such as child care needs, decisions about balancing work and family life, financial considerations and employment that is available.

During the interview phase of this research it became evident that many women choose to work on either a part time or casual basis in order to cope with their family commitments. For example, one parent spoke of how she worked to bring in some additional income but that by working part time she still had some time available for her family commitments.

Working on a less than full time basis can allow parents the opportunity to reduce the pressure on the family in comparison to the alternative of both parents working full-time. Others spoke of the desire to decrease their hours to part-time but that financial pressures meant they had to continue to work full time.

### **Weekly hours of work for part timers and casuals.**

The majority of part-time or casual respondents, 45.7 per cent, work between 11 and 20 hours each week, and next highest at 31 per cent, are those who work 21 to 30 hours weekly.

<sup>27</sup> The chi-square is 80.18470, and the significance is .0000

<sup>28</sup> Chi square is 79.82162 and significance level is .0000

A far greater number of part timers are employed for more hours each week than are casual employees (chi square = 0.0000<sup>29</sup>). While 41.6 percent of casuals work 10 hours or less each week only 10.3 percent of part timers do so.

As a total of 79 percent of all non full time respondents work in excess of 10 hours per week, they have the capacity to provide a substantial level of income for their family. This is evident in the following table which lists the gross weekly earnings of non full time females who have a spouse in full time employment. This was clearly the most common family type identified in the research

**Table 7: Gross weekly income for part time or casual females with children in cases where their spouse is employed full time.**

Weekly Hours	Part time employees			Casual employees		
	Number	Percent	Award Income in Dollars	Number	Percent	Award Income in Dollars
1 to 10	23	9.5	10 to 95	51	41.8	14 to 135
11 to 20	124	51.0	105 to 191	57	46.7	149 to 270
21 to 30	95	39.1	201 to 286	14	11.5	280 to 373
31 or more	1	0.4	296 plus	0	0	na
Total	243	100		122	100	

- Notes:
- a) Income levels are based on award hourly rates at the time of the questionnaire for adult shop assistants : part timers \$9.53 per hour, casuals \$13.50 per hour for the first twenty hours and \$10.32 thereafter which includes penalty loadings and 8.3 percent holiday pay.

b) All weekly rates are rounded to the nearest dollar.

c) na denotes not applicable.

d)The earnings are based on the award rates of pay applicable at the time the questionnaire was conducted.

The considerable income created by these female respondents is evident from the fact that the majority of part timers, 90.5 percent, earn in excess of \$105 or more per week, and of these a substantial 39.5 percent earn more than \$200 weekly. The majority of casuals, 58.2 percent, earn in excess of \$149 or more per week.

It is apparent casual employees earn a higher level of income than part timers for the same number of hours worked. This is due to the penalty loading of 33.3 percent payable to casual employees for their first twenty hours of work<sup>30</sup>. This provides casual employees with the opportunity to either have a higher income or to work a lesser number of hours than part timers and still have a similar income.

The opportunity for both part time and casual employment which exists in the retail industry provides working parents, and particularly women, with the opportunity to earn a substantial level of income without the demands of full time employment. In addition, the high level of non full time employment in the retail industry has direct implications for the provision of child care as there will be a substantial need for non full time care.

<sup>29</sup> Chi square value is 79.34568 and significance level is .0000.

<sup>30</sup> This subsequently changed to a loading of 20 percent for all time worked.

Notice of roster

The amount of notice non full time workers receive as to their rostered hours of work can have an impact on their ability to make suitable child care arrangements. Under the terms of the four retail awards noted in Chapter 2, full time workers are effectively permanent employees on a set roster and part time employees are meant to have consistent hours from week to week. Casual employees, however, can be rostered to work different hours from day to day, or week to week.

It was anticipated that the rosters of most part time respondents would stay same each week, but this was considered less likely to occur for casuals. The following table lists the amount of notice given to non full time employees.

Table 8: Notice given of rostered hours of work for part time and casual workers.

Employment status	Same hours each week		Notice of one week or less		More than a weeks notice	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Part time	255	83.6	35	11.5	15	4.9
Casual	87	52.4	64	38.6	15	9.0
Total	342	72.6	99	21.0	30	6.4

A chi square significance level of .0000 confirms that casual employees are far more likely to have hours of work which vary each week<sup>31</sup>. Whereas 11.5 percent of part timers receive one weeks notice or less, this short period of notice applies to 38.6 percent of casuals. Whereas changing hours of work impact on a total of 16.4 percent of part timers for casuals it is a significantly greater 47.6 percent.

There are implications for working parents whose hours of work vary from day to day or week to week. It can have an impact on their ability to continually make child care arrangements at short notice. For example, services such as child care centres require more permanent booking arrangements.

This lack of notice has a significant impact on the ability of respondents to deal with particular child care issues. There is a significant chi square correlation between this lack of notice and the increased likelihood respondents will experience problems with:

- getting to work late or leaving early,
- having to change roster for child care reasons, and
- being held up at work and then late picking up your child.

These problems are discussed in Chapter 9.

While the shortness of notice has an impact on such work related problems, respondents are still able make child care arrangements which they are generally happy with. There is no significant correlation between the amount of notice given to workers and their level of happiness with either

<sup>31</sup> Chi square is 54.77019 and significance is .0000

their preschool or school aged care arrangements. In addition, there is no significant correlation between the notice workers receive and their difficulty finding child care: this includes finding school holiday care, before or after school care, or care for preschool children.

## 6.6. Evening and Weekend work

The majority of both retail and warehouse workers do not work evenings or weekends.

There are a total of 68.9 percent of shop workers who primarily work during the day time and rarely or never work of an evening. There are also 82.3 percent of warehouse workers who solely work during the day, and the remaining 17.7 percent of are employed as shift workers and rostered to work either afternoon or night shift. All warehouse shift workers, as part of their daily roster, are required to work during the evening and/or night. For shop assistants, the following proportion regularly work of an evening after 7 pm:

- 27.5 percent at least one evening per week, and a further
- 3.6 percent one evening in every two to four weeks.

A higher proportion of casual shop assistants work evenings than do either full or part timers (chi square = 0.0000<sup>32</sup>). This is reflected in the proportion of each employment category who work at least one evening per week:

- 22.3 percent of full timers,
- 22.8 percent of part timers, and
- 44.6 percent of casuals.

However, there is no such connection between the employment status of warehouse workers and whether they work either during the day, or on shift work.

A very similar proportion of all respondents work evenings and weekends, irrespective whether they have children aged under 13 or not. There is no significant chi square correlation between whether respondents have children of this age and their employment during the evening or on weekends.

In relation to weekend work, 70.0 percent of shop assistants rarely or never work on a Saturday, and 88.6 percent of warehouse respondents rarely or never work on Sundays. The 11.4 percent of warehouse respondents who regularly work of a Sunday are predominantly either afternoon or night shiftworkers. While only 5.4 percent of warehouse day time workers regularly work on Sunday, a greater proportion, 40.0 percent, of shift workers do so (chi square = 0.0001<sup>33</sup>).

There is a significant difference between full time, part time and casual shop assistants in the amount of work done on Saturdays (chi square = 0.0000<sup>34</sup>):

<sup>32</sup> Chi square value is 42.33668 and significance level is .0000

<sup>33</sup> Chi square value is 15.91027 and significance is .0001

<sup>34</sup> Chi square value is 131.44352, and significance is .0000.

- 4.7 percent of full timers,
- 16.6 percent of part timers, and
- 44.9 percent of casuals.

It is also apparent in the proportion those who never or rarely work Saturdays:

- 74.1 percent of full timers
- 76.9 percent of part timers,
- 47.7 percent of casuals.

Of full time shop assistants who regularly work on Saturday, most do so on a rostered basis every two to four weeks. While few full timers work every Saturday, they represent the greatest proportion, 65.6 percent, of respondents who work one Saturday every two to four weeks. This is in part a reflection of the industrial agreements which exist between the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association, Victorian Branch and retail companies. For example, the agreement with the Myer company provides for full time employees to work Saturdays on a rotating basis, normally every second week.<sup>35</sup>

There is no significant relationship between the employment status of warehouse respondents and whether or not they work on Sundays.

For the purposes of the analysis the following Chapters, the responses of shop and warehouse respondents are generally combined into the broader categories of evening work and weekend work. The term evening work includes those respondents on either afternoon and night shift, and the term weekend work refers to Saturday work in shops and Sunday work in warehouses.

## 6.7. Marital status.

A total of 79.3 per cent of respondents are either married or living in a defacto relationship, 14.3 per cent are single and have never married and a further 6.4 per cent are separated, divorced or widowed<sup>36</sup>.

The table below compares the marital status of respondents by whether they have children aged under 13 years.

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<sup>35</sup> This was information obtained by the researcher both from his practical industrial experience in the retail industry, and from discussions with Research staff at the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association, Victorian Branch.

<sup>36</sup> For the purposes of this analysis the term married is deemed to include defacto relationships.

**Table 9: Comparison of marital status by whether respondents have children aged under 13 years.**

Marital status	Have children under 13		No children under 13	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Single, never married	60	8.4	66	38.2
Married, defacto	597	84.1	103	59.5
Widowed, separated or divorced	53	7.5	4	2.3
Total	710	100	173	100

Respondents with children aged under 13 are far more likely to be married, and those without children are more likely to be single and never married (chi square = 0.0000<sup>37</sup>). Of the 126 respondents who are single and have never married a total of 47.6 percent are single parents.

6.8. Employment status of spouse

Listed below is a summary of the employment status of the spouse of respondents.

**Table 10: Employment status of spouse of respondents.**

Status of spouse	Number	Percent
Full-Time	657	85.8
Part-Timer/Casual	45	5.9
Homeduties	35	4.6
Unemployed	18	2.3
Student	6	0.8
Pensioner	2	0.2
Other	3	0.4
Total	766	100

This indicates 91.7 percent of all respondents have a spouse who is employed and the vast majority of these are in full time employment. The unemployment rate of all spouses, at 2.3 percent, is low in comparison to the Victorian average of 9.2 percent at the time the practical research was undertaken.<sup>38</sup>

The following table compares the employment status of all respondents with that of their spouse.

<sup>37</sup> Chi square value is 102.28169, and significance is .0000  
<sup>38</sup> At the time of the questionnaire the Victorian unemployment rates were 9.4 percent for males, 9.0 percent for females and 9.2 percent for all persons. Source, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force, Catalogue No. 6203.0: seasonally adjusted series.

**Table 11: Comparison of employment status by employment status of spouse**

Employment status of Spouse	Full time respondent		Part time or casual respondent		All respondents	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Waged spouse	274	85.1	417	96.8	691	92.1
Non Waged spouse	46	13.7	13	3.0	59	7.9
Total	320	100	430	100	750	100

- Notes
- a) Non waged spouses consist of homekeepers, pensioners, students, and unemployed.
  - b) Waged spouses include full, part time and casual employees.

A chi square significance level of .0000 indicates that part time or casual respondents are much more likely than full time respondents to have a spouse who is in employment: 96.8 percent compared to 85.1 percent<sup>39</sup>. Full time respondents are more likely than either part-timers or casuals to have a non waged spouse, the majority of whom are homekeepers. This is not surprising as full timers have a greater financial capacity to support a dependant spouse.

A significant proportion of all respondents, 92.1 percent, are in two income families.

### 6.9. Sex of respondents

There are substantially more female respondents than males, 89.5 and 10.5 percent respectively. This represents an even higher bias towards females than is evident in either the retail workforce or the membership of the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association, Victorian Branch as noted earlier in this Chapter.

Whilst it would have been desirable for a greater number of males to complete a questionnaire, the high female response rate is in part a reflection of the nature of the retail industry itself. The distribution process, outlined in Chapter 4, did not have any bias which would account for the high proportion of female respondents. Those employed in each workplace where questionnaires were distributed, whether male or female, were encouraged to complete a questionnaire.

The higher proportion of females in the sample may indicate women are more actively involved in child care issues, or that child care is a more pressing concern for a greater number of women. Importantly, there is no particular bias which would be expected to result from the high proportion of female respondents, as the aim of the research is to investigate the needs of working parents: these experiences are valid irrespective whether respondents are male or female.

There is a significant difference between the sex of respondents and the employment status of their spouse (chi square = 0.0000<sup>40</sup>).

<sup>39</sup> Chi square is 33.16981 and significance is .0000  
<sup>40</sup> Chi square value is 281.41442 and significance level is .0000.

**Table 12: Comparison of sex of respondents and the employment status of their spouse<sup>41</sup>.**

Employment status of spouse	Female		Male	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Full time waged spouse	636	93.4	21	25.6
Non waged spouse	25	3.7	36	43.9
Part time waged spouse	20	2.9	25	30.5
All spouses	681	100	82	100

While the vast majority of female respondents have a spouse who works full time, a far smaller proportion of males do so. The greatest proportion of males have a spouse who is not a wage earner at all; the majority of those in this category are solely involved in undertaking homeduties. Consequently, while 96.3 percent of females have a spouse who earns either a part or full time wage, for males this is a significantly lesser 56.1 percent.

**6.10. Where Respondents Reside**

It was the aim of the survey to obtain as broad a cross-section as possible from different geographical areas. For this reason questionnaires were circulated around Melbourne as well as country areas, which included provincial cities such as Geelong, Bendigo and Ballarat. The following table contains a summary of the areas in which respondents reside categorised into five geographical areas around Melbourne as well as one general country area.

**Table 13: Suburb in which respondents reside**

Area	Number	Percent
Inner City	50	5.7
Eastern	203	23.3
Western	159	18.2
Northern	140	16.0
Southern	148	17.0
Country	173	19.8
Total	873	100

This table clearly indicates respondents are drawn from a broad cross section of residential locations. Appendix 10 lists the suburbs in which respondents reside according to the local government areas in effect at the time the questionnaire was implemented. The broadness of the geographical sample is evident from the fact that there are 26 different local government areas in which 13 or more respondents reside.

The sample contains respondents from various socio-economic areas. For example, there are local government areas which are more working class such as Broadmeadows, Sunshine and Preston; growth regions such as Werribee and Cranbourne; outer urban areas including Whittlesea,

<sup>41</sup> The category non waged spouse included homekeepers, pensioners, students and unemployed.



Frankston, Pakenham and Dandenong; and also country areas such as Gippsland, Geelong and Ballarat.

6.11.      **Workplace Location**

As with residential location, there are also a broad range of areas in which retail and warehouse respondents work. This is outlined in the following Table.

**Table 14:      Geographical location of workplace**

Area	Number	Percent
Inner City	105	12.2
Eastern	198	23.0
Western	138	16.0
Northern	131	15.2
Southern	140	16.3
Country	149	17.3
Total	861	100

In addition, a total of 33.5 percent of shop assistants indicated their workplace was in regional shopping complex. There are 16 regional shopping centres where 8 or more respondents work.

As a result, the questionnaire contains responses from those who are employed in a substantial number of different retail workplaces throughout Melbourne and country Victoria. Appendix 10 lists the workplace locations by local government areas.

Respondents are also drawn from different warehouse locations which cover different aspects of retail distribution such as food, clothing and direct mail. There are seven main distribution centre locations where 10 or more warehouse respondents are employed and these are listed in Appendix 10.<sup>42</sup>

6.12.      **More children in the future.**

There are 57.4 percent of respondents who do not intend to have any more children in the future and a further 7.8 percent who are unsure. Of the remainder,

- 16.9 percent intend to do so within two years
- 4.4 percent within five years, and
- 13.5 percent at some time in the future.

Overall just over one third of all respondents intend to have children at some future time.

<sup>42</sup> For the purpose of location, responses from Target and Just Jeans in Altona were combined due to their proximity. The workplace location of many respondents was able to be recorded as most questionnaires were returned through shop stewards. To ensure confidentiality a batch number was applied to questionnaires from the same location. The remaining warehouses were listed as 'all others' and included more than ten additional warehouses with only a small number of respondents in each.

There is a significant relationship between whether respondents have children aged under 13 years and their intention to have children in the future (chi square = 0.0000<sup>43</sup>).

**Table 15: Comparison of intention to have children in the future according to whether respondents have children aged under 13 years.**

Intention re children in the future	Have children aged under 13 years		No children aged under 13 years	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
No future children	462	65.3	40	23.8
Yes, within 2 years	97	13.8	51	30.3
Yes, within 5 years	21	3.0	18	10.7
Yes, at some future time	68	9.6	50	29.8
Unsure	59	8.3	9	5.4
Total	709	100	166	100

Whereas a total of 26.5 percent of respondents who presently have children aged under 13 intend to have children in the future, this compares to a far greater 70.4 percent of those without children aged 13 or under.

The parental leave provisions which exist in the four shops awards, as noted in Chapter 2, provide an important option for those working parents who wish to have children and then return to the same employer. A key to these provisions is the safeguard they provide for employees to return both to their employer, and maintain an equivalent position, after they take their leave of up to 12 months without pay.

In Chapter 2, it was noted that many women are delaying the age at which they give birth to their first child, and by 1990 the national average age was 27.6 years. The findings of this research indicate many respondents will be of a similar age when they have their first child.

There are 119 respondents without children aged under 13 years who are intending to have children in the future. As their mean age is 23.7 years, it is unlikely many of these respondents would presently have any children at all. Therefore, for the vast majority of these respondents, the decision relates to when they will have their first child. Their intentions, as well as their present age, are contained in the following table.

**Table 16: Mean age and planning for future children of those respondents who do not have children aged under 13 years.**

Intention to have children in the future	Number	Percent	Mean Age in Years
Within 2 years	51	42.9	25.9
Within 5 years	18	15.1	20.9
At some future time	50	42.0	22.3
Total	119	100	23.7

<sup>43</sup> Chi square value is 119.91 and significance level is .0000

As a result of this information, it is anticipated that the average age at which respondents will give birth to their first child would be at least the mid 20's, and probably very close to the national average. The table reveals many respondents who intend to have a child within two years will, on average, be aged between 27 and 29 years when their child is born. Those who intend to have children within five years will tend to be slightly younger. The remaining respondents, a substantial 42.0 percent, already have an average age of 22.3 years and are still undecided as to when they will have their children.

### 6.13. Why respondents work

Respondents were asked to indicate their main reasons for working. They were given the opportunity to select one or more options from the alternatives provided and/or write down their own reasons, and this resulted in a total of 1140 responses. These were:

- financial reasons, 825 responses;
- social contact, get out of the house, 225 responses;
- career reasons, 83 responses; and
- other answers, a total of 7 responses<sup>44</sup>.

Of the total number of reasons for working, by far the greatest proportion, 72.4 per cent, relate to working for money or financial reasons. Next highest, at 19.7 per cent, are responses which relate to getting out of the house, having social contact or to get a break from their children. Only a small proportion of all responses, 7.3 percent, relate to working for career reasons.

The following table summarises these reasons for working according to the answers given by individual respondents.

**Table 17: Respondents reasons for working**

Reasons for working	Proportion of Respondents	
	Number	Percent
Only for Financial Reasons	585	67.6
Only Social Contact	25	2.9
Only Career	18	2.1
Both Financial and Social Contact	174	20.1
Both Financial and Career	38	4.4
Both Social Contact and Career	2	0.2
All Financial, Social Contact and Career	23	2.7
Total	865	100

Not only do the majority of respondents work solely for financial reasons, but the second highest category is a combination of financial and social reasons. Only a total of 5.7 percent of all

<sup>44</sup> As there is no particular trend evident in these seven other answers, and so few responses, they are excluded from the following analysis.

respondents work for reasons which are exclusive of financial considerations. It is also evident few respondents are working in the retail industry due to their career aspirations.

The following table compares the reasons why respondents work with their sex.<sup>45</sup>

**Table 18: Comparison of reasons for working by sex of respondents**

Reason for working	Female		Male	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Financial only	517	66.7	67	75.3
Social contact only	24	3.1	1	1.1
Career only	14	1.8	4	4.5
Both Financial and Social Contact	172	22.2	2	2.2
Both Financial and Career	27	3.5	11	12.4
Both Social Contact and Career	1	0.1	1	1.1
All Financial, Social Contact, Career	21	2.7	4	4.5
Total	775	100	89	100

Most males work solely for financial reasons and a far lesser proportion due to a combination of financial and career reasons. On the other hand while a majority of female respondents also work for financial reasons, a far greater proportion work for a combination of financial and social reasons (chi square = 0.0000<sup>46</sup>). While the main reason behind both male and female employment is financial, there is a clear trend for women to have as their secondary reason a desire for social stimulation. For males their secondary reason, albeit at a lower level, is the pursuit of a career.

There is a strong relationship between respondent's motives for working and whether they have any children aged under 13 years (chi square = 0.0000<sup>47</sup>). The key differences are evident in the combined categories of financial and social reasons as well as financial and career reasons. Whereas 23.0 percent of those with children aged under 13 years work for both financial and social reasons, it is a far lesser 8.2 percent for those without children. Conversely, whereas 10.0 percent of those without children are motivated both by finance and career, it is a lesser 3.0 percent for those with children.

The following table reveals a strong relationship between the employment status of respondents and their reasons for working (chi square = 0.0000<sup>48</sup>).

<sup>45</sup> For the purposes of this comparison, social and career reasons are combined with the category of all three reasons.

<sup>46</sup> Chi square is 35.65981 and significance level is .0000

<sup>47</sup> Chi square is 44.85986 and significance is .0000.

<sup>48</sup> Chi square is 89.72533 and significance is .0000.

**Table 19: Comparison of reasons for working by employment status of respondents**

Reason for working	Full Time		Non Full Time	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Financial only	285	76.4	289	60.6
Social contact only	5	1.3	20	4.2
Career only	15	4.0	3	0.6
Both Financial and Social Contact	30	8.0	141	29.6
Both Financial and Career	29	7.8	9	1.9
Both Social Contact and Career	1	0.3	1	0.2
All Financial, Social Contact, Career	8	2.2	14	2.9
Total	373	100	477	100

A greater proportion of full timers work solely for financial reasons, and to a far lesser extent the combination of finance and either social or career reasons. While it the majority of part time employees work for financial reasons, a far greater proportion also work due to combination of financial and social reasons. This is similar to the pattern noted above for females, and is therefore consistent with the fact that the majority of females work on either a part time or casual basis.

Non full time employment provides these women with the opportunity to earn additional income, have social interaction as a result of their employment, and not have the commitment of full time employment. As a result, working parents who are employed on a part time or casual basis would normally require less child care than those who are in full time employment. Consequently, families with one parent in full time employment and the other working either part time or casual, are generally in a better position to balance the demands of work, family and child care than either families where both parents work full time or single parents.

This is evident from a comparison of these three family types with the different child care problems experienced by respondents.<sup>49</sup> There are three particular problems which are of greater concern to both single parent families and those with two full time working parents. These are:

- getting to work late or leaving early<sup>50</sup>,
- taking time off work to care for a sick child<sup>51</sup>, and
- getting interrupted at work, eg phone calls from your child<sup>52</sup>.

Whereas taking time off work to care for a sick child is a major concern for 21.4 percent of families with two full time working parents experience and 24.2 percent for single parent families, for families where one parent is employed full time and the other part time it is a much lesser 11.2 percent.

<sup>49</sup> These three family types were used in this comparison because they were the principal types identified as having children aged under 13 years. Families with one full time respondent and a spouse as a homekeeper were excluded due to the smallness of the sample.

<sup>50</sup> Chi square correlation of 16.58975 and significance level of .0023.

<sup>51</sup> Chi square value is 14.98300 and significance level is .0047.

<sup>52</sup> Chi square value is 15.05347 and significance level is .0046.

In families where one of the parents is employed part time, they have more time off work and therefore greater flexibility to be able to deal with child care problems or difficulties.

### 6.14. Family income levels

Respondents were asked to indicate their gross family income, inclusive of the earnings of their spouse or partner. Their income levels are spread across a substantial range. The greatest percentage of respondents, 21.6 percent, have a family income of between \$501 and \$600 per week. The remaining respondents, with their weekly income listed by the highest proportion in each category, are:

- 16.1 percent between \$401 and \$500,
- 15.5 percent between \$601 and \$700,
- 13.6 percent from \$301 to \$400,
- 12.7 percent have an income level up to \$300,
- 9.3 percent from \$701 to \$800, and
- 11.2 percent a total of \$801 or more per week.

The family income level for respondents with children aged under 13 years is lower than would expected based on the average weekly earnings applicable in Australia at the time the questionnaire was undertaken. At this time, average weekly earnings in Australia, as noted in Chapter 2, were as follows:

- males \$578.20, and
- females \$377.90.<sup>53</sup>

The following table is an analysis of family income, according to the six family groups outlined earlier in this Chapter.

<sup>53</sup> Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Catalogue number 6203.0, as at November 1990. Average weekly earnings is defined as gross weekly income inclusive of payments such as overtime.

**Table 20:     Family income according to family type of respondents.**

Family Groupings	Gross Family Weekly Income							
	\$0 to \$400		\$401 to \$600		\$601 to \$800		\$801 and Over	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Two parent family both working full time	16	11.1	35	24.3	63	43.8	30	20.8
Two parent family, one full time and the other non-waged	19	54.3	11	31.4	4	11.4	1	2.9
Two parent family, one full time and one part time/casual	42	12.7	175	52.9	83	25.1	31	9.4
Single working parent	66	62.3	27	25.5	9	8.5	4	3.8
Married couple, no children	8	8.3	35	36.5	31	32.3	22	22.9
Single person, no children	47	74.6	8	12.7	7	11.1	1	1.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>25.5</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>37.5</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>25.4</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>11.6</b>

The income level of the respondents is strongly related to the participation of parents in the workforce (chi square = 0.0000<sup>54</sup>). Not surprisingly, a greater proportion of families with two full time wages are in higher income categories, followed by those families with a full time and non full time wage.

This is illustrated by the proportion of each family grouping who are in the lowest and highest income categories. The highest proportion of respondents earning \$801 per week or over are those with two full time incomes, that is 20.8 percent for those with children aged under 13 years and 22.9 percent for married couples without children in this age group.

The greatest proportion of those in the lowest income category are firstly single respondents who do not have children aged under 13 years, followed by one income families and single parents. Where there is only one wage earner most families have an income level which is at or below the level of average weekly earnings. For example, 54.3 percent of married couple families where one parent is employed have an income of \$400 per week or less.

This primarily a reflection of the retail award wage structure where the full time adult shop assistant rate of pay was \$362.30 per week in 1990, well below the level of average weekly earnings. The high proportion of single respondents without children, 74.6 percent, who earn under \$400 weekly reflects the fact that 52.3 percent are aged 20 years or under, and therefore in receipt of junior rates of pay.

In addition, only a minority of working parents in two income families have a weekly income which is comparable to the level of average weekly earnings. For example, in families with two full time

<sup>54</sup> Chi square is 290.03273 and significance is .0000

wages, 35.4 percent earn less than \$600 per week, and a further 43.8 percent up to \$800 weekly. For families with one full time and one non full time wage, a substantially greater 65.6 percent earn under \$400 and a further 25.1 percent up to \$800 weekly.

Based on the level of average weekly earnings, it was anticipated that those families with two full time incomes could earn approximately the sum of the male and female rates, \$956.10 per week. However, it is evident that a very small minority of families have a weekly income comparative to the level of average weekly earnings.

There can be no doubt respondents income is below what would have been anticipated using the average weekly earnings as a general index. This is fundamentally influenced by the level of award rates of pay applicable in the retail industry and the fact that most retail workers receive minimal over award payments. These wage levels also give an indication as to why such a large number of respondents work for financial reasons; it would seem that many have to work in order to obtain an adequate level of family income.

Attention will now turn to the child care arrangements which were revealed in the retail workers survey.



## Chapter 7: Child Care Arrangements

This chapter describes the child care arrangements used by those respondents who completed the retail workers survey in regard to both preschool and school aged children. Consideration is given to the satisfaction of respondents with their arrangements and whether they wish to use other forms of care. In addition the cost of care is reviewed as well as what parents do in situations where they are unhappy with their care arrangements.

### 7.1. Some other research

Research into the child care needs of working parents reveals a reliance on informal care arrangements, evident in studies as early as the 1974 Electrical Trades Union research on the child care needs of its members. Over 80 percent of the female working parents in this study used informal care for their children (Brennan & O'Donnell 1986, p.5).

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (1990, p.1) in its report on child care arrangements in Australia, found that 18 percent of all children aged under 12 were placed in formal care arrangements compared to a far greater 42 percent using informal care. The break up of those using informal care is as follows:

- relatives, 56.2 percent,
- non relatives, 29.7 percent, and
- sibling care, 14.1 percent.

Of those using formal care services, 47.7 percent of all arrangement are in kindergartens.

The first national study to consider in detail how working parents combine work and family responsibilities was commissioned by the Work and Family Unit of the Department of Industrial Relations. The research was undertaken by the Australian Institute of Family Studies into many aspects of the needs of working parents. VandenHeuvel (1993, p.31) in reporting on the findings of this research, notes the limited use of formal care and that informal arrangements were most commonly used for both preschool and school aged children.

VandenHeuvel (1993, p.20) reports that 36.2 percent of all occurrences of preschool care are formal arrangements, 43.7 are informal and 20.1 percent are parental care.<sup>55</sup> The higher use of informal care is a reflection of

"... the relative availability of various types of care and attitudes toward the appropriate type of care for preschoolers." (VandenHeuvel 1993, p.20)

In regard to out of school hours care, she reports that formal care was not often used at all. Working parents with school aged children had a strong reliance on parental and informal care arrangements

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<sup>55</sup> While the categories used by VandenHeuvel are very similar to those utilised in this research, the method of calculating the number of care arrangements is quite different. Consequently the data presented in the VandenHeuvel report had to be recalculated to enable a comparison to be made.

both during school holidays and after school. For example, during school holidays VandenHeuvel (1993, p.25) reports formal care arrangements account for 8 percent of all care, informal care 33.6 percent, parental care 49.6 percent and in 8.8 percent of cases the child cares for themselves.

7.2.Summary of care arrangements

In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to denote what forms of child care they use both on a regular and less frequent basis, and to indicate all the types of care they use for both their preschool and school aged children. They could indicate their care arrangements by selecting from a list of options provided. They were also given an opportunity to indicate whether they use other forms of care not listed.<sup>56</sup> Preschool care was divided into care respondents use when at work both during the day and on evenings or weekends. Care for school aged children was separated into care which respondents use when they are at work on evenings or weekends, school holidays and before or after school<sup>57</sup>.

Appendix 10 contains a summary of the care arrangements used by respondents.<sup>58</sup>

The majority of care arrangements which respondents organise is regular child care, as indicated in the following table.

Table 1: Summary of the number of care arrangements used by respondents on a regular and less frequent basis.

Type of Care	Regular Care		Care Used Infrequently		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Preschool Care						
During the Day	438	73.7	156	26.3	594	100
Evening/Weekend	191	71.5	76	23.2	267	100
Total Preschool	629	73.1	232	26.9	861	100
School Aged Care						
Evening/Weekend	341	68.8	155	31.2	496	100
School Holidays	466	57.7	341	42.3	807	100
Before/After School	382	63.2	222	36.8	604	100
Total School Aged	1189	62.4	718	37.6	1907	100
Total All Care	1818	65.7	950	34.3	2768	100

<sup>56</sup> For the purpose of the following analysis these other responses are excluded, both because only a minimal number of other answers were made and they did not fall into any specific categories. There are a total of 17 other responses indicated by respondents representing only 0.6 percent of all care arrangements: 3 for regular preschool care during the day; 1 for infrequent preschool care on evenings or weekends; 1 for regular school aged care on evenings or weekends, 3 both during school holidays and before or after school; 1 both for infrequent care before or after school and on evenings or weekends, and 3 during school holidays.

<sup>57</sup> As noted in Chapter 5, the category of evening and weekend care includes evenings or Saturdays for shop workers and evenings or Sundays for warehouse workers.

<sup>58</sup> Shop workers were asked to indicate what child care they use during evenings or Saturdays when at work, and warehouse workers on evenings or Sundays. For the purpose of this analysis these responses are combined, and discussed in terms of evening or weekend care.

There is a substantially greater use by respondents of regular care arrangements for both their preschool and school aged children. The highest reliance on regular care is for those making arrangements for preschool children. Respondents make the greatest proportionate use of infrequent care arrangements during school holidays.

This report will concentrate on the regular care arrangements of respondents, as experiences or problems with these arrangements will tend to be more substantial. Care which is used less frequently, as noted by parents during the interview phase of the research, tends to be built around their regular arrangements and cover any gaps which may exist. For comparative purposes, the ensuing discussion concerning the findings of the survey, often necessitates a selection of those respondents who solely use one form of regular care.

When all regular and infrequent care is totalled, this survey reveals

- for preschool care total of 51.7 percent is informal care, 27.5 percent parental care and 20.8 percent is formal care;
- for school aged children 56.2 percent is informal care, 27.5 percent parental care, 9.8 percent formal care and 6.5 percent where the child cares for themselves.

The majority of those employed in the retail industry, as indicated by this research, rely on primarily on informal care arrangements and to a lesser extent parental care, in the provision of child care for their children while they are at work.

This comparison of child care reveals a low overall use of formal care services. However, respondents are more likely to use formal care for their preschool children than those of school age.

### **Regular care**

All regular child care arrangements are summarised in the table below according to four broad categories: formal care, informal care, parental care and children who care for themselves. In this analysis formal care consists of child care centres, family day care, occasional care, kindergartens, before or after school programs, and school holiday programs.

Informal care involves care by relatives, non relatives such as friends/neighbours and private caregivers or siblings. The category of parental care almost exclusively consists of care by the spouse or defacto but includes care by the respondent in their workplace, although there are only minimal instances of such care.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> There are only three cases where a respondent cares for their children at their workplace, and these all occur during school holidays.

For the purpose of the following discussion, the term spouse includes defacto.

**Table 2: Summary of all occurrences of regular child care for both preschool and school aged children<sup>60</sup>.**

Type of Regular Care	Number	Percent
<b>Informal Care</b>		
Relatives	517	28.6
Non Relatives	264	14.6
Sibling Care	160	8.9
<b>Total Informal Care</b>	<b>941</b>	<b>52.1</b>
<b>Parental Care</b>	561	31.0
<b>Formal Care</b>	242	13.4
<b>Child by Themselves</b>	64	3.5
<b>Total All Regular Care</b>	<b>1808</b>	<b>100</b>

This table reveals a low overall level of use of formal child care services, also evident in the findings of the other reports on child care noted above. Respondents rely primarily on informal arrangements to provide the child care they need on a regular basis, and then on parental care. Relatives are by far the most commonly used form of care while formal services account for only 13.4 percent of all regularly utilised child care.

### **Infrequent child care arrangements**

It is clear respondents do have a need to utilise care arrangements on a less frequent basis for their children. From Table 1 above, it is evident over one third of all arrangements are those which respondents use infrequently. There is a greater use of infrequent care for school aged children, 37.6 of all arrangements compared to 26.9 percent for preschool arrangements.

The vast majority of preschool care arrangements used infrequently by respondents when they work during the day, are informal care: 25 percent by relatives, 27.6 percent by non relatives and 6.4 percent by siblings. An additional 22.4 percent is parental care and only 8.6 percent of care is provided in formal child care services.

When at work on evenings or weekends, respondents rely even more heavily on either informal or parental care. In regard to the care they use infrequently at these times, 64.4 percent is informal care: both relatives and non relatives provide 28.9 percent and siblings 6.6 percent. Parental care accounts for a further 25 percent and formal care arrangements represent only 10.6 percent of all care used infrequently.

The following table summarises the care which respondents use on a non-regular basis for their school aged children.

<sup>60</sup> This summary excludes the 10 occurrences in the category of 'other responses'.

**Table 3:      Infrequent care used for school aged children.**

Type of Care	Evenings or Weekends		School Holidays		Before or After School	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Parental care	29	18.8	61	18.0	52	23.5
Child Cares for self	12	7.8	26	7.7	21	9.5
Informal care						
Relatives	41	26.6	85	25.1	44	19.9
Non relatives	42	27.3	77	22.8	57	25.8
Sibling care	17	11.0	36	10.7	28	12.7
Total Informal care	100	64.9	198	58.6	129	58.4
Formal Care	13	8.5	53	15.7	19	8.6
Total	154	100	338	100	221	100

Infrequent care arrangements are primarily used during school holidays and this could reflect the difficulty respondents face in arranging care given the number of weeks children are on holidays from school. Subsequently parents need to have as many options as possible in order to apportion the care.

Irrespective of when respondents make use of infrequent care arrangements for either their preschool or school aged children, the principal type of care is informal care, followed by parental care. There is a minimal reliance on formal services.

This substantial use of both informal and parental care could be related to the nature of the care which is needed less frequently, for example to cater for situations such as care which is needed for short periods of time, intermittent child care needs or arrangements which have to be made with little notice. It was noted in Chapter 3 that informal child care arrangements were generally more flexible than formal care, and therefore more likely to be able to assist in situations where respondents need care at short notice. During the interviews parents spoke about how their informal care arrangements often allowed them some flexibility when they needed it.

    "My husband looked after our child because he was on afternoon shift. Even if I was called to work with little notice he was mostly around when I needed him."

Another parent commented

    "My sister picks my children up from school and looks after them until I come home. She looks after her children and doesn't work. She is there to help me when I need her."

These parents had a sense of confidence that most of the time they would have someone to call upon to help at short notice.

**Prerequisites in selection of child care**

Respondents were asked to indicate the reasons why they chose their particular child care arrangements. They were given the opportunity to respond to eight specific reasons and could rate their responses to each reason on a five point scale, that is

- very important
- important
- slightly important
- unsure
- not important

Two reasons stand out as those most highly rated by parents, whether care was for preschool or school aged children. They are rated as significantly more important than the other reasons. The first, and most highly rated reason, is the need for respondents to have confidence in the person caring for their child. The importance of this reason is outlined in the following table.<sup>61</sup>

**Table 4:      How important respondents consider it is to have confidence in the caregiver.**

Degree of importance	School aged child care	Preschool child care
	Percent	Percent
Very Important	92.1	97.0
Important	7.0	2.4
<b>Total Important</b>	<b>99.1</b>	<b>99.4</b>
<b>Total Number of responses</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>334</b>

An extremely high proportion of all respondents consider it to be either very important or important to be able to trust those who care for their children. It indicates respondents believe it is of fundamental importance to use a caregiver in whom they have confidence, irrespective of the particular form of child care they use. This is not surprising given the reality that the caregiver acts as a 'defacto' parent whilst parents are at work, and at these times the caregiver plays an important role in the life of those children in their care.

The second most important reason expressed by respondents is that their children to be cared for in a safe environment which includes materials and equipment. The importance of this reason is outlined below.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>61</sup> For greater clarity the only responses reported here are those of 'very important' and 'important' as they represent the vast majority of responses.

<sup>62</sup> For greater clarity the only responses reported here are those of 'very important' and 'important' as they represent the vast majority of responses.

**Table 5: Importance of safe environment in preschool care.**

Degree of importance	School aged child care	Preschool child care
	Percent	Percent
Very Important	84.8	90.9
Important	11.9	8.5
Total Important	96.7	99.4
Total Number of Responses	329	307

Again a very high proportion of all respondents rate as important the need to provide a safe care environment for their children.

These two reasons, rather than being an indicator of why parents use particular forms of care, are much closer to being a prerequisite for all forms of child care. This is demonstrated by selecting those respondents who solely use a particular type of care on a regular basis, and comparing their responses to these two reasons. A similar pattern exists in regard to the reasons behind the selection of care for both preschool and school aged children. This comparison for preschool care is outlined in the following table.<sup>63</sup>

**Table 6: Comparison of respondents who solely use one type of preschool care on a regular basis with reasons for these care arrangements.**

Type of Care	Confidence in person providing care (Percent)			Need for a safe environment (Percent)		
	Very Important	Important	Total	Very Important	Important	Total
Parental Care	92.9	4.8	97.7	94.3	5.7	100
Informal Care	97.1	2.9	100	90.5	7.4	97.9
Formal Care	100	0	100	89.7	10.3	100

This table confirms both reasons are highly rated by respondents in their use of preschool care, irrespective of the particular type of care which they use, parental, informal or formal. A similar pattern exists for those respondents who solely use one type of care for their school aged children.

**Table 7: Comparison of respondents who solely use one type of care for school aged children on a regular basis with reasons for these care arrangements.**

Type of Care	Confidence in person providing care	Need for a safe environment
	Very important and important Percent	Very important and important Percent
Parental Care	100	92.7
Informal Care	98.5	99.0
Formal Care	100	100

<sup>63</sup> For the purpose of this comparison, the respondents selected were those who solely use one type of preschool care on a regular basis. For greater clarity the only responses reported here are those of 'very important' and 'important' as they represented the vast majority of responses.

It is evident that in selecting all types of child care for preschool and school aged children, respondents need to have confidence in the person caring for their child and a safe environment. Consequently any expansion of child care services for working parents would need to address these two issues in a positive manner, so that parents could have confidence in the quality of care provided.

**Sex of respondents**

There is a strong relationship between the sex of respondents and the care they use for both their preschool and school aged children. In regard to preschool child care, a significantly greater proportion of males have their spouse provide care for their preschool children than do females. This is apparent from the following table which compares regular forms of preschool care with the sex of respondents; there is a chi square significance level of .0000.<sup>64</sup>

**Table 8: Comparison of regularly used preschool care with the sex of respondents.**

Type of Preschool care	Female		Male	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Parental care	34	16.5	18	50.0
Informal care	113	54.9	12	33.3
Formal care	59	28.6	6	16.7
All care types	206	100	36	100

The fact that 50.0 percent of preschool care for male respondents is undertaken as parental care is strongly tied to the high proportion of their spouses who are non waged, as noted in Chapter 6. Their spouses subsequently have an opportunity to provide a greater proportion of care than those spouses who work either full or part time. Accordingly, female respondents are significantly more likely to rely on either informal or formal care than are males.

An even greater polarisation is evident for children of school age as an even greater proportion of males rely on their spouses to care for their children. There is a chi square significance of .0000 resulting from this comparison as outlined below.<sup>65</sup>

**Table 9: Comparison of regularly used school aged care with the sex of respondents.**

Type of Preschool care	Female		Male	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Parental care	61	24.4	26	83.9
Informal care	171	68.4	3	9.7
Formal care	18	7.2	2	6.5
All care types	250	100	31	100

For males the main differences between preschool and school aged care is an increase in the use of parental care for their school aged children and a subsequent reduction of informal arrangements. Changes are also evident in the care arrangements for female respondents. There is a greater

<sup>64</sup> Chi square value is 20.38403 and significance level is .0000.  
<sup>65</sup> Chi square value is 46.88663 and significance level is .0000.



reliance on the use of informal care for children of school age as well as a slight increase in the use of parental care and a substantial reduction in the reliance on formal care arrangements.

**Employment status**

There is a strong relationship between the employment status of respondents and the type of child care they use for both their preschool and school aged children (chi square = 0.0000<sup>66</sup>). This is outlined in the table below.

**Table 10: Comparison of employment status with respondents who solely use each type of preschool care.**

Type of Regular Care	Full time employees		Part time employees		Casual employees	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Informal Care	41	43.6	53	66.3	28	45.2
Parental Care	18	19.1	6	7.5	26	41.9
Formal Care	35	37.3	21	26.2	8	12.9
Total	94	100	80	100	62	100

This table shows distinct differences exist between the types of care used by respondents for their preschool children. Part time workers depend to a substantial degree on informal care, casuals on either informal or parental care and full timers on informal or formal care arrangements.

The following table reveals the details of the strong connection between the employment status of respondents and the types of care they use (chi square = 0.0002<sup>67</sup>).

**Table 11: Comparison of employment status with respondents who solely use each type of school aged care.**

Type of Regular Care	Full time employees		Part time employees		Casual employees	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Informal Care	58	58.6	92	73.0	22	41.5
Parental Care	37	37.4	23	18.3	26	49.1
Formal Care	4	4.0	11	8.7	5	9.4
Total	99	100	126	100	53	100

Full time employees rely mostly on informal care and to a lesser extent on parental care in providing care for their school aged children; they rarely use formal services. Part time employees depend to a substantial degree on informal arrangements and casuals rely on both informal and parental care.

In comparison to preschool care, respondents who are employed full time have a different pattern of care for their school aged children which is demonstrated by a dramatic decline in the use of formal services. This is replaced by an increase in both informal and parental care. Part time employees have an even greater reliance on informal care for their school aged children. The second most

<sup>66</sup> The chi square value is 33.02212 and the significance is .0000.

<sup>67</sup> Chi square value is 21.90791 and significance level is .0002.

frequently use type of care is parental care instead of formal care which was used for preschool children. Casual employees have a similar pattern of care for both preschool and school aged children: they continue to depend on both informal and parental care.

### 7.3. Cost of Child Care

Respondents were asked to indicate their average weekly cost of child care each week for all their children, preschool and school aged, both during the normal working week and school holidays. A substantial proportion of all respondents have no child care costs which result from their care arrangements, as indicated in the following table.

**Table 12: Weekly child care costs for all children.**

Weekly Cost	School Holidays		Normal week	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Nil	206	50.6	237	45.5
\$1 to \$30	47	11.5	100	19.2
\$31 to \$60	65	16	84	16.1
\$61 to \$90	39	9.6	56	10.7
\$91 or more	50	12.3	44	8.5
Total	407	100	521	100

A similar proportion of respondents, whether during school holidays or the normal working week, have no child care costs at all. The number of respondents without any child care costs has a substantial impact on the mean cost of child care. In regard to normal weekly costs, the mean cost of care for all parents is a total of \$29.05 per week. If those parents without any costs are excluded, the mean is a much higher \$54.22 per week. During school holidays the mean cost of care for all respondents is \$32.34 per week. Once those without any cost are excluded the mean for school holiday care is \$44.89.

Parents were asked to rate their costs on a five point scale from very expensive to very reasonable and their responses are summarised below.

**Table 13: Satisfaction with cost of child care**

Response	School holidays		Normal Week	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Very expensive	29	10.9	27	7.8
Expensive	44	16.5	55	15.8
Unsure	23	8.6	14	4.0
Reasonable	82	30.7	123	35.3
Very Reasonable	89	33.3	129	37.1
Total	267	100	348	100

A substantial majority of respondents are satisfied with their level of child care costs. This is indicated by the number who consider their costs to be either reasonable or very reasonable, a total of 72.4 percent during the normal working week and 64.0 percent during school holidays. This is

closely related to the high proportion of respondents who have no child care costs at all. A significant proportion of those who have no child care costs naturally find their cost level to be either very reasonable or reasonable. The higher the cost of care the more likely is that respondents will consider their cost level to be either expensive or very expensive.

The low overall cost of child care is closely linked to the high proportion of respondents who use parental or informal child care. During the interview phase of the research many working parents spoke about the impact of child care costs on the value of their employment. They expressed the feeling that if child care costs were too high then it would just not be worth their while working. This comment was particularly tied to the use of informal care.

For example, one of those interviewed relied on relatives for her regular child care arrangements, and said the reason was

"... because there are no child care costs; I want to be able to make the most of the money I earn from working."

Another parent who regularly had her mother in law provide care, said this was primarily for financial reasons.

"... it did not cost anything. If we had to pay child care fees it simply wouldn't be worth working."

It is evident that many working parents have made child care arrangements which either result in no cost at all, or are kept to a minimum, as demonstrated by the fact that 64.7 percent pay \$30 or less for care during the normal week and 62.1 percent pay this amount during school holidays.

In order to determine the relative impact of the type of care upon the cost of care, a comparison was made between those who regularly rely on either formal or informal care during the normal working week for both their preschool and school aged children. Parental care was excluded from this comparison as it does not involve any obvious child care costs. The following table reveals a clear relationship between the cost of care and the type of care respondents use.

**Table 14: Comparison of cost levels for those who have either formal or informal care arrangements for their children during the normal working week.**

Weekly Cost	Informal Arrangements		Formal Arrangements	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Nil	214	53.1	3	3.0
\$1 to \$30	72	17.9	23	22.8
\$31 to \$60	63	15.6	21	20.8
\$61 to \$90	27	6.7	28	27.7
\$91 or more	27	6.7	26	25.7
Total	403	100	101	100

There is a chi square significance at the .01 level which results from this comparison.<sup>68</sup> This confirms the notion that, in general, respondents who use informal child care have a significantly

<sup>68</sup> Chi square value calculated as 110.19 which is significant at the level of .01.

lower level of cost than those who rely on formal care arrangements. The difference is clearly evident in the proportion who pay \$61 or more per week: 53.4 percent for those who use formal care and only 13.4 percent for those who rely on informal care. Conversely, while 53.1 percent of those who solely use informal care have no child care costs it is only 3 percent for formal services. A fundamental aspect of informal care is that it is far less expensive for respondents than formal child care services.

7.4.Preschool child care

Listed below are some more specific details relating to the care which respondents arrange for their preschool children.

7.4.1. Pre-school care during the day

The following table lists the regular preschool care which respondents use during the day when working.

Table 15: Summary of regular preschool child care used during the day.

Type of Regular Care	Number	Percent
Informal Care		
Relatives	145	33.3
Non Relatives	60	13.8
Sibling Care	19	4.4
Total Informal Care	224	51.5
Parental Care	72	16.5
Formal Care		
Child Care Centre	61	14.0
Family Day Care	39	9.0
Kindergarten	36	8.3
Occasional Care	3	0.7
Total Formal Care	139	32.0
Total All Regular Care	435	100

Clearly relatives provide the most common form of regular preschool care during the day and the majority of care is provided through informal arrangements.

In regard to formal care arrangements, kindergartens account for only 36 occurrences of care, or 25.8 percent of the 139 regular formal arrangements. It has already been noted kindergartens operate in many ways as more of an educational service rather than a form of child care. The sessional nature of kindergartens means working parents would find it difficult organise their work solely around kindergarten hours. This is evident in that of the 36 parents who regularly use kindergartens, only 3 have this as their sole form of regular care. Most rely on additional regular care to be provided either by relatives or their spouse.

The role key role played by relatives in the provision of preschool care is evident from the fact that they provide a greater proportion of care arrangements used during the day than all formal services combined: 33.3 percent to compared to 32.0 percent respectively for regular care, and 25.0 to 8.6 percent respectively for care used infrequently.

**7.4.2. Evening and Weekend Preschool Care**

A summary of the regular care which is arranged by respondents when they at work on evenings or weekends is outlined in the table below.

**Table 16: Summary of occurrences of regular child care for preschool children on evenings or weekends.**

Type of Regular Care	Number	Percent
Informal Care		
Relatives	58	30.4
Non Relatives	15	7.9
Sibling Care	6	3.1
Total Informal Care	79	41.4
Parental Care	110	57.6
Formal Care	2	1.0
Total All Regular Care	191	100

Respondents rely almost exclusively on parental and informal care arrangements when working evenings or weekends. Their combined use of parental and informal care at these times is even greater than that indicated when working during the day: 99 percent compared to 68 percent.

This is at least partially linked to the failure of many formal child care services to offer evening or weekend care. Subsequently, parents with work related child care needs at these times have only limited options open to them, as essentially the only formal service available is family day care. This was confirmed in the phone poll of child care centres and family day care programs conducted during this research, as noted in Chapter 4.

Not one of the 38 child care centres contacted, either commercially operated or government funded, were open either on evenings or weekends. On the other hand, 90 percent of the family day care programs normally provide the opportunity for care both during the evening and on weekends as 90 percent of the programs contacted allow the opportunity for care at these times. Given the nature of family day care, as outlined in Chapter 3, a mutually convenient care arrangement can be organised between the two parties. Consequently, working parents would need to make contact with a caregiver who was willing to provide care on evenings and/or weekends. Particular caregivers may not be willing to work at these times and there is no requirement on them to do so.

In the light this poll, it is evident few child care centres would offer care outside the normal day time hours on Monday to Friday: most centres contacted in the phone poll open from around 7 am or 7.30 am and close at 6 pm. In addition, the availability of family day care on evenings or weekends needs to be viewed in the context of the reasonably low level of use by respondents of

such services. During the working day Monday to Friday, only 9 percent of all regular preschool care is provided by family day care programs.

The high use of informal and parental care on evenings and weekends may therefore reflect the limited options open to working parents at these times. On the other hand, parents may in fact choose to work evenings and/or weekends because of the increased availability of informal and parental care, particularly the latter. Given a substantial majority of spouses are also employed, respondents may elect to work at these times so that their spouse can provide most of the care for their preschool children. This would minimise their reliance on child care arrangements external to the family.

There is a substantial relationship between respondents who work during evenings or weekends and the age of their children (chi square = 0.0009<sup>69</sup>). Whereas 22.8 percent of respondents who only have school aged children work evenings, it is a substantially greater 34.2 percent for those with only preschool children and 38.2 percent for those with both preschool and school aged children. There are similar proportions in an equivalent comparison for weekend work (chi square = 0.0002<sup>70</sup>).

Once respondents only have school aged children it is less likely they will work either of an evening or weekend. This indicates how respondents can attempt to organise their hours of work around their child care needs. For example, there are respondents who elect to work evenings or weekends so that their spouse can care for their preschool children. Once children reach school age, there is less disruption if they work during the day due to the relatively reduced need for child care.

This employment pattern was clearly demonstrated in the interview phase of this research where a number of those interviewed spoke of how they changed their roster to evenings or weekends specifically so their spouse could care for their children.

"I changed my work pattern around child care needs; I worked of an evening so my husband could take care of them while they were very young. Once they were at school I could change back to day time hours."

Others spoke about a desire to minimise the amount of time they place their children in the care of anyone other than their spouse.

"Until 18 months ago I worked as a casual of an evening. It was good for my husband to be around to care for our children at these times. He understands more. You hear about things that happen to other kids."

The retail industry does provide the opportunity for some working parents to organise their employment so that their preschool children could primarily be cared for by their spouse. This can allow them to be around more often during the week for their children while they are young and still remain in employment.

<sup>69</sup> Chi square value is 14.01467 and significance level is .0009.

<sup>70</sup> Chi square value is 16.88696 and significance level is .0002.

7.4.3. Other reasons for pre-school child care

It has been noted that having confidence in the caregiver and a safe environment are essentially prerequisites for respondents in their choice of all types of child care. Respondents also stated how important they consider each of the following six reasons to be in their selection of preschool care arrangements.

Table 17: Reasons why respondents make their care arrangements.<sup>71</sup>

Reason	Response as a percentage					
	Very Import	Import	Slightly Import	Unsure	Not Import	Total
Cost has to be low	54.2	25.8	11.3	1.9	6.8	100
Needs to be in a home environment	57.3	16.6	15.0	4.1	7.0	100
Few other care options are available	37.8	20.2	10.5	18.7	12.8	100
Child to have contact with other children	42.9	29.7	13.9	1.0	12.5	100
Wanted care near work place	45.9	25.8	7.6	0.7	20.0	100
Wanted care near home	48.3	30.4	11.7	1.0	8.6	100

Of these remaining reasons, both need for cost to be low and care in a home environment have the highest 'very important' ratings. Both of these are in fact principal features of many informal care arrangements.

In discussions with working parents during the interview phase of the research it became evident that part of the reason why a number chose relatives or friends to care for their children was because of the costs associated with the use of formal child care services.

"I preferred a more personal form of child care rather than a creche. Creches are too expensive".

There is a significant relationship between the type of care respondents use and the importance they place on keeping the costs of child care low (chi square = 0.0143<sup>72</sup>). A significantly greater proportion of those using informal care, 64.3 percent, consider it is very important to keep their child care costs low, compared to 50.0 percent for parental care and 41.1 percent for formal care.

A comparison of employment status with the need for low cost care does not reveal any significant difference, indicating the cost of care is essentially of equal importance to respondents, whether they are full time, part time or casual.

While keeping costs low was of major importance to those using informal care, the need for contact with other children was a significant factor in the selection of formal preschool services (chi square

<sup>71</sup> For greater clarity only percentages are used.  
<sup>72</sup> For the purpose of this comparison, the respondents selected were those who solely use one type of preschool care on a regular basis. The chi square value is 15.90113 and the significance level is .0143

= 0.0000<sup>73</sup>). Whereas 73.3 percent of those using formal services consider this reason to be very important, only 24.2 percent of respondents using parental care and 37.5 of those using informal care believe it is very important for their children to have contact with other children.

Substantial differences are evident in the primary reasons why respondents choose different types of care, clearly evident in a summary of the most important reasons for each type of care noted below (a selection of the highest very important responses for each type of care).

#### Parental Care:

- care in a home environment, 63.2 percent

#### Informal Care

- cost of care needs to be low, 64.4 percent
- care in a home environment, 60.6 percent

#### Formal Care

- contact with other children, 73.3 percent

These reasons essentially reflect the differences between each type of care. Parental care would normally be in the child's own home. Informal care services are normally in a home environment, either that of the child or the caregiver, and tend to be of lower cost. A fundamental difference for formal child care services, whether kindergartens, child care centres or occasional care, is the setting for the care. These services are centre based and children are in group care situations. Obviously the exception is family day care, for whilst it is a home based situation, it normally also involves contact with other children, either those of the caregiver or other children in care.

Proportionately, respondents did not create as a high priority in the selection of their preschool care arrangements, the desire to have care located near their place of employment. The highest proportion of respondents, 20.0 percent, rated this reason as not important in the selection of their care. In addition, the limitation of having few child care options from which to choose, is comparatively a less important reason: the smallest proportion of all respondents rate this reason as very important, 37.8 percent and it also receives the lowest combined total of important and very important responses, 58.0 percent.

Despite this, the practical effects of a lack of child care being available for preschool children cannot be ignored. Those parents who face the problem of having few child care options from which to choose are placed in a difficult position. These parents may be forced to settle for child care arrangements which they would rather not use or decide to remain out of the workforce against their wishes. Such sentiments were expressed by respondents during the interviews, when asked whether child care needs had limited their involvement in the workforce.

"Yes. I would have preferred to work if our kids could have had child care. I didn't have anyone to look after my kids and a career was not possible until they grew up."

<sup>73</sup> For the purpose of this comparison, the respondents selected were those who solely use one type of preschool care on a regular basis. The chi square value is 33.87077 and the level of significance is .0000



The issue of availability has the capacity to undermine the choices parents wish to make about which form of preschool care is most suitable for their child.

There are also particular reasons why respondents choose between the two most commonly used types of formal preschool care, child care centres and family day care. There is a significant difference between the importance of cost for those respondents who solely use either of these two formal services on a regular basis. The difference is reflected in the combined total of very important and important responses for those who say it is important for costs to be low (chi square = 0.0233<sup>74</sup>):

- 86.4 percent for those using family day care, and
- 51.6 percent for those using a child care centre.

A significantly higher proportion of those using family day care consider it either important or very important for care to be in a home environment (chi square = 0.0314<sup>75</sup>).

- a total of 90.5 percent for those using family day care, and
- a total of 53.3 percent for those using a child care centre.

Consequently, it is far more likely that respondents who use family day care, when compared to those using child care centres, desire care that is low cost and in a home environment.

The reasons why respondents select between the particular types of informal care arrangements is less obvious. There is no relationship between any of the different types of informal care and the reasons for selecting particular care arrangements.

7.4.4.            **Happiness with preschool care**

In response to the question 'How happy are you with these arrangements for your preschool children?', respondents clearly indicate a high degree of happiness with their child care arrangements both while at work during the day and on evenings or weekends.

**Table 18:    Happiness of respondents with their care arrangements.**

Response	During the Day		Evening and Weekend	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Very Happy	194	60.8	105	59.3
Happy	92	28.9	54	30.5
Unsure	15	4.7	10	5.7
Unhappy	17	5.3	6	3.4
Very Unhappy	1	0.3	2	1.1
Total	319	100	177	100

<sup>74</sup> For the purpose of this comparison, the respondents selected were those who solely use one type of preschool care on a regular basis. The chi square value is 7.517.3 and significance is .0233

<sup>75</sup> For the purpose of this comparison, the respondents selected were those who solely use one type of preschool care on a regular basis. The chi square value is 8.84925 and significance is .0395

The overall pattern of happiness for care provided both during the day and on evenings or weekends is very much alike. The majority of respondents are happy with the care arranged for their children; a combined total of 89.7 percent are either happy or very happy with care provided during the day and 89.8 percent with evening or weekend care when they are at work. Only 5.6 percent of respondents were either unhappy or very unhappy about their care during the day and 4.5 percent during evenings or weekends.

However, there is a significant difference when comparing the type of regular care used by respondents while working during the day and their happiness with this care (chi square = 0.0155<sup>76</sup>). Their responses are outlined in the following table.

**Table 19: Level of happiness for respondents who solely use one type of regular preschool care while they are at work during the day<sup>77</sup>.**

Type of Care	Very Happy	Happy	Unsure	Unhappy or Very Unhappy	Total	
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Number	Percent
Parental Care	73.9	8.7	0	17.4	23	100
Informal Care	63.2	30.4	1.6	4.8	125	100
Formal Care	62.2	26.8	7.3	3.7	82	100

This reveals a greater level of happiness for respondents who solely use parental care when compared to either formal or informal care. It is no surprise to find respondents would prefer to have their children in the care of their spouse in preference to any external care arrangement. There is also a polarisation in the attitudes of those who regularly use parental care: while the greatest proportion are very happy with their care arrangement, the greatest proportion are also unhappy with this care indicating a desire for other forms of care to be available.

A comparison of only formal and informal care reveals no significant difference in their level of happiness.

There is a strong relationship between respondent's satisfaction and the care they use when at work on evenings or weekends for their preschool children(chi square = 0.0131<sup>78</sup>). Respondents who regularly use parental care are more likely to be satisfied with their care arrangements. Whereas 72.6 percent of those who regularly use parental care are very happy with their arrangements it is a much smaller 43.8 percent for those using informal care.

This confirms the notion that respondents are most satisfied in situations where their spouse can care for their children. This applies to care for preschool children both during the day and on evenings or weekends.

<sup>76</sup> Chi square correlation of 15.69004 and significance level is .0155  
<sup>77</sup> Responses are limited to those numbering more than 10 in each type of care.  
<sup>78</sup> Chi square value is 12.65353 and significance level is .0131.

In order to determine how happy respondents are with specific forms of care, the following table compares the satisfaction of respondents who solely use one form of preschool care on a regular basis when they are at work during the day.

**Table 20: Happiness of respondents who solely use one form of preschool child care on a regular basis when they are at work during the day.**

Type of Care	Very Happy	Happy	Unsure	Unhappy or Very Unhappy	Total	
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Number	Percent
Parental	73.9	8.7	0	17.4	23	100
Child Care Centre	68.1	21.3	8.5	2.1	47	100
Family Day Care	55.6	37.0	3.7	3.7	27	100
Non relative	68.4	21.1	10.5	0	19	100
Sibling	62.5	12.5	0	25.0	8	100
Relative	66.3	31.4	0	2.3	86	100

While the vast majority of respondents are either very happy or happy with their particular care arrangements, respondents who use family day care or a sibling to provide care are least happy in comparison to the other forms of care (chi square = 0.0027<sup>79</sup>). Those who rely on family day care record a significantly lower proportion of very happy responses. In relation to sibling care, the highest proportion, 25.0 percent, are unhappy however the small sample size makes it difficult to draw any confident conclusions.

In regard to these specific types of care, respondents who rely solely on parental care, as noted above, are likely to be most content with their care.

One possible limitation in this comparison of those who solely use one regular form of child care relates to those respondents who have multiple care arrangements. The main multiple care arrangements, and the proportion of these respondents who are either very happy or happy, are outlined below.

- parental care and relative, 93.3 percent,
- parental care and a kindergarten, 100 percent,
- relative and kindergarten, 100 percent,
- relative and friend, 100 percent.

There is no significant relationship between these multiple regular care arrangements and the satisfaction of respondents. In addition, the overall level of happiness is at very similar levels to those outlined above for respondents using only one form of regular preschool care. There is no indication that respondents who use multiple care arrangements are less happy with their care. This is clearly demonstrated by the fact that only one of the 53 respondents who have multiple regular care arrangements are either unhappy or very unhappy with their arrangements.

<sup>79</sup> Chi square is 34.75455 and significance is .0027.

In regard to preschool arrangements on evenings or weekends, there is only one multiple arrangement of any number; that is, 22 respondents who use both parents and relatives on a regular basis. Again, there is no significant difference in the level of satisfaction between those using multiple arrangements of an evening or weekend and those who have only one form of care. This is evident in that 95.5 percent of these respondents are either happy or very happy with their care, which is almost identical to the responses for those who have one regular arrangement.

Consequently, respondents who have multiple regular care arrangements are no less content than those respondents with one type of regular preschool care.

Overall, however, the vast majority of respondents are content with their preschool child care given that only a total of 5.6 percent are either unhappy or very unhappy with their preschool arrangements when they at work during the day and 4.5 percent of an evening or weekend.

The findings of the questionnaire strongly indicate parents are successful in finding preschool child care which meet their needs. Most do not settle for unsatisfactory preschool care arrangements.

**7.4.5. Use of other services if available**

Respondents were asked whether they would use child care centres or family day care programs if available either near their place of work or their home. Their responses are outlined below.

**Table 21: Would parents use the following preschool services if available?**

Type of care	Would Use		Might Use		Not Use	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Child Care Centre near work	138	41.8	109	33.0	83	25.2
Child Care Centre near home	120	37.3	120	37.3	82	25.4
Family Day Care near work	114	36.4	110	35.2	89	28.4
Family Day Care Near Home	111	35.7	114	36.7	86	27.6

This indicates a substantial level of support for child care centres and family day care programs to be located either near the workplace or home. Only around a quarter of respondents indicated they would not use these services if available while potentially up to three quarters of respondents would use these alternative formal preschool child care services. There is a slightly higher overall numerical preference for child care centres above family day care programs and of these for child care centres located near the workplace.

There is a significant connection between the types of care which respondents use and whether they will use the alternative forms of care listed. Respondents who currently use formal services are those most likely to make use of each of the alternative services. For example, 73.7 percent of

respondents presently using formal care may use a child care centre located near their workplace compared to 30.4 percent using parental care and 30.9 percent using informal care<sup>80</sup>.

Those respondents who are least likely to use any of these additional forms of preschool child care are those who currently use parental care. For example, of those using parental care 39.1 percent would not use a centre near work compared to 29.1 of those using informal care and 15.8 percent using formal care.

There is also a significant relationship between how content respondents are with their present preschool care arrangements, and whether they would use these other forms of care. A greater proportion of those respondents who are not willing to use these services are very happy with their present arrangements (80.9 percent) compared to 53.7 percent for those who would use the service and 51.6 percent for those who might do so (chi square = 0.0004<sup>81</sup>).

A further factor in whether respondents would use alternative forms of care relates to their existing level of child care costs. The lower their present child care costs, the less likely respondents are to use other forms of care for their preschool children. For example, whereas 25.7 percent of respondents with no child care costs would use this service, 55.6 percent of those paying \$91 or more would do so (chi square = 0.0001<sup>82</sup>).

It is evident that those respondents who have minimal cost for their present preschool care arrangements are less likely to change to other forms of care. This needs to be viewed in the context of the high overall degree of happiness respondents have for their child care. In situations where the costs are low and parents are happy with their particular arrangements, there would seem to be little incentive to change.

There is no connection between where respondents either live or work and their demand for additional services.

### **Reasons for care and desire to change**

A significant connection also exists between particular reasons why respondents selected their present arrangements and whether they would use other services. This relationship is clearly evident for respondents who desire a care arrangement where their child could have contact with other children. For example, of those who consider child contact to be very important 47.6 percent would use a family day care program if available near home and only 18.1 percent who would not. Conversely, of those who did not believe contact with other children is important, only 5.9 percent would use this service and 41.2 percent would not (chi square = 0.0000<sup>83</sup>).

As noted earlier, contact with other children is a feature of both child care centres and family day care programs. The respondents are more likely to consider changing their care arrangement and

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<sup>80</sup> Chi square value is 34.22115 and significance level is .0000.

<sup>81</sup> The chi square value is 28.47812 and significance is .0004

<sup>82</sup> Chi square value is 32.83399 percent and significance level is .0001.

<sup>83</sup> Chi square value is 34.79018 and significance level is .0000.

using these child care services if they consider it is important for their children to interact with other children.

There are some more obvious relationships between the reasons why respondents choose their preschool care and whether they desire to use other forms of care. Those who consider it is important to have care located near their place of work are more likely to prefer to use either a child care centre or a family day care program located near their workplace. For example, of respondents who said location near work was very important, 52.9 percent would use a centre near work and only 16.5 percent would not use this care. By contrast, of those who state this reason is not important, 25 percent would use a centre near work and 40.4 percent would not (chi square = 0.0032<sup>84</sup>).

A similar pattern is evident for those who consider it important to have care located near their home. Of respondents who consider it very important to have care located near home, 48 percent would use this care and only 16.8 percent would not (chi square = 0.0015<sup>85</sup>).

There is no significant relationship between the sex of respondents and whether they would use any of the alternative types of preschool care. Likewise, there is no link between the employment status of respondents and their desire to use alternative types of care. All respondents, male or female, and whether full time, part time or casual have a need for such alternative forms of care.

In summary therefore, respondents who are most likely to use these alternative forms of preschool child care are those who:

- consider it important for their children to have contact with other children,
- presently use formal child care services,
- are less content with their existing care arrangements, and
- have higher child care costs.

In addition, those who

- consider it important to have care near work will prefer to use alternative services near their workplace, and
- those who regard it as important to have care near home are more likely to use services located near their home.

Those who are least likely to use alternative preschool care arrangements are those who:

- have no child care costs at all,
- are very happy with their existing arrangements, and
- primarily rely on parental care.

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<sup>84</sup> Chi square value is 23.11019 and significance level is .0032.

<sup>85</sup> Chi square value is 25.02117 and significance level is .0015.

**When care is needed**

Most respondents prefer these alternative preschool services to be available for them to use when they are at work during the day, Monday through Friday. Listed below is a summary of the times respondents desire this care.

**Table 22:     When would parents want care to be available**

When care is needed	Number of responses	Proportion of those with a preschool child
Monday to Friday during the day	263	70.7
Thursday or Friday evenings	51	13.7
Weekends	55	14.8

The fact that 70.7 percent of respondents with a preschool child desire additional services to be available when they work during the day demonstrates the demand for care at these times in preference to evenings or weekends. This is consistent with the fact that the majority of respondents, as noted in Chapter 6, never or rarely work evenings or weekends and therefore do not need care at these times. Of the 372 respondents who have preschool children, there are 128, or 34.4 percent, who regularly work of an evening, and 126, or 33.9 percent, who regularly work on weekends.

The fact that respondents work evenings or weekends does not necessarily mean they would use child care services if they were available. It has already been noted that a number of parents would work at these times so that their spouse could care for the children and negate any need for external child care.

Nonetheless, it is still important for the child care needs of evening and weekend workers to be addressed. Part of the nature of the retail industry is that many employees will be required to work at these times and there are a reduced number of formal child care services which are available for them.

Respondents also indicate a need for child care to be available for less than full time hours. The following summarises the hours for which respondents desire child care services to be provided.

**Table 23: Hours parents would want to use other child care if available.**

Hours per week	Monday to Friday		Evenings		Weekends	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1 to 10	49	20.2	16	34.0	19	38.0
11 to 20	71	29.2	16	34.0	20	40.0
21 to 30	40	16.5	7	14.9	4	8.0
31 to 40	53	21.8	4	8.5	3	6.0
41 to 50	25	10.3	2	4.3	3	6.0
51 and over	5	2.0	2	4.3	1	2.0
Total	243	100	47	100	50	100

A substantial number of respondents desire less than full time care to be available, as indicated by the high proportion who need care of up to 20 hours each week. Of those who want preschool care Monday to Friday during the day, 49.4 percent want care for 20 hours or less; during evenings there are 68.0 percent and on weekends an even greater proportion of 78.0 percent. The demand for less than full time care is also evident in the mean number of hours, 23.7 per week, that respondents want to use these services. This is clearly linked to the high proportion of all respondents who work on either a casual or part time basis.

There are practical difficulties in providing a substantial number of places which are less than full time in formal child care services. The need for part time care could result in an uneven spread of demand for places where services are oversubscribed for care at certain times and under utilised at other times. This could have a substantial impact on the cost effectiveness and therefore the viability of services.

At present family day care provides a greater degree of flexibility for part time care than do child care centres. In family day care it is normally possible to arrange care on an hourly basis and pay accordingly. However, in most instances child care centres charge for a full day even if less care is required. Parents needing care for only part of a day may not be willing to pay the full daily fee.

The substantial demand for less than full time care has an impact on the amount parents are prepared to pay to use these services. The following table notes what parents are willing to pay to use these services.

**Table 24: What parents would pay to use other preschool services.**

Weekly Payment	Number	Percent
\$1 to \$30	113	39.1
\$31 to \$60	103	35.6
\$61 to \$90	50	17.3
\$91 to \$120	19	6.6
\$121 or more	4	1.4
Total	289	100



This reveals 74.7 percent of these respondents would pay up to \$60 to use one of these forms of child care each week. It indicates both a desire for the costs of child care to be kept low and reflects the demand for less than full time care.

It is evident that if additional preschool services were available, and the needs of parents for less than full time care could be accommodated at an acceptable cost level, there could be a far greater use of formal preschool child care services such as those listed in the questionnaire.

7.4.6. Cost of preschool care

It is clearly evident that the cost of preschool child care is significantly related to what particular form of child care respondents use for their children (chi square = 0.0000<sup>86</sup>), as summarised below.

Table 25: Cost of child care for respondents who only have preschool children.<sup>87</sup>

Cost of care	Type of Care		
	Parental	Informal	Formal
Dollars	Percent	Percent	Percent
No Cost	82.4	46.9	2.1
1 to 30	5.9	18.8	8.5
31 to 60	5.9	18.8	17.0
61 to 90	5.9	9.4	42.6
91 or more	0	6.3	29.8
Total Percent	100	100	100
Total Number	17	64	47

Note: For comparative purposes, respondents were selected who solely use one type preschool care on a regular basis.

This comparison reveals a significant chi square correlation at the level of .0000. It is not surprising that a very high proportion of respondents who solely use parental care on a regular basis have no child care costs at all. However, there is also a significant difference in cost level between those who solely use either informal or formal care on a regular basis. This is clearly demonstrated in the proportion who have no child care costs at all, 46.9 percent for informal care and only 2.1 percent for formal care.

Accordingly, a significantly greater proportion of those solely using formal care pay in excess of \$60 per week, 72.4 percent, compared to only 15.7 for informal care.

<sup>86</sup> Chi square value is 61.90019 and significance level is .0000

<sup>87</sup> The wording of this question was intended to ascertain the actual cost to parents, not the cost including any government Child Care Assistance or Rebate payments. Interviews with parents showed that this is the way that the question was interpreted.

## 7.5.School Based Care.

The care arrangements for school aged children are divided according to three different occasions when working parents need care: before and after school, evenings and weekends or school holidays.

### 7.5.1. Regular school aged care

The following table lists the regular child care arrangements used by respondents for their school aged children.

Table 26: Care used regularly for school aged children.

Type of Care	Evenings or Weekends		School Holidays		Before or After School	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Parental care	162	47.7	114	24.6	103	27.2
Child Cares for self	12	3.5	18	3.9	34	9.0
Informal care						
Relatives	79	23.2	159	34.3	76	20.0
Non relatives	42	12.4	66	14.3	81	21.4
Sibling care	31	9.1	56	12.1	48	12.7
Total Informal care	152	44.7	281	60.7	205	54.1
Formal Care	14	4.1	50	10.8	37	9.7
Total	340	100	463	100	379	100

Irrespective of when respondents provide care for their school aged children, the most commonly used type of care is informal care. There is some variance in the kind of care arrangements used at different times, however informal care accounts for a substantial proportion of all school aged care. On evenings or weekends, there is an almost equal reliance on informal and parental care, with relatives comprising the most common type of informal care.

During school holidays there is a far greater reliance on informal care alone, and relatives also provide the most substantial proportion of this care. The next most common form of care used by respondents is parental care. Before and after school, respondents also rely primarily on informal care with both relatives and non relatives providing most care. Again parental care is the next most often used form of care.

It is not surprising that there is very little use of formal services of an evening or weekend, as few services cater for school aged children at these times, with the possible exception of family day care. However, there is a very low use of formal services either before/after school or during school holidays. There are only a total of 40 arrangements where respondents use school holiday programs on a regular basis and a lesser 31 instances of care in before or after school programs.

Whilst this may reflect a preference for parental and informal care, it also points to a lack of formal services being available for respondents to use at these times. The latter may well be the case

judging by the level of demand amongst respondents for after school care and school holiday care, as indicated by respondents in this survey.<sup>88</sup>

7.5.2. Other reasons for school aged care

It has been noted that the two key reasons behind the selection of all child care arrangements are the need to have confidence in the person providing care as well as the importance of a safe environment. In addition to these two reasons, respondents rated the importance of the following six reasons in their selection of child care.

Table 27: Reasons for selection of care for school aged children

Reason	Percentages					
	Very Important	Important	Slightly Important	Unsure	Not Important	Total Number
Cost has to be low	58.3	25.1	8.1	1.5	7.0	343
Needs to be in a home environment	57.5	19.6	10.5	1.5	10.9	341
Few other care options are available	45.6	20.1	8.0	14.2	12.1	274
Child to have contact with other children	35.4	22.5	21.2	2.3	18.6	311
Wanted care near work place	42.7	18.4	9.9	1.0	28.0	304
Wanted care near home	56.9	22.5	10.6	0.6	9.4	320

Of these reasons, as with preschool care, the two reasons which receive the highest 'very important' rating are the need for low cost care and care which is in a home environment. Next highest is the need for care near home. These first two reasons are clearly related to the nature of informal care arrangements: that is, the cost of care is low and it is usually located either in the home of the person providing care or that of the child.

Substantial differences are evident in the primary reasons why respondents choose different types of care for their school aged children, clearly evident in a summary of the most important reasons for each type of care (indicated by a rating of very important).

Parental Care:

- cost of care is low, 62.5 percent,
- care is in a home environment, 62.5 percent.

Informal Care:

- cost of care is low, 64.7 percent,
- care is in a home environment, 59.0 percent.
- care is located near home, 57.5 percent.

<sup>88</sup> This issue is discussed later in the Chapter.

#### Formal Care:

- care located near work, 81.3 percent,
- care located near home, 75.0 percent,
- contact with other children, 70.6 percent.

As with the principal reasons behind the selection of preschool child care, these responses essentially reflect the key differences between each form of care. Both parental and informal care arrangements are usually lower in cost and in a home environment, often that of the child.

Formal care arrangements normally involve contact between children, due to the group care situation which is a feature of most formal care. Conversely, it is clear that respondents who solely use either parental or informal care do not consider contact with other children to be key reason behind their selection of care: both give contact with other children their lowest 'very important' rating of any reason: 38.1 and 32.5 percent respectively.

There is some indication that certain reasons are more strongly related to why respondents choose particular care arrangements for their school aged children. There is a strong relationship between the use of informal care and a lack of other child care options being available: 78.3 percent of those who use informal care rate the lack of other options as either important or very important compared to 66.0 percent using formal care and 63.4 percent using parental care (chi square = 0.0177<sup>89</sup>).

In addition, those who use parental care and informal care are most likely to rate the need for low cost care as a very important consideration in the selection of their regular care arrangements: 62.5 percent of those using parental care rate low cost care as very important, 59.0 percent for informal care and a lesser 52.6 percent for formal care (chi square = 0.0450<sup>90</sup>).

There is a strong relationship between the cost of care and the selection of formal care arrangements for school aged children.

### 7.5.3. Happiness with child care

Overall, respondents are less satisfied with the care arrangements for their school aged children in comparison to those who are of preschool age, and this is reflected both in the lesser proportion who are very happy and the increased proportion who are either unhappy or very unhappy. Nonetheless, the majority of respondents, as noted in the following table, are either happy or very happy with the child care arrangements for their school aged children.

<sup>89</sup> Chi square value is 15.35242 and significance level is .0177

<sup>90</sup> Chi square value is 12.88155 and significance level is .0450.

**Table 28:     Happiness with school aged child care arrangements**

<b>Level of Happiness</b>	<b>Percentage</b>		
	<b>Before/After School</b>	<b>School Holidays</b>	<b>Evenings or weekends</b>
Very Happy	49.8	43.9	58.9
Happy	32.6	28.3	24.5
Unsure	9.2	11.1	9.1
Unhappy	5.7	12.7	4.6
Very Unhappy	2.7	4.0	2.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Total Number of Responses</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>371</b>	<b>241</b>

There is a similar level of satisfaction both before/after school and on evenings or weekends. On evenings or weekends a total 82.4 percent are either happy or very happy with their care arrangements compared to 81.4 percent for before or after school care. During school holidays a lesser proportion, 71.2 percent, are happy with their care arrangements and a total of 16.7 percent are either unhappy or very unhappy, which is nearly double the level recorded on these other occasions.

There is no significant relationship between the different types of care which respondents use during school holidays, and their level of satisfaction with this care. This is clearly demonstrated in the total proportion who are either happy or very unhappy with their care arrangements: 85 percent for those solely using parental care, 80.0 percent for formal care and 86.7 percent for informal care arrangements.

Therefore a greater proportion of respondents, irrespective of what type of care they use, have difficulty making satisfactory child care arrangements during school holidays. It would be anticipated this is linked to the fact that there are in excess of ten weeks of school holidays every year but most working parents have only four weeks of annual leave. In cases where there are two full time working parents, even if they take all their leave at separate times, they still cannot fully cover their needs. An added complication for these parents is that they may also desire to have some time when they are both on leave at the same time, for example to have a family holiday.

A comparison between the different types of care respondents use before or after school reveals significant variations in their satisfaction with these arrangements. Whereas 84.1 percent are very happy with parental care, the equivalent proportion for formal care is 62.5 percent and 50.0 percent for informal care (chi square = 0.0076<sup>91</sup>).

It is apparent that those respondents who rely solely on informal care before or after school are least likely to be happy with their care arrangements.

On evenings or weekends there is no significant variation in the level of satisfaction with the different types of care respondents use on a regular basis.

<sup>91</sup> Chi square value is 17.49929 and significance level is .0076.

**Happiness with individual forms of care**

In order to compare how happy respondents are with the particular type of care they use for their school aged children, a comparison was made between respondents who solely use one type of care on a regular basis. The following table compares these responses for before/after school care.

**Table 29:     Happiness of respondents who solely use one form of care on a regular basis for their school aged children when they are at work on before/after school.**

Type of Care	Very Happy	Happy	Unsure	Unhappy or Very Unhappy	Total	
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Number	Percent
Parental	84.1	11.3	2.3	2.3	44	100
Before/After school program	62.5	33.3	4.2	0	24	100
Sibling care	34.8	52.2	8.7	4.3	23	100
Relative	68.9	20.0	2.2	8.9	45	100
Non relative	40.7	40.7	9.3	9.3	54	100

This table reveals a significant difference in how satisfied respondents are with their arrangements before/after school (chi square = 0.0017<sup>92</sup>). It is evident that respondents are most satisfied with parental care as indicated by the very high proportion, 84.1 percent, who are very happy with this care.

Conversely, respondents report the lowest 'very happy' responses for both care by siblings and non relatives. In regard to sibling care, it is understandable that parents may feel nervous leaving their children in the care of older brothers or sisters. Obviously these are factors such as safety and security as well as the relative maturity of the siblings concerned.

As an indication of their endorsement for before/after school programs no respondents were unhappy with this type of care.

In regard to the particular types of child care used by respondents either on evenings/weekends or during school holidays, there is no significant variation in the level of happiness irrespective which particular type of care respondents use.

**Happiness with multiple care arrangements**

One possible limitation in the comparison of those who solely use one regular form of child care for their school aged children relates to respondents who have multiple care arrangements. In regard to care for school aged children, the only multiple care arrangement of a substantial number involve both parents and relatives. As with preschool care, respondents who rely on multiple arrangements for their school aged children are also satisfied with their care arrangements.

<sup>92</sup> Chi square value is 31.49776 and significance level is .0017.

For example, in regard to multiple care arrangements before/after school those who use multiple care arrangements record an equivalent level of satisfaction with their care arrangements as outlined below.

- parental care, 95.5 percent,
- formal care, 95.8 percent,
- informal care, 85.2 percent, and
- a combination of parental care and care by relatives, 89.3 percent.

In fact, no respondents who regularly use multiple arrangements before/after school are unhappy with the care.

Consequently, it is evident that multiple arrangements for school aged children, as with preschool children, do not have a negative impact on how content respondents are with their care arrangements.

**7.5.4. Use of other services if available**

Respondents were asked to indicate whether, if available, they would use other types of formal out of school hours services. Their responses are outlined below in relation to use of before or after school programs.

**Table 30: Whether respondents would use before or after school programs.**

Response	Before school		After school	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Would Use	95	25.4	147	36.1
Might Use	110	29.4	143	35.2
Not Use	169	45.2	117	28.7
Total	374	100	407	100

There is a lower level of support for before school programs, indicated by 45.2 percent of respondents who would not use these programs compared to 28.7 percent for after school programs. This may be tied to the fact that many shops do not open until about 9 am and so many parents would need only a minimal amount of care before school when compared to after school. As a result, there may not be a sufficient level of demand to ensure a successful expansion of before school services. The need for this form of care would have to be reviewed on an area by area basis to assess whether a sufficient demand exists.

This is evident from the strong relationship which exists between the demand for before school care and the areas where respondents reside. Respondents who live in the inner city area are significantly more likely to use before school programs; a total of 81.0 percent of these respondents either would or might use such a service compared to the next highest proportion which is 62.1 percent for those

who reside in the western area of Melbourne (chi square = 0.0000<sup>93</sup>). Conversely, the areas with the least demand are the eastern suburbs and country areas, which include provincial cities or towns.

The greater demand which exist for care after school is a strong indication of the need for an expansion in the number of after school programs.

Respondents were also asked to indicate whether they would use school holidays programs, if available either near their place of work or their home. There is a slightly higher lever of demand for these programs than that reported for after school care programs. Their responses are outlined below.

**Table 31: Would parents use school holiday programs located either near work or home**

Response	Near Work		Near Home	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Would Use	155	39.4	155	40.2
Might Use	126	32.1	130	33.8
Not Use	112	28.5	100	26
Total	393	100	385	100

There is also a strong demand for school holiday programs which is indicated by the fact that 71.5 percent of respondents who would or might use a program near work and 74 percent near home. This is not surprising given respondent's lower level of happiness with care at these times. There is little difference whether programs are located near work or home.

There is a strong connection between the types of care respondents use and whether they will use the alternative forms of care listed. Respondents who currently use formal services are those most likely to make use of each of the alternative services: 84.6 percent of respondents presently using formal care would use this service compared to 19.1 percent using parental care and 38.1 percent using informal care (chi square = 0.0000<sup>94</sup>).

Those respondents who are least likely to use any of these additional forms of care for school aged children are those who currently use parental care. For example, there are 40.4 percent of such respondents would not use an after school program compared to 24.6 of those using informal care and 3.8 percent for formal care.

There is a significant relationship between how content respondents are with their present care arrangements and whether they would use the alternative out of school hours programs listed in the questionnaire. Those respondents who are unhappy with their present arrangements are more likely to use each of these alternative types of care: of those who are unhappy with their current care arrangements, 74.5 percent would use this service and only 9.1 percent would not do so (chi square = 0.0000<sup>95</sup>).

<sup>93</sup> Chi square value is 17.20714 and significance level is .0041.  
<sup>94</sup> Chi square value is 31.82361 and significance level is .0000.  
<sup>95</sup> Chi square value is 46.35996 and significance level is .0000.



A significant factor in whether respondents would use an alternative form of care relates to their existing level of child care costs. The lower their present child care costs, the less likely respondents are to use any of the other forms of care for their school aged children (chi square = 0.0000<sup>96</sup>).

Whereas 23.2 percent of respondents with no child care costs would use this service, 53.3 percent of those paying \$91 or more would do so. Conversely, while 37.4 percent of those without any child care costs would not use such a service only 6.7 percent of those paying \$91 or more would not do so.

The same situation exists in regard to school holiday care and the present child care cost of respondents during these holidays. As an example there is a chi square significance of .0000 in respect to school holiday care located near work. Whereas 23.1 percent of those with no costs would use such care, by contrast there are 64.7 percent of those paying \$91 or more who would do so.

It is evident that those respondents who have minimal cost in caring for their school aged children are less likely to change to other forms of care. This also needs to be viewed in the context of the high overall degree of happiness respondents have for their child care. In situations where the costs are low and parents are happy with their particular arrangements for their school aged children, there would seem to be little incentive to change.

### **Reasons for care and desire to change**

There is also a significant connection between particular reasons why respondents chose their present care arrangements and whether they would use other services for their school aged children. The pattern of responses is almost identical for each of the alternative services listed. That is, respondents who are most likely make use of alternative forms of care before or after school and during school holidays are those who:

- consider it important for their children to have contact with other children, and
- have few child care options to choose from.

As noted earlier, a feature of these formal child care services for both preschool and school aged children is they facilitate interaction between children due to the group care situation. Clearly there is a strong connection between a parent's desire for their children to interact with other children and their willingness to use each of the alternative formal child care services listed for both preschool and school aged children.

Those least likely to change the care arrangements for their school aged children are respondents who believe it is important their children are cared for in a home environment.

Firstly, in regard to contact with other children there is a clear relationship between this reason and demand for each of these other forms of care. Of those who consider this reason to be very important, 38.8 percent would use an after school program if available and 23.5 percent would not.

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<sup>96</sup> Chi square value is 36.57164 percent and significance level is .0000.

Conversely, of those who did not believe contact with other children is important, a lesser 14.6 percent would use this service and 30.9 percent would not (chi square = 0.0060<sup>97</sup>). Similar differences are evident in a comparison with each of the other forms of care.

Secondly, there is a relationship between respondents who had fewer child care options from which they could select their existing care arrangements and demand for each of these types of care. While a total of 47.5 percent of those who had few care options would consider using the holiday program located near the work place, a lesser 32.8 percent would not. Alternatively, for those with more care options, only 8.2 percent would consider using the service and 23.9 percent would not (chi square = 0.0009<sup>98</sup>).

Thirdly, respondents who value their children being cared for in a home environment are less likely to use any of the services listed. Of those who consider a home environment is very important 51.8 percent may use such a holiday program compared to 73.3 percent who would not (chi square = 0.0097<sup>99</sup>).

There are also some more obvious relationships between the reasons why respondents chose their care arrangements and whether they desire to use other forms of care. Those who consider it is important to have care located near their place of work are more significantly more likely to prefer to use a school holiday program located near their workplace. Conversely, those who believe is it important to have care located near their home are significantly more likely to use programs located near their home.<sup>100</sup>

In summary therefore, there is an increased likelihood of respondents using alternative formal out of school hours programs in situations where:

- it is important that their children have contact with other children,
- they have few care options from which to choose,
- they presently use formal out of school hours care,
- their costs of child care each week are higher,
- they are not that happy with their existing care arrangements,
- those who consider it important to have care near work will prefer to use alternative services near their workplace, and
- those who regard it as important to have care near home are more likely to use services located near their home.

Those who are least likely to use alternative out of school hours programs are those who:

- are very happy with their existing arrangements,

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<sup>97</sup> Chi square value is 12.4403 and significance level is 0060.

<sup>98</sup> Chi square value is 12.27661 and significance level is .0065.

<sup>99</sup> Chi square value is 11.40590 and significance level is .0097

<sup>100</sup> In regard to care near work, the chi square value is 29.52989 and significance level is .0000; for care near home the chi square value is 11.44826 and the significance level is .0095.

- have no child care costs at all,
- consider it important their care is in a home environment, and
- primarily rely on parental care.

A comparison between the employment status of respondents and the possible use of before school programs reveals that full time employees are far more likely to use before school programs (chi square = 0.0005<sup>101</sup>). Whereas 35.9 percent of these employees would use such a program a lesser 26.0 percent of casuals would do so and only 16.3 percent of part timers. This may be linked to the fact that full time employees are more likely to start early in the day whereas employers roster part time and casual employees to start progressively throughout the day in order to meet the staffing needs.

No such relationship exists between the employment status of respondents and any of the other types of care which could be made available: neither after school programs nor school holiday programs located near work or home.

There is no significant relationship between the sex of respondents and whether they would use any of the alternative types of preschool care. Consequently, with the exception of the link between full time employment and a demand for before school care, all respondents, male or female, and whether full time, part time or casual have a need for the alternative forms of care listed.

#### **7.5.5. Use of school holiday programs.**

Respondents were asked to indicate how many hours per week they would desire to use school holiday programs, if they become available. The responses are set out below.

- 1 to 10 hours, 26.8 percent,
- 11 to 20 hours, 35.9 percent,
- 21 to 30 hours, 18.4 percent, and
- 31 hours or more, 18.9 percent.

It is clear the vast majority of respondents want to use school holiday programs on less than a full time basis; only 18.9 percent desire care of 31 or more hours each week. In fact, only 5.1 percent of respondents indicated they would need care for 41 hours or more each week. The demand for less than full time care is also evident in the mean of 21 hours for which care is required each week.

The cost respondents are willing to pay for school holiday care is directly linked to the number of hours for which they desire the care. The following is a comparison of cost respondents would pay each week with the mean number of hours care is desired.

- \$1 to \$30, 18.2 hours per week,
- \$31 to \$60, 25.0 hours per week,

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<sup>101</sup> Chi square value is 19.93483 and significance level is .0005

- \$61 to \$90, 25.8 hours per week,
- \$91 to \$120, 27.8 hours per week, and
- \$121 or over, 29.6 hours per week.

In order to cater for the needs of the vast number of employees who do not work full time, these school holiday programs would need to operate in a more sessional manner. That is, they would need to allow working parents the opportunity to send their children for part days as well as part of the week. The fact that the majority of respondents, 62.7 percent, want care for 20 hours or less each week may make it difficult to offer the number of places and at the times which suit the needs of all respondents.

## 7.6. Dealing with unhappy care

It is evident the vast majority of respondents are happy with their particular preschool care arrangements. This high level of parental happiness could be the result of factors such as careful parental selection of child care and/or an unwillingness of respondents to tolerate unsatisfactory arrangements for any length of time. Both issues were raised in the interview phase of this research.

Firstly, a number of parents spoke of how they spent time trying to determine what care was most suitable for their children.

"We spent time looking for someone we could trust; my parents were too far away. I had to find someone they (my children) can trust and feel comfortable to talk to and ask for things."

Another parent said

"I preferred a group situation for my child and wanted to use a registered child care centre because they are open for inspection. I inspected two centres and chose the one I was most relaxed with."

In addition a number of parents spoke of how they tried to prepare their children for their new situation, in order to help them settle as quickly as possible. One of the parents talked of how she decided to

"Talk to the kids about it and let them know what its about; it's important to talk to them and prepare them."

Another parent told of how

"I started to leave my child with my mother in law before I started work just to get her used to being away from me."

During the interviews working parents identified the importance of trying to select a suitable care arrangement for their child as well as the benefit of preparing their child for this new situation. The high level of happiness revealed through the questionnaire would indicate most parents are successful in finding suitable care.

The second issue identified in the interviews which impacts on parental happiness is the ability of parents to deal with problems that may arise with their child care arrangements.

When parents were asked to indicate what they would do if their child was unhappy in their care arrangement, a very clear pattern of answers evolved. In most cases this process of dealing with problems or concerns was essentially the same irrespective of whether parents used formal or informal child care.

Parents would firstly attempt to resolve the particular problem within their care situation.

"I would figure out something with the centre."

They would attempt to identify the problem and then address it with minimum fuss. For example, if parents felt the caregiver was being too abrupt or terse with their child then they would discuss this. As far as possible parents spoke of their desire to resolve any problems with their care arrangement.

If problems could not be resolved within their existing arrangement then parents would seriously consider taking their child elsewhere. This was dependant upon whether suitable alternatives could be found. If their child was still unhappy after the issues had been dealt many parents spoke of the need for change.

"Change the care arrangements. Keep changing and keep looking. But it wouldn't be easy. Centres that had vacancies were often not that good, and not the ones you would use. Waiting lists could be for six to twelve months. Changing might not be easy."

A number of alternatives would be considered and tried until the options were exhausted. At this point, in situations where the child was still unhappy, parents believed they had only two real alternatives. Either they had to settle for the best care option they could find or alternatively change their employment situation. For example,

"Consider going part time and spend more time with them."

Parents spoke of how they investigated alternative employment, and looked at whether they could change their hours of work in order to reduce the number of hours their child would spend in care. For some this could involve working evenings and/or weekends so their spouse would be able to care for their children.

Some parents said they would give up work if they had to, in order to resolve the problem.

"If you can afford it you give up work."

It was however clearly indicated that a change to employment would not be a realistic option for many parents.

"I really don't have much choice. I have to work. I have to find the best care I can."

It is clear that most parents would not allow their child to remain in an unhappy situation if they could avoid it. This would seem to be part of the reason why such a high proportion of working parents interviewed were happy with their care arrangements.

However, during the interviews parents also identified problems which relate specifically to the nature of informal child care arrangements. That is, many of these arrangements, as identified in the questionnaire, are low cost or cost free. This could pose substantial problems for parents in some situations. Parents commented that because this child care is essentially offered as a favour complications could arise when they tried to deal with matters of concern.

For example, one of the working parents interviewed spoke of how her husband's mother looked after their preschool child and that this caused some trepidation.

"She thinks she owns him. There are two sets of rules, one at nanny's and one at home and conflict about them. My son says 'but nanny said I can do this'. What can I do about it? We can't do anything if it doesn't work out. It causes conflict but she's helping us out."

She spoke about the frustration of not being able to demand that certain rules and conditions should apply. They didn't pay anything for the care and it was provided as a favour to help them out.

In most informal care arrangements there is some form of relationship between the parents and the caregiver such as relatives, friends or neighbours. Parents spoke of how their attempts to deal with problems were tempered by a desire not to offend the caregiver or place their care situation at risk.

There is no suggestion that informal care arrangements provide a lesser quality of care than formal arrangements. In fact, parents may choose informal care arrangements precisely because it fulfils the requirements they have in terms of the quality of care they desire, taking into account the needs of their children. However, their ability to adequately deal with any problems or difficulties will essentially depend on the relationship they have with the person providing care.

The regulations set out by the Victorian Government place controls and standards on child care services including child care centres, occasional care and kindergartens. They exclude informal care arrangements as they only cover situations where five or more children aged under 6 are in care. However, this also means that no formal regulations exist to govern the operation of family day care programs. Parents rely on the family day care sponsors to have in place guidelines for caregivers which address issues in relation to providing quality care.

A number of formal child care services have management committees which allow, if not encourage, parental participation. In the interviews many parents spoke about the importance of parental involvement in the operation of services. A total of 91 percent of these parents considered parents should be involved in running the child care services which their child attended. The role most commonly suggested by these parents was to have a direct input and say in decisions which are made as well as involvement in the management of the service.

For example, one parent explained how she felt it was her obligation to know what went on in the service her child attended and to ensure the aims and program were suitable. However, she also commented that as a working parent she would have restrictions on the amount of time she would

have available. It was important to ensure, as far as possible, that she chose a suitable care arrangement in the first place.

There are few resources available to help select what particular type of child care arrangement best suits their needs. Parents could benefit from having a booklet which addresses a range of issues related to selection of care arrangements. This could also be a resource which working parents could use to monitor the ongoing suitability of their child care arrangements. Child care needs could reasonably be expected to vary or change as children grow older and their needs change.

One of the most fundamental areas where parents need additional support relates to caring for sick children which is considered in the next chapter.

## Chapter 8: Care for sick children

This chapter deals with the experiences and problems faced by working parents as they attempt to deal with situations when they have a sick child or children. Caring for sick children is the single most substantial problem faced by the majority of working parents. The problem is discussed and some possible responses are identified.

### 8.1. Some issues

Research undertaken by the Australian Institute of Family Studies, titled the *Early Childhood Study*, found a high proportion of working mothers took time off work to care for sick preschool children. Of the 591 mothers questioned about sick child care, Ochiltree and Greenblat (1991, p.18) reported almost 57 percent had usually taken time off work to care for a sick child and that women were more likely to take time off work than were males.

Ochiltree and Greenblat also note the difficulties which face parents in their decision about who should provide care for their children when they are sick. This can often depend

"... on the perceived severity of the illness, whether other carers were available, and sometimes on the amount of personal leave due to the parents ... Many wanted either some special form of leave or the right officially to take their own sick leave, while others wanted employers to have more understanding of their situation.:". (Ochiltree & Greenblat, 1991 p.19,22).

"" (Ochiltree & Greenblat 1991, p.22).

A joint research project, completed by the Australian Institute of Family Studies and the Department of Industrial Relations, was

"...the first national study to investigate in depth how people with jobs and families manage to combine these often conflicting responsibilities." (VandenHeuvel 1993, p.1).

A report of the findings by VandenHeuvel (1993, p.36), *When Roles Overlap: Workers with Family Responsibilities*, reveals

"A large proportion of parents (46 percent) reported that they had taken some time off work in the previous year to care for a sick child."

There were eight different reasons why parents took time off work in the previous year and on average female working parents took 10 days off work and males 9.7 days. The greatest proportion of this absence was related firstly to the care of sick children and secondly to leave during school holidays. VandenHeuvel (1993, p.37) reports



"As in previous research, there was a significant difference between time taken off work by mothers and fathers; 52 percent of mothers and 31 percent of fathers had taken time off work to care for sick children."

Under the terms of the various shops awards, parents are unable to use their own sick leave to care for sick children. The entitlement to sick leave is limited to those times when the employee is sick and unable to attend work. The awards also provide ways for employers to satisfy themselves that employees were indeed sick and not absent for other reasons. For example, employees can be required to sign a statutory declaration indicating the reason for their absence or in certain circumstances supply a doctor's certificate.

8.2.Survey findings

In the questionnaire respondents were asked whether they experienced any problems which related to the care of sick children. This was one of a range of issues canvassed in the survey, which were identified from the interviews and other research as those most likely to be of concern to working parents. Respondents could select from one of three choices: no problem, moderate problem or major problem.

Of all the issues raised through the questionnaire by far the most substantial concern to the greatest number of respondents relates to providing care for children when they are sick. Their responses to this issue are outlined below.

Table 1: Problem of care for sick children.

Extent of Problem	Number	Percent
No problem	122	26.7
Moderate problem	144	31.4
Major Problem	192	41.9
Total	458	100

The magnitude of this issue is evident from the fact that 73.3 percent of respondents experience difficulty in providing care for a sick child, and for a substantial 41.9 percent it is a major problem. The extent of this problem is also evident from a comparison of responses to the other issues raised in the survey; the next highest proportion to rate any issue as a problem are the 57.6 percent who have difficulty finding care when they need it, and of major concern to 26.1 percent.

Caring for sick children is a problem for the vast majority of working parents, irrespective of

- their employment status,
- their age,
- whether they have preschool or school aged children,
- where they work,
- where they live,

- their sex, or
- whether they use formal, informal or parental care.

There can be no doubt that the single most significant problem experienced by the greatest proportion of working parents is determining how to care for a sick child.

**Time off work**

Respondents were also asked to indicate whether they had a problem taking time off work to care for their child when sick. Their responses are outlined below.

**Table 2: Respondents who have difficulty taking time off work to care for a sick child.**

Extent of Problem	Number	Percent
No problem	223	39.7
Moderate problem	251	44.6
Major Problem	88	15.7
Total	562	100

A total of 60.3 percent of respondents have either a moderate or a major problem with taking time off work to care for their sick children. It is far more likely to be a problem for those who are employed on either a full time or part time basis (chi square = 0.0120<sup>102</sup>). For example, whereas 48.2 percent of casuals state they have a problem taking time off work, a substantially higher 62.3 percent of full timers and 64.6 percent of part timers do so.

It is anticipated that this is influenced by two factors. Firstly, under the terms of their employment a casual essentially works the hours which are available. They also have a right to make themselves unavailable for a particular shift or period of work. This does give them, as well as their employers, some flexibility. Secondly, it has already been established that casual respondents work significantly lesser hours. Consequently, they will need a far lesser amount of time off work to care for their children.

The greater disruption for full or part time employees is therefore related to both their terms of employment and the longer periods of time they are at work. They do not have the same flexibility to advise an employer that they are unable to attend work. They must rely on award provisions such as sick leave to take time off work. As noted, however, the pressure they are under is that sick leave does not entitle them to be absent from work due to illness of their child unless their employer agrees.

In the interview phase of the research it became apparent that there are employees who do use their paid sick leave when they are in fact caring for their children. In almost all cases this occurred without the consent of the employer. These employees spoke of not having confidence they would be allowed time off work if they told their employer the real reason. For example, parents made comments such as

<sup>102</sup> Chi square value is 12.85186 and significance level is .0120.

"I took time off work and it was taken as a sick day. I had no other choice as I didn't think my manager would give me time off."

Another parent commented

"I had to take a sick day to get the time off work to care for my sick child."

The substantial nature of this problem is reflected in the number of days respondents have taken off work in the last year in order to look after a child who is sick, as noted in the following table.

**Table 3: Days off work in the last year to care for sick children.**

	Care for Sick Child	
Number of Days	Number	Percent
Nil	283	45.9
1 - 3	187	30.4
4 - 6	87	14.1
7 - 9	27	4.4
10 - 20	28	4.6
21 or more	4	0.6
Total	616	100
Total days off work	1471	

Of all respondents with children, a substantial 54.1 percent have taken time off work in the last year due to the illness of their child and a substantial 23.7 percent of respondents have taken four or more days off work during this period.

There is a strong relationship between respondents who experience difficulty with taking time off work and the number of days they have had off work in the last year caring for their sick child (chi square = 0.0000<sup>103</sup>). The greater the number of days they have off work, the more likely it is to be a major problem. For example, of those who were absent for four days or more, a total of 59.8 percent have a major problem taking time off work to care for a sick child, 32.0 percent have a moderate problem and only 5.7 percent do not have a problem at all.

The mean number of days respondents were off work in order to care for a sick child is 2.4 days in the last year. Those respondents who actually took time off for this reason in the preceding year have an average absence of 4.1 days per year.

There is a clear relationship between the type of care which respondents use and the number of days they are absent from work due to the illness of their child. Whereas 37.8 percent of those solely using formal care were absent for four or more days, it is a lesser 24.1 percent for those who only use informal care and 8.4 percent for parental care (chi square = 0.0000<sup>104</sup>).

In addition to taking the most time off work, those who solely use formal care also experience the greatest difficulty in being able to take time off work: 27.4 percent of those using formal care have a major problem having time off, 14.6 percent using informal care and only 5.9 percent using

<sup>103</sup> Chi square value is 183.59303 and significance level is .0000.

<sup>104</sup> Chi square value is 32.63026 and significance level is .0000.

parental care (chi square = 0.0003<sup>105</sup>). It would seem the two issues are related for those parents who rely on formal child care services. That is, the increased amount of time these working parents take off to care for sick children places direct pressure on them when they again need to take time off work for this reason.

This problem is both a reflection on the capacity of formal services to cater for sick children as well as indication these working parents have few other alternatives open to them. Formal services do not generally care for sick children whereas relatives or friends may be willing to still look after children even when they are ill. For instance, child care centres and family day programs will not care for children if they have any contagious illness, such as measles, or a sickness which results in vomiting or diarrhoea. This is understandably related to the duty of care these services have to all children in their care.

For instance, in the interviews parents explained how services such as child care centres and family day care programs have pretty strict rules about illness. There are a number of illnesses which mean that parents are simply not able to send their child to the centre.

Another major influence on the time working parents take off work is whether they have some form of backup care they could use in these situations. Again during the interviews parents explained that the amount of time they were absent from work was directly related to the other options which were available.

"If my child is sick I try to find someone, but it is pretty hard; otherwise I have to take the day off as a sickie."

Other parents commented that the time restrictions they normally faced in such situations also placed significant limitations on them. They normally have little notice that their child is going to be ill. They explained how their children often get sick very quickly; they seem fine one day, show signs of being off colour that evening and the next day are sick enough for parents to remain home. If they are fortunate enough to have some notice of their child's illness, some parents commented they have a better chance of making alternative arrangements rather than taking time off work.

It is also possible that children who attend formal services may in fact have more illness. Some parents raised this issue and felt that the contact their child had with other children in these services meant they were more likely to get sick anyway.

Parents who relied on informal care indicated they were often still able to send their child even if they were sick. For example, parents commented that many of the relatives friends or neighbours were still willing to care for children in spite of the fact they were ill. The same rules did not apply. Parents who use formal services are far more likely to have to find alternative forms of care when their child is sick. Unless these parents already had some backup arrangement they could use at short notice, they were often forced to have time off work.

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<sup>105</sup> Chi square value is 21.02737 and significance level is .0003.

During the interview phase of this research parents also outlined a range of dilemmas they face in deciding what to do if their child did not seem to be well.. It is evident that some parents consider it is their sole responsibility to care for their children if they are sick. It is part of their role as a parent and so they will take the necessary time off work. Many also felt that their children preferred to be in their own home with their parents taking care of them when they were ill. These parents made comments such as

"When a child is sick they want their mother; you'd feel guilty if you sent them ... if they are really sick I have to stay home."

It was priority for these parents to care for their children themselves and have to face any problems that arose in terms of the absence from their employment.

The issue of caring for sick children is also complicated by the difficulty parents experience in trying to determine at what stage children are so sick that they should remain home. Parents indicated that some illness was not easy to assess.

"Sometimes you just don't know how sick they are until the day goes on."

In situations where parents are not certain how sick their children really are, they can be reluctant to place them in care.

"How would you feel if they were really sick and you sent them off- you have to be pretty cautious I guess."

Parents spoke of the frustration they experienced in trying to deal with the illness of their children. Parents talked of the questions that would run through their mind as they decided what to do. How sick are they really? Will they get better as the day goes on? What happens if they send their child and they get worse? Should they go to the doctor? Parents explained that decisions could also be substantially influenced by the issue of what options they had available to them anyway.

The decisions parents make can also have a direct impact on their work performance. There were parents who spoke of occasions that they had gone to work when their child did not seem all that well. This had a detrimental impact on their work that day.

"It affects your performance at work when you are worrying about your child."

There were parents who felt that having a day off work would not be readily accepted by their employer and that this did influence their decisions. Parents told of how they had pushed their children off to school or care when they wanted to keep them home but felt they couldn't take the time off work. A problem with illness is that it can also remain around for some time. One parent explained the problems she faced because an illness worked its way through the family. The children got sick one after another over a period of about two weeks.

"How could I take this amount of time off work?"

There is no doubt that care of sick children is a major dilemma for many working parents. It is also very clear that the attempts by parents to deal with the illness of their children can have a direct impact on their employment.

### 8.3. Possible responses

There is little doubt employers who can find ways of assisting their employees cope with sick children would gain substantial benefits. It is obviously one of the most substantial problems faced by working parents as they attempt to balance the demands of employment and family responsibilities. Parents do take a substantial amount of time off work in order to care for their children.

The Australian Council of Trade Unions(1991c) at its 1991 Congress, as noted in Chapter 1, recognised the need for working parents to have a right to take leave in order to care for sick children. A test case on special family leave was endorsed at this Congress which would provide up to five days leave for working parents for family related reasons. A limitation to this initial claim was that leave would be unpaid. However, a meeting of the Australian Council of Trade Unions Executive in March 1994 endorsed a claim for five days paid family leave (Green 1994a, p.5). If successful this would allow working parents the right to take paid time off work to care for their children when sick rather than rely on secretly using their own sick leave entitlements.

The findings of this research are a strong endorsement of the strategy of the Australian Council of Trade Unions to improve family leave provisions. The intention is to use one of the awards of the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association for the special family leave test case (Cossar 1994, p.5).

These findings also support the action of individual unions to include the right for workers to have an entitlement to family leave provisions as part of their enterprise bargaining agreements. However, while there are isolated examples of enterprise agreements providing family leave, the vast majority of workers do not have any such entitlements and this includes those employed in the retail industry in Victoria. If special family leave provisions are to extend across the majority of the workforce then the Australian Council of Trade Unions will need to pursue and be successful in its centralised award claim for family leave.

While caring for sick children is the most substantial problem faced by the majority of parents, there were a number of other problem raised through this research which are related to the child care arrangements used by respondents. These are discussed in the following chapter.

## Chapter 9: Problems with child care arrangements

This chapter deals with a number of problems related to the care arrangements for both preschool and school aged children: availability of care, finding care in various situations, information provision, location and travel to care arrangements and quality of care.

### 9.1. Some background information

In Chapter One it was noted that outside school hours care programs expanded from funding 7910 places in 1982 to 44,974 places in 1991. Whilst this is a substantial expansion in the number of places, it has not yet met the demand for outside school hours care. A report prepared by the Victorian Women's Consultative Council (1990, pp.24-6) notes

"There is a vast unmet need for school aged care."

In order to be eligible for government funding both school holiday programs and before or after school program must operate on a non profit basis. In addition, the *Outside School Hours Care Handbook* prepared by the Department of Community Services and Health (1990b) indicates all out of school hours care programs must also function in accordance with the relevant state regulations. However in Victoria there are no regulations which cover the operation of these programs (Department Of Labour, Women's Employment Branch c.1989, p.3).

The lack of regulations leaves the responsibility for the decisions about the functioning of programs essentially up to the sponsoring body.

#### Out of school hours care

The Victorian Women's Consultative Council (1990, p.47) found many working women had real difficulties in coping with the ten weeks of school holidays, and concludes

"Current provision of care for school aged children is inadequate and should be increased beyond increases currently planned by the Commonwealth."

The Federal Labor Government as part of its National Child Care Strategy is committed to continue to increase the number of child care places available in outside school hours care (Department of Employment, Education and Training 1990, p.5). This expansion of services is to be shared where possible with State Governments, employers and the commercial sector (Department of Community Services and Health 1990b, p.2).

Information was obtained from the Office of Preschool and Childcare as to the location of school holiday programs in Victoria as at April 1991. This information was only available for programs which are federally funded, however these represent the vast majority of programs within Victoria.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> A visit was made to the Office of Preschool and Childcare in June 1991. Staff in attendance provided information on the breakdown of federally funded school holiday programs by local government areas. This was internal information, and no published material was available.

It would seem there is a substantial imbalance in the allocation of funding for school programs throughout Victoria. For example, there are seven metropolitan local government areas in which no programs were funded: Bulla, Cranbourne, Flinders, Hastings, Keilor, Moorabbin and Sandringham. A further twelve local government areas or regions have only one federally funded school holiday program. These are the Ballarat region, Wodonga and Benalla region, Port Melbourne, Prahran, Ringwood, Caulfield, Coburg, Box Hill, Doncaster/Templestowe, Kew, Knox and Oakleigh.<sup>107</sup>

In contrast, there are fifteen federally funded school holiday programs in the Geelong region which includes the local government areas of Geelong city, Barrabool, Bellarine, Corio, Geelong West and South Barwon. Next highest with 11 programs is the local government area of Melbourne, and seven other areas have five or more programs in operation: Collingwood, Essendon, Sherbrooke, Sunshine, Broadmeadows, Brunswick and Springvale.

This imbalance in program funding is evident from a comparison between the number of programs and the population in these local government areas. The following table contains details of nine different areas and for comparative purposes includes the largest and smallest local government areas.

**Table 1: Comparison of population and number of federally school holiday programs for nine local government areas.**

Local Government Areas	Population of children aged 5-12 yrs Number	Number of Federally Funded Programs	Population Per Program
Berwick	10,334	3	3,445
Collingwood	985	5	197
Cranbourne	10,223	1	10,223
Footscray	4,147	4	1,037
Port Melbourne	548	1	548
Richmond	1,467	4	367
Sunshine	11,182	8	1,398
Waverley	11,966	2	5,983
Werrimbee	10,432	4	2,608

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics Census of population & housing, CLIB91, Table B35: Age by sex listed by local government area, ABS, Canberra.

This information reveals a substantial inconsistency in federal funding according to the population of children 5-12 years old who live in each of these local government areas. For example, where Collingwood has one program for every 197 children aged 5-12 years, Cranbourne has one program for 10,223 children this age and Waverley one for every 5,983 children in this age group.

<sup>107</sup> It is possible that there are school holiday programs which operate in these areas but are funded from other sources such as local government.



Whilst this is not a detailed comparison, it does point to the clear inconsistencies which presently exist. This is at least in part a result of the submission based funding model which operates for these federally funded programs. Staff from the Office of Pre-School and Child Care indicated funding is essentially in response to a submission from a particular sponsoring organisation. Whilst Office of Pre-School and Child Care staff can attempt to initiate programs, a sponsoring body must first accept responsibility. These staff advised that the funding of programs was not based on any needs based guidelines.

The report prepared by the Victorian Women's Consultative Council (1990, pp.24-6), *The Care of School Aged Children*, considers the present level of supply and demand for before and after school care. The statistics provided indicate possibly as little as 4 percent of existing demand is being met.

Before and after school programs are funded by both the Victorian and Federal governments. One significant difference between their funding guidelines is that the Victorian state funded programs are only run in schools. Commonwealth programs can be sponsored by either schools or municipal authorities. They can be set up in any location deemed suitable such as a neighbourhood house, multipurpose centre or an occasional care centre. Most programs, however, operate within schools in rooms set aside for this purpose.

The following table lists the number of programs funded as at June 1991 for both before and after school care.

**Table 2: Government funded before and after school programs in Victoria.**

Program Funding	Program	Number of Places
State funded	163	6825
Federal funded	254	8600
Total	417	15425

Source: Staff from the Office of Pre-School and Child Care, in June 1991.<sup>108</sup>

It was not possible to obtain detailed information about the location these programs.

**Availability of preschool care**

The Department of Labour (1989, p.iv,v) report *Child Care in Victoria and Women's Access to the Labour Market* discusses the availability of care in child care centres and reveals:

- Commonwealth and State funded centres are not able to provide a sufficient number of child care places to meet existing levels of demand;
- Privately run centres on the other hand, do have vacancies;
- Family day care programs in most areas are not able to meet present demand levels, or any increase in demand, due to difficulty recruiting caregivers.

<sup>108</sup> The number of places are approximate only; before and after school program offered at the same location are counted as two programs.

The overall conclusion of this research was that:

"Clearly, the demand for formal child care substantially outweighs the supply... over the next few years, the demand for child care will continue to increase, although the actual increase cannot be quantified." (Department of Labour 1989, p.iv).

One factor which could influence the availability of preschool care is the decision of the Federal Labor Government to extend fee relief to private or commercial child care centres as of 1st January 1991. At the time the questionnaire was implemented, the government's fee relief subsidy did not apply to these commercial child care centres.

This decision heralded a most important change because it removed the inconsistency that a parent who sent a child to a government funded centre was eligible for fee relief and another parent who used a commercial or private centre was not. It is not surprising then, that the Department of Labour (1989, p.iv) research concluded

"... the availability of fee relief in government child care centres makes these centres more attractive from a price point of view and this partly explains the large waiting lists and relatively few vacancies in these centres".

The fact that care in commercial centres would be more affordable could also have an impact on the availability of child care places as

"...almost three-fifths of all the vacancies in child care centres are accounted for by private centres, whereas Commonwealth and State centres have considerably higher proportions of filled places. In fact, across many areas of metropolitan Melbourne, there are few vacancies in the government sector..." (Department of Labour 1989, p.iv)

Parents could have greater difficulty finding care in centres for their children aged under 3 years due to the higher staff ratios required by the Children's Services Centres Regulations. For those aged under three there is requirement to have one staff member for every five children compared to one for every fifteen children aged 3 or over. This has had an impact on the number of child care places which are available for children aged under 3 years.

"Due to the minimum staff ratios, it is significantly more expensive to care for those aged under 3, than those aged 3 or over. This has significant implications for the attempts by commercial centres to cater for under 3's, and remain profitable" (Victorian Post-Secondary Education Commission 1983, p.9).

As a result fewer commercial centres offer care for those children aged under 3 years old.

### **Fee levels**

Fees for use of formal child care services need to be at levels which are affordable for working parents. This is noted in guidelines prepared by the Office of Preschool and Child Care (1990, p.4).

"The service .... should offer a sliding scale of fees according to the capacity of parents to pay."

Fee levels can have a substantial impact on the use of formal care services because if parents consider fees levels are too high,

"Families will reduce their use of funded services and rely increasingly on informal child care". (Brennan 1989, p.6).

The Department of Community Services and Health (1990b, p.4.3) in its *Outside School Hours Care Handbook* also notes the importance of fee levels.

" ... fee relief is provided in order to ensure that all families, including those on low income, can afford to take advantage of services funded by the government."

The fee structures vary substantially between the different services. In regard to preschool care few controls exist to determine maximum fees. For example, child care centres have no maximum fees and family day care programs determined their fee levels. There are also no set fees imposed on out of school hours care programs, rather funding bodies have recommended fee levels. At the time the practical field research was undertaken, staff from the Office of Pre-School and Child Care suggested a maximum of \$12 per day be charged for school holiday care. In regard to before or after school care, at this time the Department of Community Services and Health (1990b) recommended fees of \$4.50 per session for one child, \$9.00 for two and \$13.40 for three children; with full fee relief these reduced to \$2.70, \$5.40 and \$8.10 respectively.

## **Location and travel**

A report by Burbidge (1990, p.30) on the location of preschool care within Melbourne found there was a higher proportion of places available in inner city areas in comparison to outer and fringe suburbs. A follow up report by Burbidge (1991, p.12) discusses whether the inner city areas are therefore over resourced at the expense of outer areas. However, it was established that many of the inner city centres had long waiting lists, and

"... most of these places were required for children under three years of age."

Many working parents had to wait anywhere from three to eighteen months to find a place for their children. Despite the greater number of places which are available in the inner city areas, Burbidge (1991, p.12) concluded that there is still a shortage of places. The problem is not one of location, rather an inadequate overall supply of places.

Research by the Department of Labour (1989, pii) found that the majority of child care places were located in areas where the greatest number of child care users reside.

## 9.2.Finding school holiday care

Parents who require school vacation care can experience substantial difficulty in making arrangements which meet their needs. Over half of the respondents state they have a problem finding school holiday care, as outlined in the table below.

**Table 3:      Problem of finding school holiday care.**

Extent of Problem	Number	Percent
No problem	208	49.2
Moderate problem	120	28.4
Major Problem	95	22.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>423</b>	<b>100</b>

The fact that many respondents have difficulty finding school holiday care seems related to an inadequate supply of school holiday care programs throughout Victoria. Both the limited use by respondents of school holiday programs and their desire for additional services to be made available supports this contention. It was noted in Chapter 6 that respondents rely primarily on informal care arrangements during school holidays and there is very limited use of holiday programs. There was also extensive support for an expansion of school holiday programs, demonstrated by the fact that in excess of 70 percent of respondents state they would consider using a school holiday program located either near work or home.

Consequently, the capacity of working parents to find care for their children during school holidays is linked to a continuing expansion of school vacation care.

There is a significant relationship between the employment status of respondents and the difficulty they have finding care for their children during school holidays: both full and part time employees are far more likely to experience a problem finding care at this time (chi square = 0.0332<sup>109</sup>). While it is a problem for 51.7 percent of full timers and 57.1 percent of part timers, it proves to be a difficulty for a lesser 36.3 percent of casuals.

As with their ability to cope with sick children, casual workers have more flexibility to take time off work due to the terms of their employment. In addition, they work significantly less hours than either full or part time employees are therefore need less child care.

There is no connection between the problem of finding school holiday care and the type of care which respondents use. Likewise, there is no relationship between this problem and the sex of respondents or where they live and work.

The difficulty parents experience finding school vacation care is tied to the substantial number of weeks which children have off school. This was indicated by parents during the interview phase of this research when they spoke of the frustration that can occur in trying to find care for their

<sup>109</sup> Chi square value is 10.46836 and significance level is .0332.

children. Parents talked about needing to make a number of different arrangements in order to cover the amount of time children were on holidays.

"I have problems in finding care during school holidays. I rely on school holiday programs, my parents and friends."

These parents relied on combining many different types of care such as neighbours, relatives, friends, school holiday programs or older children looking after their brothers or sisters. Parents also talked about how they alternated their annual leave with their spouse so that one parent was with the children for a substantial part of the holidays. The type of care which they use during school holidays is also related to the age of their children, for example, as children get older parents are more willing to have them look after themselves.

Respondents were asked whether they had difficulty taking leave during school holidays to care for their children. Their responses are outlined below.

**Table 4:      Problem of taking leave during school holidays.**

Extent of Problem	Number	Percent
No problem	304	58.6
Moderate problem	127	24.4
Major Problem	88	17.0
Total	519	100

Clearly a substantial number of parents, 41.4 percent, have a problem taking their annual leave during the school holidays. The nature of the retail industry is that for many retailers school holidays are part of peak trading periods, for example Easter and Christmas. Retailers are often reluctant to allow their employees to take annual leave during these periods. For instance, many of those parents interviewed indicated their employers had either a policy or practice of not allowing staff to take annual leave during school holidays.

Under the terms of the retail awards, employers are within their rights to set some limits on when employees can take their leave. It is quite legitimate for them to restrict annual leave during these peak trading times. However, this restriction has implications for many working parents as they need to find a substantial amount of child care at these times.

Parents were asked to indicate how many days they had off work during school holidays, in the last year in addition to their annual leave, to care for their children. This would normally be taken as leave without pay.

**Table 5: Days off work during school holidays in the last year in addition to annual leave.**

Number of Days	Respondents	
	Number	Percent
Nil	534	87.5
1 - 3	31	5.1
4 - 6	16	2.6
7 - 9	5	0.8
10 - 20	20	3.3
21 or more	4	0.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>610</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Total days off work</b>	<b>647</b>	

While the majority of respondents did not take additional leave during the school holidays, a small number of respondents had a substantial amount of time off. This is demonstrated by the mean for the number of days absent. Whereas for all respondents the average is a total of 1.1 days, for those who actually had additional time off work during the school holidays the average was a much higher 8.5 days.

The problem of taking leave during school holidays is greater for those respondents who currently have time off work during school holidays in addition to their own leave. Of those respondents who did not take any such additional leave in the preceding year, only 14.1 percent have a major problem taking their leave during school holidays. However, of those respondents had four or more days additional leave there are 40.9 percent who have a major difficulty obtaining leave during school holidays (chi square = 0.0000<sup>110</sup>).

This indicates that many respondents who presently take additional unpaid leave during the school holidays would like the opportunity to take their annual leave at these times. Consequently they either want the opportunity to take their existing unpaid leave as paid annual leave, or they want an option of taking both their annual leave and additional unpaid leave during school holidays. Both issues were raised in the interview phase of this research. Some parents spoke of a desire to take time off work every school holidays, even if some of this was unpaid. Others wanted to have the option to take their paid annual leave rather than being restricted to leave without pay at these times.

Overall, there is a strong desire for working parents to be able to take leave during the school holidays so that they can care for their children.

As with the problem of finding care for school aged children, there is a clear relationship between the employment status of respondents and the difficulty of taking leave during school holidays: full and part time employees are far more likely to experience such a concern than are casual employees (chi square = 0.0000<sup>111</sup>). It is either a moderate or major problem for 48.5 percent of part timers,

<sup>110</sup> Chi square value is 53.13890 and significance level is .0000.

<sup>111</sup> Chi square value is 13.64724 and significance level is .0085.

41.4 percent of full timers and a lesser 29.2 percent of casuals. This is consistent with the earlier discussion that casuals, due to the nature of their employment, have more flexibility.

There is no relationship however between the problem of taking leave in school holidays and the sex of respondents or the type of care they use.

**Additional school holiday leave**

Respondents were asked whether working parents should be entitled to additional unpaid leave during school holidays so they could care for their children. Their responses are outlined in the table below.

**Table 6: Proportion of respondents who agree that working parents should be entitled to have unpaid extra leave during school holidays to care for their children.**

Response	Number	Percent
Strongly agree	279	35.2
Agree	286	36.1
Unsure	90	11.4
Disagree	111	14.0
Strongly Disagree	26	3.3
Total	792	100

In the light of the problems working parents experience in providing care during school holidays, it is no surprise a total of 71.3 percent of parents agree working parents should be entitled to additional unpaid leave during school holidays and only 17.3 percent disagree.

There is a substantial connection between the sex of respondents and support for additional unpaid school holiday leave: a total of 72.3 percent of females agree with this proposition compared to a lesser 59 percent of males. Conversely, a total of 28.9 percent of males and 16.2 percent of females disagree (chi square = 0.0127<sup>112</sup>).

Consequently, while a substantial majority of males support the entitlement to additional leave, a significantly greater proportion of females do so. During the interview phase of the research it became evident that many women are actively involved with the child care needs of their children. These women spoke of their desire to take additional leave to care for their children because of their desire to spend time with them.

Some parents spoke about their desire to take time off work during school holidays as unpaid leave. They saw this as a compromise which could benefit both themselves and their employer. In a number of situations parents were in fact able to arrange with their manager to have time off without pay, and in some cases on a regular basis. It was an arrangement that both the employer and the employee concerned were happy with. For example, one parent said

"My manager is happy for me to take unpaid leave sometimes and he brings in junior school kids to replace me."

<sup>112</sup> The chi square is 8.72483 and significance is .0127

Parents indicated that by having leave without pay their employer was able to employ students at junior rates of pay and therefore possibly save money on wages. The parents would take their annual leave at some other time during the year when trading was slower. Although these parents suffered a loss of income during the school holidays, they were happy to gain the benefit of being able to look after their children for at least part of the holidays. This substantially reduced the pressure on them to find suitable child care.

Other parents, however, spoke of how they tried to get unpaid leave during the school holidays but that their employer would not allow it. They were restricted to four weeks of annual leave and their employers would not allow this to be taken during school holidays.

In addition to the support for additional leave to care for sick children, a substantial majority of respondents consider additional leave needs to be available for working parents during school holidays. Given the strong support for unpaid leave, it would seem the cost to employers in the retail industry would be minimal. In fact, there could well be direct cost savings for many employers due to the opportunity they have to employ secondary and tertiary students. These are students who are regularly employed during year, normally on an evening or weekend, as either casuals or part timers. They are a ready made workforce who would normally be available during school holidays and would appreciate the opportunity to earn some additional income.

It is possible that employers may be reluctant to reduce the number of experienced staff they employ during the holidays as these are generally times of higher trading. However, it is conceivable these concerns could be overcome by additional staff training. It would seem there is scope for initiatives such as this to be seriously considered by retail employers.

9.3.Before and after school care

While a substantial number of respondent experience difficulty in finding before or after school care, a smaller proportion have problems finding before or after school care as outlined in the table below.

Table 7: Problem of care before and after school.

Extent of Problem	Number	Percent
No problem	257	62.4
Moderate problem	83	20.1
Major Problem	72	17.5
Total	412	100

Nonetheless, there are still a total of 37.6 percent for whom it is either a moderate or major problem.

It has been noted that there is a greater demand for after school care than before school care. This was also evident from the interviews in discussions about their organisation of child care and work.



The structure of the retail industry means that many part time or casual employees do not commence work until after 9 am. In many cases therefore, no care is required at all before school. For example, one of those parents interviewed worked from 11 am until 3 pm Monday to Friday. This meant she could take her two children to school each day. The difficulty she had was in finding care after school because no after school program was available. Consequently, she relied on two other mothers with children at the school sharing the responsibility for collecting her child.

Other parents commented during the interviews on their desire to work less than full time once their children reached school age. The benefit of working as either a part time or casual employee was the possibility of arranging most of their hours of work around the time their children were at school. As a result they only needed shorter periods of child care. This same opportunity did not exist for most full time employees.

Respondents who work full time are more likely to have a problem finding before or after school care: 45.5 percent of full timers have a problem finding before or after school care compared to a 33.6 percent of non full time employees (chi square = 0.0232<sup>113</sup>). Full time employees are less able to minimise the number of hours their children need care.

There is no relationship between the need for before or after school care and the sex of respondents, the different types of care they use or the areas in which they live or work.

9.4.Availability of preschool care

The problem respondents had in finding care for their preschool children is outlined in the table below.

Table 8: Problem of finding care for preschool children.

Extent of Problem	Finding care for under 3 year olds		Finding care for 3 to 5 year olds	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
No problem	254	69.8	265	75.7
Moderate problem	63	17.3	48	13.7
Major Problem	47	12.9	37	10.6
Total	412	100	350	100

The majority of respondents do not have a problem finding care for their preschool children whether they are aged under 3 years or 3 to 5 years old. A greater proportion of respondents, 30.2 percent have a problem finding care for under 3 year olds in comparison to 24.3 percent for 3 to 5 year olds.

It could have been anticipated that parents would have more difficulty finding care for their children aged under three years due to the relatively higher costs involved in child care centres offering this care. However, respondents do not have a significantly greater problem finding care for children

<sup>113</sup> Chi square value is 5.15180 and significance level is .0232.

under 3 years of age than they do for those aged 3 to 5 years. This may be related to the fact that the majority of respondents use informal care for their preschool children, and their ability to find informal care is not significantly influenced by the age of their children.

The need for preschool care can be a problem for any respondents. There is no relationship between the need for preschool care and whether respondents use formal, informal or parental care on a regular basis. In addition, there is no association between the problem of finding preschool care and the sex of respondents, their employment status, the locality in which they live or work or their age.

The decision by the Commonwealth government to extend fee relief to commercial and workbased child care centres will provide a real benefit to those who presently use, or would consider using, child care centres. There are parents who would not consider using a commercial child care centre because of the increased cost of care. During the research interviews parents spoke of choosing informal care for their preschool children because it was far cheaper than sending their child to a privately run centre. Fee relief can bring about a substantial reduction in the cost of child care. For example, two parents working full time in the retail industry, and receiving award rates of pay, would be eligible for \$42 per week if they have one child in full time care. This is a nett benefit to the parents concerned and represents a substantial saving.

It has been established through this survey that a substantial number of respondents would consider using alternative forms of preschool care, for example a child care centre near work or home, if such care was available. It is important that any expansion in preschool care provide places for both children aged 3 to 5 and those under 3 years of age. It is relatively less expensive to provide care for children over 3 years old due to the lesser number of staff required. However, there is a similar level of demand for each of these groups: those respondents who said they would or might use a child care centre near work have a total of 156 children aged under 3 and 144 children aged 3 to 5 years.

## **9.5. Finding extraordinary care**

The other major difficulty which respondents experience with their child care arrangements is finding care to cover those more extraordinary situations or needs. This was the second most common problem experienced by respondents, after care for sick children.

During the interview phase of the research parents spoke of the frustration they encountered when they needed child care at short notice or to cater for some extraordinary needs. Some parents spoke of the frustration of finding out at the last minute that the school their child attends is having a curriculum day. Some who relied on informal care spoke of the disruption they faced if their caregiver was sick. It could be extremely difficult to find alternative care in these situations. For example, one of these parents said

"I have had to take time off work to mind my child because my mother in law was unavailable."

The following table shows the proportion of survey respondents who had difficulty finding child care in those situations when they needed it.

**Table 9:      Problem of finding care when you need it.**

Extent of Problem	Number	Percent
No problem	188	42.4
Moderate problem	140	31.5
Major Problem	116	26.1
Total	444	100

The majority of respondents, 57.6 percent, have either a moderate or major problem in finding care to cover these situations.

There is a strong relationship between those who experience this difficulty and the amount of time they have off work because their child care arrangements broke down. The following table contains a summary of respondents' absence from work due to a break down in care arrangements.

**Table 10:      Days off work in the last year due to a break down in care arrangements.**

Number of Days	Respondents	
	Number	Percent
Nil	492	87.5
1 - 3	85	5.1
4 - 6	26	2.6
7 - 9	2	0.8
10 - 20	6	3.3
21 or more	0	0.7
Total	611	100
Total days off work	368	

While only a minority of respondents, 12.5 percent, had time off it is evident that a failure in child care arrangements can cause them to be absent from work. The average number of days off work for this reason for all respondents is 0.6 days, however for those parents who had time off work the average is 3.1 days.

Those who had time off work due to such a failure in their care arrangements are far more likely to have a major problem finding care to cover these extraordinary situations. Of those who had four or more days off work there are 60 percent who have a major problem finding care in such extraordinary situations. In contrast, of those who did not have any time off work only 22.1 percent have a major problem (chi square = 0.0000<sup>114</sup>).

This type of problem is common for all respondents. There is no relationship between the problem of finding care when it is needed and

- the employment status of respondents,
- their sex,

<sup>114</sup> Chi square value is 43.66766 and significance level is .0000.

- the type of care the use,
- where they live or work,
- their age, or
- the age of their children.

Clearly the inability of working parents to find care to cover short term or extraordinary care requirements can have a direct impact on their attendance at work.

## 9.6.Information Service

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they considered it was necessary for an information service to be established in order to help employees find out about child care that is available. Their responses are contained in the following table.

**Table 11: It is necessary to establish an information service to help employees find out about child care that is available.**

Response	Number	Percentage
Strongly agree	374	48.1
Agree	312	40.1
Unsure	50	6.4
Disagree	31	4.0
Strongly disagree	11	1.4
Total	778	100

It is evident there is very strong support among respondents for the establishment of an information service. There are a total of 88.1 percent of respondents who agree with this proposition and only 5.4 percent in total who disagree overall. Fifty four percent those with preschool children strongly agree with the proposition, 50.4 percent of those with both preschool and school aged children, and a lesser 42.4 percent of those only with school aged children (chi square = 0.0433<sup>115</sup>). The fact that such a small number of respondents are in disagreement indicates there is an overwhelming need for an information service to be developed.

The greatest support for an information service exists among those respondents who have difficulty finding care for either children aged under 3 years old or at those times before and after school. There is an increased likelihood that those with either a moderate or major problem finding such care will strongly support the establishment of an information service. Of those who have a major problem finding care for children under 3 years of age, 68.1 percent strongly agree with the need for an information service. For those with a moderate problem 59.7 percent strongly agree and a lesser 42.3 percent for those who do not have a problem finding care (chi square = 0.0117<sup>116</sup>).

<sup>115</sup> The chi square value is 5.09848 and significance is .0433.

<sup>116</sup> Chi square value is 19.65740 and significance is .0117.

In regard to the problem of finding care before or after school, there is a chi square significance level of .0060.<sup>117</sup> Of those with a major problem finding care at these times, 70.6 percent strongly support an information service. Of respondents who have a moderate problem 45.1 percent strongly agree and it is 44.4 percent for those with no problem.

This indicates that the support for an information service is at least partially connected to the relative availability of child care places. That is, respondents who have problems finding these types of care may hope that the creation an information service will help solve the difficulty they have finding child care. This was raised during the interviews by parents who experienced such difficulties. For example one parent commented her support for an information service was to help her

"... find out if there are more places available; it is hard to find child care."

Another parent commented that it the information service would need to contain information about vacancies that existed in her local area. She would use an information service which helped her find suitable child care in her area.

There is no connection between the support for an information service and the type of child care which respondents use, their sex, their employment status or the suburbs in which they live or work.

The establishment of an information service on its own will not create child care places. A major limitation with the development of an effective information service relates to the relative demand and supply of places. If there is an overall shortfall of places, as has been established for most types of formal preschool and school aged care, then the effectiveness of the information service well be greatly reduced.

The value of an information service to working parents is that it can provide up to date and accurate information about child care services available in the particular location needed. In order to maximise the effectiveness of such a service, it would be advantageous for all child care services for children aged 13 or under to be listed on a common computerised data base. Consequently, preschool care, before or after school care, evening care, weekend care, school holiday care and so on could all obtained from one source. Parents could obtain information about all their child care needs at one time from the one information source.

It would also be of assistance to parents if this data base could provide parents with general information about the differences between services and how to select care which best suits their needs. Such an information system would not only prove valuable for parents, but it would be a ready source of information for those involved in child care research and policy formation. It would be possible to monitor needs in particular areas and ensure the necessary services are developed.

There are substantial organisation problems to be overcome in establishing such a computerised information systems. It is possible for a smaller scale and more localised information service to be

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<sup>117</sup> The chi square value is 21.46824 and significance is .0060.

developed either by employers or any of a number of organisations such as trade unions, local government or community organisation.

9.7.Location and travel

Respondents were asked whether they have any difficulties which stem from the location of their child care, or problems in travelling to or from their care location. Their responses are outlined below.

Table 12: Problem of finding care when you need it.

Extent of Problem	Location of child care		Travel to or from care location	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
No problem	277	63.0	277	62.4
Moderate problem	103	23.4	118	26.6
Major Problem	60	13.6	49	11.0
Total	440	100	444	100

The issues of location and travel are interrelated. The location of care has a direct impact on what transportation or travel arrangements are necessary. Likewise, the availability of transportation has a direct impact of the accessibility of care, so that parents can get to and from their home, their child care arrangements and their workplace. Those with transportation problems are most likely to also have a problem with the location of their care arrangement (chi square = 0.0000<sup>118</sup>).

Overall, the majority of respondents do not have a problem with where their child care is located or with transportation. Those who do, in excess of one third of respondents, may have limited ability to resolve their difficulties. For example, employees have little influence over the location of their workplace.

Problems with location and travel may also be related to an under supply of suitable child care which is conveniently located. On the other hand problems may stem from the decision of parents to opt for particular care arrangements and then attempt to put up with resultant location or travel difficulties.

It is far more likely, however, that problems of transport and location of care are caused by a lack of child care being available for working parents. Those respondents who have difficulties with location and travel are also likely to experience problems finding care for both their school aged and preschool children: that is, during school holidays, before or after school and for children aged either under 3 years old or 3 to 5 years (chi square = 0.0000<sup>119</sup>).

<sup>118</sup> Chi square value is 335.57484 and significance level is .0000.  
<sup>119</sup> Chi square value is 63.52227 and significance level is .0000.

There is no relationship between the issues of transportation or location and the sex of respondents, the type of care they use, their employment status, the suburbs in which they live or work, their age or that of their children.

Difficulties with transport and location can be a source of frustration for working parents, particularly where it is a result of an inadequate supply of child care. In the interview phase some parents spoke of their frustration in having to spend more than 10 hours each week travelling. For some parents there was a complication of having to transport their children to different locations, for example, one child to school and the other to a child care centre.

Parents also spoke about the transportation problems which can arise while children attend kindergarten. The sessional nature of kindergartens means special plans have to be made in order to get children to and from the kindergarten and their other care arrangements. For instance, one parent explained how she dropped her daughter to one of the mothers whose child was also attending the kindergarten. This mother then took her child to and from the kindergarten and dropped the child off at her grandmother's house on the way home in return for a small payment.

9.8.Finding care for two or more children

Parents were asked to indicate how difficult it was to find care for two or more children in the same centre or service. Their responses are outlined in the table below.

Table 13: Problem of finding care in the same centre/service for two or more children.

Extent of Problem	Number	Percent
No problem	254	68.1
Moderate problem	55	14.7
Major Problem	64	17.2
Total	373	100

Almost one third of respondents, 31.9 percent, have either a moderate or major problem finding care for two or more children. Of those respondents finding such care, 21.4 percent have children solely of preschool age, 39.3 percent solely of school age and a further 39.3 percent have children in both age groups.

It is notable that a greater proportion of respondents have a major problem rather than a moderate problem in finding this care. Out of the ten different problems with care arrangements which were raised in the survey, in only two cases did a greater number of respondents have a major rather than moderate problem; the other related to substantial difficulties experienced in caring for sick children.

The considerable difficulty which can be experienced by those trying to find care for two or more children in the same service was raised by parents during the interviews. These parents explained that they preferred to have all their children cared for by the same person or in the same service.

Some of those with two preschool children explained how they had to resort to placing their children in different care arrangements. For example, one parent told of how she had to use different child care centres because she couldn't find a centre which had places available for both her two year old and four year old children. Others spoke of the frustration of trying to find child care when they had one child of preschool age and the other at school. There was the added complication of their children being transported at different times between home, their care arrangement and for the older child school as well.

The difficulties in finding child care can clearly be accentuated for parents who need care for more than one child. Few formal services, with the possible exception of family day care and multipurpose centres, provide care for children of both preschool or school age. Some parents who have informal arrangements indicated they experienced problems finding such care as there was at times a reluctance by their caregivers to look after more than one child.

The frustration of trying to find care for two or more children in the one location are not related to any particular respondents. There is no relationship between this problem and whether respondents use formal, informal or parental care. In addition, there is no connection with the age of respondents, their sex, their employment status or the areas in which they live or work.

9.9.Quality of child care

Parents were asked whether they have a problem with the quality of care being below standard and their responses are listed below.

Table 14: Problem that quality of child care is below standard.

Extent of Problem	Number	Percent
No problem	334	79.2
Moderate problem	49	11.6
Major Problem	39	9.2
Total	422	100

This reveals a total of 20.8 percent of respondents have problems with the quality of their child care, the lowest proportion for any of the problems with child care arrangements raised in the questionnaire.

It has already been noted that few respondents were unhappy with their child care situation and in addition a substantial majority do not have a problem with the quality of their care arrangements. Either few parents experience problems with the quality of their care arrangements or they will not, in general, tolerate care arrangements that they consider to be of inferior quality. This latter issue was raised by parents during the interviews. For example, parents indicated that if there were problems with the quality of their care arrangement they would address these concerns with their caregivers. They were not happy to leave their children in a child care situation which they believed to be of low quality.



When comparing the quality of care with the type of child care arrangements which respondents use regularly, it is evident that those who rely primarily on informal care are significantly more likely to have problems ( $\chi^2 = 0.0317^{120}$ ). Twenty two percent of those using informal arrangements have a problem with the quality of their care in comparison to a lesser 6.3 percent of those who use formal care.

This could be related to the fact that informal care arrangements operate in a totally unregulated manner. For example, there are no minimum standards for informal care as the arrangement is a private one between the parents and the caregivers concerned. During the interviews some parents talked about the practical frustration which could occur for those who rely on informal care. For example, some indicated that while there were some concerns with the quality of care provided, they did not want to confront the caregiver in case this jeopardised their care arrangement. Other parents talked about how they tried to raise issues but that it was difficult to make too many demands on someone who was essentially providing child care as a favour.

There is no relationship between the problem of inferior quality care and the age of respondents, their employment status, where they live or work, their age or that of their children.

In addition to the problems which are related to child care arrangements, there are a number of situations where child care problems impact on the employment of working parents. These are discussed in the next chapter.

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<sup>120</sup> Chi square value is 10.57854 and significance level is .0317.

## Chapter 10: Impact of child care problems on employment

There are numerous ways in which child care can have an impact on the employment of working parents. Respondents were asked to indicate whether a range of issues posed problems for them: absence from work, not being able to work overtime, punctuality, being late to pick up their child, changes in roster, being unable to get a promotion, being interrupted at work, unable to attend job training and reduced work performance. There is a discussion about possible employer responses which include establishing child care centres. Consideration is also given to option of parents being able to spend time at home caring for their children instead of working.

### 10.1. Some background information

Much has been written about the impact of child care problems on the employment of working parents. While reviewing maternity leave within Australia, Wulff (1987, p.17) identified the need for a change in attitudes about work so family responsibilities of working parents did not continue to be overlooked.

"In the Australian workplace, child care, child welfare and family responsibilities remain in the 'private' domain - problems to be coped with by women. There is great scope for the introduction of responsive and innovative policies in this area."

A number of publications have focussed on the possible benefits available to employers who take an active role in addressing the needs of their employees who have children. The most commonly discussed issues relate to reduced absenteeism and improved productivity.

A publication prepared by the Victorian Trades Hall Council (c.1992b), *Workbased child care: addressing some employer questions and concerns*, indicates that employees with child care problems are likely to have increased absenteeism. The research by VandenHeuvel (1993, p.34) found that a total of 68 percent all parents had taken time off work for various reasons in order to care for their children.

Wolcott (1990, pp.33-8) discusses research into the impact of child care on working parents and their role within the workplace. A number of possible gains are identified for those employers who actively support their employees who are working parents. These include reduced absenteeism, an increase in productivity, better retention of staff and improved morale in the workplace.

There is a direct impact on employers when working parents have child care difficulties, and this is evident through factors such as employees being absent from work for family related reasons.(VandenHeuvel 1993, p.116).

The Department of Employment, Education and Training publication, *Women and Work* notes

"... increased productivity due to reduced stress, anxiety and distraction caused by unsatisfactory child care arrangements is one of the primary cost benefits to employers who are actively involved in the child care issue." (Department of Employment, Education and Training 1990, p.7).

Childcare At Work Ltd (c.1989, p.2) also notes a number of benefits employers will receive if they become involved with the child care needs of their employees, such as:

- a reduction in staff turnover and a subsequent saving in recruitment and training costs,
- less absenteeism,
- favourable publicity,
- various taxation incentives, and
- productivity gains due to an improved commitment and morale in their workforce, and less stress on working parents.

The challenge for employers is to review the objectives and operation of their business so that they can take advantage of the opportunity to improve productivity and morale, and consequently ensure they get a better return on the investment they make in their employees.

Many within the trade union movement have advocated for employers to take a more active role in support of the issues which affect working parents.

"... Childcare is a legitimate concern to workers and therefore to the unions representing them. ... Studies have clearly demonstrated the positive results employers derive from the provision of childcare. It is widely recognised that strong links exist between unsatisfactory childcare arrangements and employee lateness and absenteeism" (Victorian Trades Hall Council c.1992a).

Employers on the other hand are in general reticent about what role, if any, they have in regard to the needs of their employees who are working parents. Wolcott (1991, p.37) in *Work and Family: Employers Views*, reports on the attitudes and experiences of a cross section of Australian employers. Only three companies, or one percent of the 183 companies surveyed, financially supported a child care facility for their employees use and there was a general reluctance for most employers to become involved.

"... Corporate values, on the whole, were still based on the premise that work and family lives were separate worlds." (Wolcott 1991, p.56).

VandenHeuvel (1993, p.114) found that working parents consider their employers should take a greater level of responsibility for work and family issues. When asked to indicate what workplace changes would assist working parents with their dual work and family roles, the greatest level of support existed for the development of more employer supported child care.

"Confirming other research, this study found that of workers suggesting change, most (44 percent) were interested in the area of child care. More specifically, 40 percent noted the need for more employer-sponsored child care facilities and services."

In addition, VandenHeuvel (1993, p.116) considers child care cannot be left as an issue which working parents need to address on their own. There is workers to be given support such as access to paid leave as well as time off work to deal with family matters; this needs to be dealt with by employers, governments and unions.

There are at present no examples of any employer involvement in the provision of any child care service within the retail industry for either preschool or school aged children.

10.2. Research Findings

Respondents were asked to indicate whether any of a range of child care difficulties had an impact on their employment. Their responses are outlined below.

10.2.1. Employee absence

One of the major problems, as noted earlier, was that many parents had been forced to take time off work in order to care for their children. The total number of days absent in the last year is contained in the following table.

Table 1: Days off work for child related reasons.

Reason for absence	Respondents absent	Days off	Average Time Off
	Number	Number	Days
Care for a sick child	333	1471	4.4
Care broke down	119	368	3.1
Care during school holidays	66	647	8.5

It is clear that many working parents are forced to take a substantial amount of time off work every year to care for their children. In total there are 361 respondents who had time off work in the last year and between them they had a total of 2486 days off work, or an average of 6.9 days per respondent.

This amount of absence could have a negative impact on productivity within the workplace. In addition, discussions with shop stewards of the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association Victorian Branch during the interview phase of this research revealed the existence of other complications. These shop stewards explained that some employees were quite intolerant of working parents who took time off work. Some employees had expressed feelings of resentment because the absence of working parents could have an impact on them. One key reason for this is that employers seldom replace any worker who is absent for up to a few days at a time and this increases the workload of other employees. Consequently, this increased pressure meant that some

employees rather than showing sympathy or understanding perceived the absence as little more than slackness which placed an unfair burden on co-workers.

**10.2.2. Working overtime**

The majority of respondents, 59.3 percent, experience the problem of not being able to work extra hours or overtime due to a lack of available child care, as outlined in the following table.

**Table 2: Respondents who are not able to work overtime due to inadequate child care.**

Extent of Problem	Number	Percent
No problem	223	40.7
Moderate problem	197	35.9
Major Problem	128	23.4
Total	548	100

It is far more likely that respondents who work part time or full time will experience this difficulty rather than casual workers. While this a major concern for 26.1 percent of full timers and 24.0 percent of part timers, it is a major problem for a lesser 16.2 percent of casuals (chi square = 0.0441<sup>121</sup>).

This can be explained by the nature of casual employment. Casuals would often need more flexible and adaptable care arrangements to cope with the fact that they can be 'on call'. These employees would need to have child care arrangements which provide them flexibility to work when needed by their employers.

There is a strong connection between the problem of working overtime and the difficulty of finding child care at short notice or to cater for extraordinary needs. Of the respondents who have either a moderate or major problem working overtime, 72.0 percent also have a problem finding extraordinary care, and 28.0 do not. Of those who do not have a problem working overtime, only 34.0 percent have difficulty finding extraordinary care and 66.0 percent do not (chi square = 0.0000<sup>122</sup>).

During the interviews parents explained that there were often substantial restrictions placed on them due to the nature of their child care arrangements. For example, some respondents who use formal services spoke of the restrictions imposed on them due to the set hours that these services opened and closed. Others who use informal care arrangements indicated that they did not want to place additional burdens on those who provide care by working back late. As a result, these parents were often unable to work any additional hours despite their willingness to do so. Unless parents have flexible or back up care available, they may not be able to work at the additional times desired by their employer.

<sup>121</sup> Chi square value is 9.79224 and significance level is .0441.

<sup>122</sup> Chi square value is 57.70958 and significance level is .0000.

The nature of the retail industry is that as sales increase in general more staff are required to work. However, it is not always possible for employers to predict the exact staffing they will need and employees can be asked to work extra hours at relatively short notice.

As a result of the difficulty many working parents face in working overtime, employers would seem to have less adaptability in being able to utilise these employees when necessary. This would seem to be accentuated for many parents due to the short notice which can be involved. The inability to work extra hours is the most severe work related problem experienced by working parents. It is a major problem for nearly a quarter of the respondents, a far greater proportion than for any of the other work related problems listed in the survey.

The problem of not being able to work additional hours is not related to whether respondents regularly use formal, informal or parental care. In addition, there is no relationship between this problem and the age of respondents, their sex or the age of their children.

**10.2.3. Punctuality**

The proportion of respondents who are faced with the problem of getting to work late or leaving early due to child care related reasons are summarised in the table below.

**Table 3: Respondents who have a difficulty getting to work late or leaving early due to child care problems.**

Extent of Problem	Number	Percent
No problem	229	42.2
Moderate problem	273	50.4
Major Problem	40	7.4
Total	542	100

Getting to work late or leaving early is a problem for the majority of respondents, 57.8 percent, most of whom classify it as a moderate problem: a greater proportion of full time respondents experience the difficulty of starting or finishing work on time (chi square = 0.0392<sup>123</sup>).

This would again seem to be related to the structure of employment within the retail industry. A greater proportion of full time employees commence work when the store opens in the morning and then work their full day. Many part time and casual workers start later and only work part of the day. Consequently these non full time employees tend to have a greater amount of time each working day to organise their child care arrangements.

There is no significant relationship between problems with punctuality and the sex of respondents, their age, the age of their children or the type of child care which they use on a regular basis.

Clearly, the number of respondents who experience problems in arriving late to work or leaving early would have a substantial impact on productivity and organisation with the workplace. It also has the capacity to diminish cooperation between staff. Discussion with shop stewards during the

<sup>123</sup> Chi square value is 10.07302 and significance level is .0392.

interviews revealed employees could also be intolerant of working parents who have problems with punctuality. Such employees seemed to be more concerned with the impact on them rather than attempting to understand the problems these working parents have to deal with.

**10.2.4. Being delayed at work**

A substantial number of respondents have a problem with being held up at work and consequently being late to pick up their child. Their responses are summarised below.

**Table 4: Problem of being held up at work and then late picking up your child.**

Extent of Problem	Number	Percent
No problem	299	55.9
Moderate problem	163	30.5
Major Problem	73	13.6
Total	535	100

There are a total of 44.1 percent of respondents who had a problem of being late to pick up their child after work. Some of the reasons behind these delays were explained by parents in the interviews. As shop assistants work primarily with customers, this can mean they have to finish serving before they can leave work. For example, parents explained how it was not easy for them to walk out on a customer because it was time for them to knock off work. If they were in the middle of serving a customer it was expected that they would remain at work until the sale was finished.

Likewise, where a number of shoppers were still in the store at closing time, which often occurs, these parents spoke of feeling guilty and not very popular with management, if they were to walk out immediately and leave it up to their co-workers to finish serving. In small stores or individual departments of larger stores, there may only be one or two people in the particular department on duty anyway. Many companies also have employment practices where employees must close off their registers at the end of the workers shift or the end of the days trading. This can delay workers even further after they have finished the last sale.

These are just some of the numerous ways workers can be delayed at work.

There can be consequences for working parents who are late to collect their children. For example, many child care centres require an additional payment as a late fee if parents are delayed by more than a few minutes. The problem is accentuated by the fact that many retail stores are open until at least 5.30 pm and most centres close at or before 6 pm. Those parents rostered to work until the store closes do not have much time to collect their children from child care centres. Other forms of care such a family day care or occasional care require additional payments because fees are structured on an hourly basis.

There is a strong relationship between being late to pick up children and the type of care arrangements which respondents use: respondents who regularly use formal care experience the

greatest difficulty and those who use parental care the least (chi square = 0.0102<sup>124</sup>). This is evident from the total number who have either a moderate or major problem in being delayed at work:

- 51.4 percent of those using full time care,
- 39.0 percent of those using informal care, and
- 21.3 percent for those using parental care.

While respondents who use formal care, for the reasons outlined above, have the greatest problem it also has an impact on a substantial proportion of those who use informal care. In general, respondents who rely on informal care would not have quite the same restrictions as those outlined above for formal services. In the interviews parents explained that as informal caregivers generally receive minimal payments these parents were reluctant to increase the burden on them through being late, just in case it could jeopardise the care arrangement.

There is no relationship between the problem of being delayed at work and the sex or employment status of respondents, their age or the age of their children.

**10.2.5. Other problems affecting work**

Listed below are responses to the four other child care problems raised in the survey which impact on a lesser number of working parents.

**Change of roster**

The following table contains a summary of those respondents who experienced a problem in having to change their roster for child care reasons.

**Table 5: Respondents who had a problem changing their roster for child care reasons.**

Extent of Problem	Number	Percent
No problem	328	62.6
Moderate problem	138	26.3
Major Problem	58	11.1
Total	524	100

Over a third of respondents, 37.4 percent, have a problem changing their roster. During the interviews many parents spoke about the changing nature of their child care needs. This could result from considerations such as children growing older, existing arrangements no longer proving to be effective or from a need review the relationship between work and family life. The sorts of changes parents spoke of included:

- going from full-time back to part-time or casual;
- working evenings and Saturdays instead of during the week;
- changing the times or days on which they worked to suit school times or kindergarten hours;

<sup>124</sup> Chi square value is 13.23738 and significance level is .0102.



- going from part-time or casual to full-time;
- wanting to work lesser hours;
- wanting to work increased hours.

The need for each of these changes could be brought about as working parents balanced their work and family commitments.

For example, parents who were interviewed talked of changes such as:

"When I came back to work from maternity leave I went from full time to part-time."

"When my children were young I mainly worked evenings and Saturdays so my husband could look after our young child. Once he reached kindergarten I went back to day time work."

Some parents spoke of receiving a substantial amount of cooperation from their managers even though employers were not obliged to assist. Other parents talked of how their employers were not at all co-operative. Under the provisions of the various shops awards, there is no requirement on employers to cooperate with working parents and change a roster. There is an opportunity for employers to be more responsive to the needs of working parents, however it is reasonable that roster changes would need to fit within the overall staffing needs of each company or store.

There is no connection between the problem of changing rosters and the age or sex of respondents, the type of child care they use, their age or that of their children.

**Not able to get a promotion**

The table below indicated how many respondents have a problem of not being able to get a promotion for reasons related to child care.

**Table 6:      Problem of not being able to get a promotion.**

Extent of Problem	Number	Percent
No problem	373	74.6
Moderate problem	68	13.6
Major Problem	59	11.8
Total	500	100

There are only just on one quarter of respondents, 25.4 percent, who experience such a problem. Part of the reason could be the low proportion of respondents who work for career related reasons. That is, there is no problem with promotion primarily because the majority of respondents are not interested in getting a promotion in the first place. There may also be some connection with the fact that those women who have prime responsibility for family matters would find it difficult to establish a career and still undertake their child related responsibilities.

It may also be related to a parent's, and in particular a woman's, expectation of combining work with the care of young children. For example, in chapter 6 it was noted that respondents with children aged under 13 are significantly more likely to work for a combination of financial and

social reasons while those without children are more likely to work for financial and career reasons. Consequently promotional opportunities may be less important at the time parents have young children.

However this discussion is inconclusive because there is no significant connection between not being able to get a promotion and either the sex of respondents or whether they have children aged under 13 years. The ability to make a meaningful comparison is also restricted by the fact that there are only 10 respondents with children aged under 13 who work solely for career related reasons.

Additionally, there is no relationship between this problem and the type of care which respondents use, their age or their employment status.

The need for improved career opportunities for retail workers was the subject of discussion between employers and the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association, Victorian Branch, particularly after the federal Industrial Relations Commission approved guidelines which allowed a review of classifications. In its National Wage Case Decision, August 1988, the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission (1988, p.6) established a structural efficiency principle to review award provisions and

"provide workers with access to more varied, fulfilling and better paid jobs ... establishing skill-related career paths which provide an incentive for workers to continue to participate in skill formation".

Employers were reluctant to agree to any significant changes without obtaining significant concessions but the union did not agree. A case was taken to State Industrial Relations Commission, but their decision failed to grant retail workers a new classification structure. Promotional opportunities remain primarily as an employer prerogative. This could disadvantage working parents.

Those working parents who would like to gain promotion should have an equal opportunity to do so. However, some parents indicated during the interviews that their employer did not regard them as suitable for a management role due to their family commitments. This perception may in reality have little to do with the capacity of individual working parents to be successful in more senior positions. Rather it points to a need for these employers to provide practical child care support to working parents so they can have a genuine opportunity for advancement.

**Interruptions at work**

The number of respondents who have a problem with getting interrupted at work, for example phone calls from their child, is outlined in the table below.

**Table 7:      Respondents who have a problem getting interrupted at work for child care reasons.**

Extent of Problem	Number	Percent
No problem	403	75.9
Moderate problem	102	19.2
Major problem	26	4.9
Total	531	100

Just under a quarter of respondents, 24.1 percent, experience this difficulty. The lower number of parents with this difficulty, in comparison to other concerns, indicates this is not as substantial a problem for many working parents. It is possible that such situations do not often arise, and/or that employers tend to co-operate and allow telephone contact.

However, in the interviews some parents spoke of the frustration they experienced in trying to contact their children or vice versa. At times management were not sympathetic. These parents desired to make contact in situations where there was an emergency or a problem which needed immediate attention. Some parents said they wanted to be able to contact their children just to ensure they were all right.

It was important for these parents to be able to communicate with their children even when they were at work. Parents mentioned that some companies have a policy of not allowing personal phone calls to employees in any situation. It is understandable that an employers would desire to limit the amount of disruption in their workplace, however, such an policy is lacks any sympathy for the needs of working parents.

There is a significant relationship between the problem of being interrupted at work and the employment status of respondents: full and part time employees are more likely to experience this problem than casuals. Whereas a total of 29.9 percent of full timers and 24.7 percent of part timers have either a moderate or major problem, it is a lesser 12.6 percent for casuals (chi square = 0.0167). This would seem to be related to the fact that casuals work significantly lesser hours than either full or part time employees and therefore are not away from their children for as long.

There is no connection between this problem and the type of care which respondents use, their sex, age or the age of their children.

**Job training**

The proportion of respondents who have a problem of not being able to attend job training or product information nights for child care reasons is outlined in the table below.

**Table 8:      Problem of not being able to attend job training or product information sessions.**

Extent of Problem	Number	Percent
No problem	395	76.7
Moderate problem	73	14.2
Major problem	47	9.1
Total	515	100

This is the issue with which the least number of parents have a moderate of major problem, a total of 23.3 per cent. In the interviews parents spoke of :

- occasions when companies ran a training or product information session during evenings outside normal working hours;
- occasions when companies conducted such sessions on weekends and this could also involve a residential component.

There are working parents who have problems finding child care in order to attend job training which is outside normal work hours. This could prove frustrating to parents who would like to attend such courses as they may help them carry out their employment role more effectively. Employers could reduce problems such as these by structuring the programs as part of an employees working day. In cases where such programs or training is considered vital, employers could assist working parents by providing child care for working parents at these times.

There is no relationship between this problem and the sex of respondents, their employment statue, their age, the age of their children or whether they use formal, informal or parental care.

### 10.3. Impact on work performance

The findings of this research clearly indicate there are many ways in which the child care needs of working parents have a direct impact on their employment. The most substantial issues relate to the amount of time working parents have off work to care for their children, their inability to work overtime, being delayed at work and difficulties with punctuality.

In the interview phase of this research parents indicated that child care problem increased their stress level and could have the effect of decreasing their standard of work. In the questionnaire respondents were asked whether difficulties with child care had an affect on the standard of work performance and their responses are outlined in the table below.

**Table 9:      Respondents view on whether child care difficulties reduce work performance.**

Response	Number	Percent
Strongly agree	180	24.2
Agree	274	36.9
Unsure	114	15.3
Disagree	140	18.9
Strongly disagree	35	4.7
Total	743	100

A substantial majority of working parents, 61.1 percent, believe that when they have difficulties with child care the standard of their work performance is reduced. This compares to a total of 23.6 percent in disagreement.

In the interviews many parents explained that if they were concerned about the well being of their children they could not just turn off when they went to work. One parent commented

"My child is complains ... he doesn't like the arrangements and gets upset. This affects me at work. I get distracted and my performance can go down."

There is a significant relationship between the sex of respondents and the impact of child care problems on employment: a greater proportion of females believe their work performance is affected. Whereas 62.5 percent of women either agree or strongly agree that their work performance is reduced, it is a lesser 48.8 percent for males (chi square = 0.0225<sup>125</sup>).

This may be connected to the fact that it is women who remain primarily responsible for child related issues within the family. Consequently they are more likely to be the ones who have their work performance affected because they tend to take greater responsibility for their children's care arrangements. Consequently when there are problems they experience them first hand and they worry about their children. One female parent commented

"If there are problems I get into work feeling unhappy. It affects you personally ... its on your mind and makes it hard to concentrate on your work.

There is no connection between perceptions about work performance and the type of care which respondents use, their age, the age of their children or their employment status.

The degree to which individuals are affected will also depend on factors such as the nature of the problem, their own personality and the environment around them. There were parents who expressed the attitude that the difficulty tended to be exaggerated in situations where their manager was not supportive.

"If there are problems with child care you feel under stress ... it makes it difficult if employers are not very understanding."

Employers can, by addressing the needs of working parents, and women in particular, expect to improve work performance and thus productivity. There is compelling evidence from this questionnaire that employer involvement in the child care issue will have a dual impact. It will assist working parents as well as being of benefit to employers. The question is not whether there will be a benefit but how great the benefit can be to both employees and employers.

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<sup>125</sup> Chi square of 7.58730 and significance is .0225.

## 10.4. Possible employer responses

The findings of this research strongly indicate that a variety of child care problems, concerns and difficulties have a direct impact on the employment of working parents. The research reveals many ways in which the child care needs of working parents affect their role as an employee. The most substantial ways in which the child care needs of working parents impacts on their employment are:

- absence from work due to reasons such as caring for a sick child or to look after the children in school holidays,
- an inability to work overtime or extra hours,
- a reduction in punctuality, and
- a reduction in work performance.

The findings of this research strongly indicate that a variety of child care problems, concerns and difficulties have a direct effect on the employment of working parents. Consequently, employers who develop policies which adequately address the needs of working parents will have much to gain.

The vast majority of parents interviewed indicated their support for the notion that employers should develop company policies which are supportive of the needs of working parents. A total of 90 percent of those interviewed believe there is a need for such policies and that they would directly benefit working parents.

"Their policies would be a great help for young working mothers. We (my husband and myself) both need to work to get the things we need. It can be really hard on us."

Parents considered that employees who received support from their employers would be more productive and cause less disruption in the workplace. Those employers who were supportive would ultimately obtain benefits too. One parent commented that

"Supportive policies will help families and in the long run it also benefits the company."

Another parent felt that companies who developed policies and methods of assisting working parents would find

"Employees wouldn't have as much time off for child care reasons ... employees would feel more secure."

The need for companies to have child care policies was also related to the issue of employment. There were parents who felt some companies did discriminate against workers with children. One parent commented that this had actually stopped her obtaining employment.

"Some employers in the past wouldn't employ me because I had children."

It is in the interest of working parents that employers in the retail industry develop policies which are sensitive to their needs. This will have the by product of allowing many employees who have

children to be more relaxed at work and consequently more productive which will clearly benefit employers.

10.5. Employers and child care centres

Parents were also asked to indicate whether they consider their employers should pay the cost of establishing a workbased child care centres. This issue is of fundamental importance for two principal reasons. Firstly the Federal Government Industry Initiative Program aims to increase to number of child care places in part through an expansion of employer sponsored child care services, including services such as child care centres. Secondly, the Government determined employers would have a key role in relation to the meeting the establishment costs of child care centres.

The attitude of respondents to this issue is outlined below.

**Table 10:     Proportion of respondents who agree employers should pay the cost needed to establish a workbased child care centre.**

Response	Number	Percent
Strongly agree	190	24.5
Agree	205	26.4
Unsure	199	25.7
Disagree	131	16.9
Strongly Disagree	50	6.5
Total	775	100

A total of 50.9 percent of respondents support this proposition and 23.4 percent disagree, a ratio of in excess of two to one. This indicates a substantial level of support amongst respondents for employers to pay the costs involved in building a child care centre.

There is no connection between the opinion of respondents and whether or not they have children aged under 13 years. Likewise opinion on this issue is not connected to the sex of respondents, their age or the age of their children, their employment status or the type of child care which they use.

During the interviews parents spoke about whether they considered employers should pay to build a child care centre. Parents who supported this idea considered it was reasonable for employers to make a financial contribution to establishing a child care service which would benefit their employees. Some indicated that the company made a lot of money out of the work of their retail employees and should give something back to them too; others said that in principle employers should pay some part of the child care costs of their employees; and yet other parents indicated that the profits generated by large companies meant that

"Large companies in particular have a responsibility to provide child care support (for their employees)."

One parent expressed her frustration that employers had not paid for child care centres to be established long ago.

"Work based child care should have occurred years ago; it would have saved a lot of families a lot of heartache."

There were however parents who opposed the idea that employers had an obligation to pay any part an employee's child care costs. One parent felt strongly that

"If parents choose to work when they have children then it is solely their responsibility what they do with their children. It has got nothing to do with the employer."

Responses made during the interviews also help explain why 25.7 percent of respondents were undecided if employers should pay the cost needed to build a child care centre.

There were also a group of parents who expressed uncertainty during the interviews. Some were unsure whether employers had any role to play with regard to the child care needs of their employees; some uncertain whether employers should be compelled to make a contribution or whether it should be left to each employer to decide what they wanted to do; others supported the idea of employers being required to assist working parents but were unsure whether paying to build a centre was the correct way to go. Another parent expressed concern that

"If there is too much pressure on employers to do things they may buck and not employ women with children."

There were parents who expressed concern that if employers were pressured against their will to provide assistance for working parents they may then discriminate against these workers. As a result, they were uncertain whether it would ultimately be in the interest of parents for employers to be forced into action.

Parents also identified benefits which would flow to those employers who assisted working parents in this way. There were parents who considered employers would reap direct benefits from paying to locate a child care centre near the work place. Some felt this would make parents feel more at ease by having their young children located nearby. They could relax more in the knowledge that they were close by if needed. As a result, these parents made comments that working parents would have less time off work, productivity would go up and there would be less disruption in the workplace.

A key to many comments was that parents would have flexibility to visit the service and respond to their child's needs if necessary. For example, if their child was feeling 'off colour' without any obvious illness, they could still go to work safe in the knowledge their child was close by; they would be able to monitor their progress throughout the day. Parents could drop in and see first hand how their child was going. One parent commented

"... you could just drop in to see how your child was going; if necessary they (the staff) could contact you at work because you would be so close."

Another commented



"... you are close by if your child is sick. Parents could still go to work if their child didn't seem well instead of having time off .. could see how they are going during the day."

The majority of parents support the notion that employers should be required to pay the cost of building workbased child care centres. This is an endorsement of the stance taken by many trade unions, that employers have an obligation to support the child care needs of their employees who are working parents. However, the fact that so few employers throughout Australia have funded the establishment of child care centres raises the relevance of the Commonwealth guidelines. The substantial capital costs involved building a child care centres could be a real disincentive for employers to become actively involved in the creation of child care services for their employees.

In the retail industry there are possibilities for action by individual employers or groups of employers. It is difficult to see how smaller employers would be able to fund the establishment of a child care centre for their employees on their own. However, it is possible for groups of employers located near each other to cooperate in a joint venture. An example of such an opportunity are the regional shopping centres, where a significant number of employer function in the same location. An indication of the number of employees in these centres is contained in the following table.

**Table 11:    Number of shops in some regional shopping centres as at June 1991.**

Centre Location	Number of Shops
Highpoint West, Maribymong	207
Northland City, Preston	180
Doncaster Shoppingtown	170
Chadstone Shopping Centre	300
Knox City, Wantima South	220
Forest Hill Chase	216
Southland, Cheltenham	173

Source:        Gill (1991, pp.1-2).

An important factor that each regional centre has a combination of the large retailers. For example, Highpoint West has Myer, Target, McEwans, Big W, Coles New World; Doncaster Shoppingtown has Myer, K-Mart, McEwans, Coles New World; and Forest Hill Chase has Harris Scarfe, Coles New World, K Mart, McEwans to name just some of the larger retailers who have stores at these locations. Each regional centres has a significant number of smaller employers as well who normally operate specialty shops.

The regional shopping centres provide a realistic opportunity for employers to collectively assist their employees who are working parents. It would however be a logistical nightmare if negotiations were to be held with each employers. However, a far more relevant mechanism for such a centre to be funded and developed by the Centre Management at each regional complex. The costs of such a service could then be passed back to employers on an organised basis.

## 10.6. Unions and child care

The trade union movement has taken a stance on the issue of the child care needs of working parents.

"... Childcare is a legitimate concern to workers and therefore to the unions representing them." (Victorian Trades Hall Council c.1992a).

Many unions have become actively involved in pursuing issues which have an impact on working parents. Unions such as the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association really have little choice but to support the needs of working women in particular because of the substantial proportion of their membership who are women. The ability of the union movement to respond to the child care needs of working parents could also have a direct impact on their ability to recruit and retain union membership. For example, working women may well be reluctant to join a union which they consider is not addressing their need to balance work and family commitments.

In addition, during the interviews parents were asked to comment on whether they considered unions had a role in regard to child care and to indicate what this role might be. When asked whether unions should be actively involved in child care issues a total of 79 percent said yes, 9 percent no and 12 percent were unsure.

A substantial majority of parents, 89 percent, also considered unions should encourage employers to build child care centres for their employees use. The same proportion, 89 percent, said that unions should encourage employers to develop policies that are supportive of the child care needs of working parents.

A number of these parents commented that most employers would not do anything to assist working parents unless unions pushed them to act. One parent said that their employer wasn't doing anything.

"Working parents need assistance and the union should try to do something."

Another parent commented

"The union should push employers because parents must work and not enough support is available."

Some parents felt that the answer was for both unions and employers to cooperate and jointly develop a strategy to meet the needs of working parents.

"It would be good if unions and employers could work together to assist workers who have children."

There are ways in which the union can be of practical assistance to workers on the job. The shop steward structure of the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association, Victorian Branch provides a mechanism of support for working parents. Most of the shop stewards who were interviewed as part of this research considered there was an important role they could play as union representatives.

"We are there on the job to explain to members exactly what is available for them."

The assistance they could offer extended to advocating of behalf of union members who had child care problems to deal with. They could assist these unions members by raising issues with management. In a practical sense they considered their role would allow them

"... to help employees in need ... give them support and understanding."

and also

"... to make sure there is no discrimination against parents with children."

The presence of shop stewards provides a focal point for working parents; someone who is willing to offer support and to assist in the resolution of any difficulties.

10.7. Parents and care at home

In discussions with parents during the interviews, some expressed a feeling that the problems they face as working parents only existed because they could not afford to remain at home to care for their children themselves. Many of these parents clearly indicated they were working for financial reasons and would happily remain out of the workforce until their children were older. As parents with young children, their first preference was clear; if they could afford it, they would remain at home looking after their children instead of working. One parent stated

"I wasn't happy leaving my child with someone else. I would much prefer not having to work and care for them myself."

For many of these parents their desire was to remain at home and care for their children while of preschool age. They wished to remain out of the workforce for this period if they could afford to do so.

"I cared for my children until they reached school age. I could afford to do it."

In the questionnaire respondents were asked whether they wished to remain at home with their children if they could afford to do so.

Table 12: Respondents desire to stay at home and care for their children if they could afford it.

Response	Number	Percent
Strongly agree	435	55.8
Agree	139	17.8
Unsure	93	11.9
Disagree	89	11.4
Strongly disagree	24	3.1
Total	780	100

Overall, 73.6 percent of respondents support this proposition. As an indication of support, the majority of respondents, 55.8 percent, strongly agree that they would remain at home to care for their children if they could afford it. The substantial number of respondents in strong agreement

indicates many would seriously consider taking the opportunity to stay at home if they could afford to do so.

There is a significant relationship between support for this opportunity and the employment status of respondents. Those who most strongly support this concept are full time employees and with casuals indicating the least support. Of those who are full time employees 63.0 percent strongly agree, and a total of 10.1 percent disagree. Of part time employees 55.2 percent strongly agree and 17.2 percent disagree, whereas for casuals, a lesser 41.5 percent strongly agree and in total 21.4 percent disagree (chi square = 0.0006<sup>126</sup>).

This difference would seem to be related to the fact that casual employees work the least number of hours and therefore have a greater amount of time which they can spend with their children. Full time employees have less time available to spend with their children and therefore it is not surprising they have a greater desire to cease work and remain to home. The lesser number of hours which casuals work would therefore seem to give them a greater opportunity to balance the commitments of work and family life.

While a substantial majority of both male and female respondents would like to stay at home and care for their children, a greater proportion of females desire the opportunity to do so: 56.6 percent of females strongly agree compared to 45.1 percent of males. Conversely, whereas a total of 13.9 percent of females disagree it is a greater 21.9 percent for males (chi square = 0.0211<sup>127</sup>).

The higher proportion of females in agreement would seem to be a reflection of the traditional male and female roles noted in Chapter 2. That is, women are likely to have a more active role in the care of their children and therefore more likely to alter their employment arrangements to undertake the role of full time homemaker. However, this needs to be treated in the context that a substantial proportion of males, over two thirds, also indicated a desire to stay at home and care for their children if they could afford it.

There is no relationship between support for this issue and the type of care which respondents use, their age, the age of their children or where they live or work.

The strong overall support by respondents for the opportunity to remain at home is consistent with the fact that the substantial majority of respondents work only for financial reasons. Consequently, should their financial needs be met, respondents indicate a desire to spend time at home with their children, with strongest support among females and full timers.

These responses support for the notion of a caregiver's allowance as discussed in Chapter 2. That is, an allowance which would be paid by the Commonwealth to provide parents with a sufficient level of income so that they can remain at home and care for their children full time.

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<sup>126</sup> Chi square value is 27.36131 and significance level is .0006.

<sup>127</sup> Chi square value is 11.53949 and significance is .0211.

This is an issue which deserves the serious attention. Existing Commonwealth funding has primarily supported the needs of working parents by expanding the number of child care places, for both preschool and school aged children, which are available for working parents. This does not provide support for parents who wish to exercise a choice about whether one parent will remain out of the workforce for a period of time in order to look after their children on a full time basis.

If the government is to respond to the needs of these working parents it will need to establish some form of homemakers allowance which provides these parents with a sufficient level of supplementary income. The challenge for the Commonwealth is to develop a policy which meets two important objectives:

- firstly to ensure there a sufficient number of places available in out of school hours and preschool child care, and
- secondly, to give financial support to working parents so they can exercise a choice about whether they work or stay home to care directly for their own children.

There is a need for both forms of support.

The following chapter concludes the research by commenting on some of the more fundamental issues raised in this research and possible responses which may be appropriate.

## Chapter 11: Conclusions

This research reveals substantial differences between male and female working parents in the retail industry. For example, women are significantly more likely to work on either a part time or casual basis and have a spouse who works full time. Males are more likely to work full time and their spouse less likely to participate in the paid workforce. Women work due to a combination of financial and social reasons and men solely for financial reasons. Males are significantly more likely to have child care provided by their spouse whereas women use either informal or formal care. A significantly greater proportion of women support the need for additional unpaid leave during school holidays, the desire to stay at home and care for their children as well as believing that their work performance suffers from child care related problems.

These differences point to the fact that there are many ways in which women who are more active in relation to many child care needs of their children. However, in other ways there are few differences such as in relation to the problem of taking time off work to care for sick children. Nonetheless, there is little doubt substantial scope exists for males in general to take a greater degree of responsibility for the ways in which parents respond to their child care needs. It is important for attention to continue to focus on a more equal sharing of family responsibilities. For example, trade unions and Governments could embark on an education campaign to encourage a far more active role by males in many family/work related issues.

This research reveals numerous ways in which the child care needs of working parents have a direct impact on both their participation in the workforce and disrupt their employment. There are numerous ways in which the working lives of parents, and women in particular, can be improved so that problems which arise through workforce participation can be minimised. Employers who remain unresponsive will continue to experience this disruption in their workplace.

It is the opinion of this researcher that there is a social obligation which extends to employers, governments and trade unions to provide support to working parents. Each can have a major influence on the working lives of parents and therefore has a responsibility to discharge this influence in a positive manner. There can be no doubt that the ratification of ILO Convention 156 will be an important factor in shaping responses to the needs of working parents. This ratification was a formal commitment by government to address the needs of workers with family responsibilities.

The trade union movement is using the ratification of this convention as a key part of its campaign to improve the working life of parents who are in the workforce (Department of Employment, Education and Training 1990, p.4). Thus, due to the pressure of both the federal government and the trade union movement, the ILO Convention 156 will prove to be a key factor in shaping the responses of employers to the needs of their employees who are working parents. Employers can be pressured to respond to the needs of their employees if there is both a moral and legislative

responsibility to do so. However, it is still important that wherever possible each of these groups aim to provide the particular support that working parents believe are necessary. There is little to be gained from attempting to impose solutions that parents themselves do not consider to be either relevant or worthwhile. This research provides a valuable guide to the particular needs and aspirations of those working in the retail industry.

Listed below are a number of possible responses identified through this research which are available to those who wish to address the needs of working parents. It is important to note that this is not intended to be an exhaustive list but rather some examples of the options which are available in response to the issues raised in this research. There is a need for reform which encompasses a broad range such options. The success of reform will in many ways depend how effectively decision makers whether they be in government, trade unions or amongst employers, listen to what working parents say about their needs.

It is very clear there is no one solution to the problems faced by working parents just as there is no one experience of being a parent. The needs of parents change and consequently there is a need for flexibility in the options which are available to working parents as they attempt to cope with the demands of employment and family responsibilities.

It would be advantageous for working parents to be involved in the development of strategies to ensure their relevance. For example, such a process would allow individual employers and their employees to discuss reform their individual workplaces and jointly seek solutions.

## **11.1. Cost of child care**

It is important for working parents to have access affordable child care. As most respondents work solely for financial reasons and are not highly paid, parents need to minimise the cost of child care in order to maximise the value of their income. The need for additional family income has a direct impact on the decisions parents make about employment.

## **11.2. Access to Information**

Working parents need accurate and up to date information about child care services which are available. At present there is no centralised data base which allows parents access to information about availability of different types of care. Parents must undertake the often time consuming tasks involved in identifying the services or types of care which are available and then contacting these services to obtain information.

A more effective system would be to develop a centralised or regionalised information services. In order to maximise the usefulness of such an information service, it would be advantageous for all child care services for children aged under 13 to be listed on a common data base. Consequently

parents could find out about preschool care, before or after school care, evening care, weekend care, school holiday care and so on all from one source.

This information could be stored on a computerised data base which would be updated and reviewed regularly. In Victoria a body such as the Office of Pre School and Child Care could take responsibility for developing and coordinating the data base and information network.

This information data base could be available to parents in different ways such as a centralised telephone service or through localised networks such as the workplace, trade union offices and any number of government departments or instrumentalities.

It may also be possible for working parents to place their name on a central waiting list which would be regularly distributed to service providers. Hence the information system would not only prove valuable for parents, but it would be a ready source of information for those involved in child care research and policy formation. It would be possible to monitor needs in particular areas and ensure necessary services are developed.

Given the financial resources involved in the establishment of such a service, it may be necessary to consider a more localised information systems. There are many ways to coordinate such an information service, for example through local government, state or federal government departments or community organisations. There is also a possible role for both employers and trade unions. This would be the less preferred option as it involves both a duplication of resources and could lack a sense of coordination.

In order to be effective any information data base would need to be frequently up dated.

In order to improve the information available to working parents, it is desirable to develop a resource handbook in conjunction with the data base recording the availability of care. A resource handbook could have two roles. Firstly, to inform working parents about the different types of child care which are available for both preschool and school aged children. It could contain information about the nature of each type of care and their relative advantages or disadvantages as seen by working parents themselves.

The differences between various types of care could be presented in the context of how they relate to the particular needs of working parents. Additionally, up to date information could be available about the hours that services open and close, costs, particularly fee arrangements, maximum or minimum hours of care, availability of care on a sessional or hourly basis, availability of short term or emergency care and so on. Information could be provided about various support services or agencies as well as phone numbers, addresses and where relevant information about sponsoring bodies or organisations.

Secondly, this handbook could be a resource to assist parents review their appropriateness of their care on an ongoing basis. Given the lack of regulations or standards to oversee many different types



of care, for example informal arrangements, out of school hours care and family day care, it could assist parents to review the quality of the care being provided.

Such a resource could help parents deal with the many issues involved in both finding suitable care and then monitoring the operation of these services.

This research indicates that there is a particular need for any such resource handbook to focus specifically on the needs of those parents who use informal child care services. It could also contain information relevant to parents who work in the retail industry and deal with the many problems or difficulties which these parents can experience.

It is also possible for a computerised information service to be developed which meets both these needs. A centralised database which stores information about the availability of services could be networked with an interactive program such as the Job and Course Explorer, coordinated by the Department of Education in Victoria. The Job and Course Explorer is a computerised information system providing individuals with data about various occupations or study options which would suit their needs and is available from various government departments, schools and so. It could be adapted to form the basis of an interactive program which would allow working parents to access information about child care services. It would also be possible to provide information about a range of issues related to the selection and review of child care arrangements.

This dual information system could be widely available on a subscription basis through the workplace, government departments, trade unions and so on. While there are substantial organisation problems to be overcome, complex computerised data information and service systems are available.

The overall effectiveness of any information service will remain linked to the relative availability of child care places. It is also difficult to link in such an information service with anything other than formal child care services.

### **11.3. Care of sick children**

One of the most substantial needs of working parents is in trying to care for their children when they are sick. There is a need to respond to these needs in two different ways. Firstly, and foremost, is to grant working parents an entitlement to additional leave which is designed to allow them to take time off work to care for sick children. It is in the interest of working parents that this be paid leave which is available as an award entitlement so that it does not depend on the consent of individual employers.

Secondly, it is possible to consider the establishment of additional centres or services which are specifically designed to care for sick children. These would need to be staffed by suitably qualified personnel and could either operate as a form of sick child care centre, or care in the child's own home.

However, many parents desire to be able to care for their own children when they are ill and so the priority is that working parents have the right to take additional leave.

There is also a great deal of scope for employers to be supportive of those parents who need to care for sick children.

## 11.4. Expansion of child care services

There is demand for additional formal services to be made available to those who work in the retail industry in Victoria. These include:

- child care centres near work or home,
- school vacation care,
- after school care and to a lesser extent before school care.

There are presently inconsistencies in the distribution of funds for these services, particularly in regard to out of school hours care services. Funding guidelines should be developed to ensure services are located according to need.

In the development of child care services to suit those in the retail industry, particular attention needs to be paid to those working parents who are employed on a less than full time basis. There is a demand for care which is more sessional in nature to cater for the substantial number of respondents who desire less than full time care each week.

There continues to be a lack of coordination in the operation of child care services that is not in the interest of working parents. Services have developed separately and rarely is care available on more of a multipurpose model. For example, few services provide care for both preschool and school aged children, thus parents are generally forced to make separate arrangements for their children or rely on making their own informal care arrangements. A review should be conducted into the feasibility of creating services which integrate care for children of all ages: that is, a genuinely multipurpose approach which provides child care for preschool children, kindergarten type programs and a full range of out of school hours care.

Any review of services also needs to take into account the extension of fee relief to those who use commercial or employer supported child care centres. Eligibility for fee relief can substantially reduce child care costs and this could have an impact on the relative supply and demand of places available in child care centres.

There is also a need to review the need for additional formal services to operate for those parents who work outside normal weekly working hours, Monday through Friday. This research indicates that at present there is not a strong demand for care at these times. A substantial number of employees work of an evening and on weekends and many are at present junior employees. Employment at these times provides some parents with the opportunity to minimise their reliance on child care services. However, this pattern of employment could change, particularly if employers decide to increase the proportion of senior sales staff who work on evenings or weekends. This could have substantial implications for working parents given the lack of formal care services which are available.

## 11.5. Impact of child care on work

It is clear from this research that there are many and varied ways in which the child care needs of working parents have an impact on their employment. There is scope for employers in the retail industry to develop a far more responsive approach to the needs of their employees who are working parents. This research indicates there are many possible benefits available to those employers who aim to minimise the pressures on working parents and these include improved work performance, productivity gains and less employee absence. In an industry such as retail where there is so much contact with the public, the attitude of shop assistants can have a direct impact on their interaction with customers.

### Care of sick children

There is substantial scope for employers to assist working parents as they attempt to care for sick children. A more responsive approach by employers could provide employees with greater flexibility. Employers could grant additional leave to their employees to cover such situations. In addition, they could allow a more flexible approach to absence to assist parents in those situations when they are unsure about how sick their children are. Parents may feel more relaxed if they know their employer will allow them to leave work to attend to a sick child. This benefits for employers would be that parents may not take the full day off work just to be safe.

A more flexible approach by employers could encourage parents to have telephone contact with their children's care arrangement in order to monitor their child's health. If necessary the employee could be given the opportunity during the day to attend to their child. In situations where there may be problems, sympathetic employers could assist working parents in such practical ways. This level of support by employers, and encouragement of access between parents and children, could well have a positive impact on the amount of absence. In situations as that outlined above, parents could go to work safe in the knowledge they can still contact their children and take time off work if needed.

Likewise in situations where there are short term emergencies, a flexible approach by employers could mean working parents only have to leave their workplace for a short period of time to resolve problems and then return. Without this cooperation by employers, they may have taken a longer period of time off work.

Employers could reap the benefit of employees feeling more of commitment to their employer because the employer cooperated at a time of need.

### Employers and an expansion of services

This survey reveals support among parents for employers to be actively involved in funding the establishment of child care services. The opportunity exists for either individual employers or groups of employers to fund new services for use by their employees. One option is for such developments to occur in conjunction with the continuing expansion of regional shopping centres.

The opportunity exists for regional shopping centres, in the light of their size, to develop a genuine multipurpose approach to the needs of working parents. A range of services could be established, due to the substantial numbers of employees, which provide:

- after school and possibly before school care,
- school holiday care,
- a child care centre, and
- an occasional care component for use by certain part time or casual employees and shoppers.

This concept would seem to be workable due to the level of demand which this research has established for each of these services within the retail industry, other than the needs of shoppers. The opportunity to provide some care for some shoppers may make the proposal more attractive to the centre management.

Child care centres located in regional shopping complexes could take advantage of a ready demand for a variety of forms of care due to the number of employees who work in these complexes and the number of shoppers who pass through their doors.

The opportunity exists to gain the cooperation of centre management rather than attempting to deal with a vast number of employers. Centre management can agree to the establishment of such a multipurpose centre and pass the cost on to employers over time in much the same way as they do with rental costs.

While a viable option is for employer involvement through regional shopping complexes, individual employers or other groups of employers can also provide direct support for an expansion of child care services which are available for their employees. These employers can support the expansion of child care services in a number of ways such as

- funding the creation of a child care centre or multipurpose centre,
- funding the creation of various out of school hours care services, for example a school vacation program,
- making donations of land, materials, cash, equipment etc, to child care services used by their employees.
- purchase places in existing preschool or out of school hours services for use by their employees, and
- subsidising child care fees paid by working parents.

However, some concern has been expressed that employers who are directly involved in the provision of child care services have an opportunity to manipulate their employees. The role of employers in the expansion of services needs to be monitored so that unscrupulous employers do not have an opportunity to exercise control over the operation of services or the employment conditions of their staff. Employers need to operate thus at an arms length from the services

themselves. Management of services is far more appropriately controlled by parents and the staff who work within the service.

### **Company policies**

A key to the effective involvement of employers in attempting to respond to the needs of their employees who are working parents is the establishments of company policies which are supportive of these needs. Such a policy would need to express a clear commitment by employers to be responsive to the difficulties faced by working parents. This in turn would bind employers to a supportive approach and attitude.

There are many practical ways that employers can provide support if they have a policy to do so. For example, during this research some parents raised concerns about the lack of communication they were able to have with either their children or their caregivers while at work. Parents should have the opportunity to communicate with their child and/or caregiver as necessary. Those companies that have a policy of not allowing personal phone calls could modify this policy. While it is understandable that employers would desire to minimise disruption, such a policy is not sympathetic to the needs of working parents.

In addition, this research has identified that there can be times when working parents in the retail industry desire to change their rosters or have increased flexibility in hours of work. Respondents identified occasions when they desire to have a change of roster and, for example, to move to or from evening and weekend work. At other times they desire to increase or reduce their hours of work or change their employment status between full time, part time or casual work.

These changes would be greatly facilitated within employers who have a policy to support such change wherever possible.

### **Career Paths**

Some working parents desire the opportunity for advancement or promotion. Employers need to ensure career opportunities exist for all employees, whether they are full time, part time or casual. In order to allow genuine opportunities other issues such as staff training need to be reviewed so that training is run at times when working parents can attend.

## **11.6. Remaining at home**

There is strong support among working parents, particularly women, to remain at home and care for their children instead of working if income support was available.

The fundamental issue is whether governments will provide financial support, such as a caregivers allowance, so that families have a right to determine whether they will both work, or if one parent will undertake the role of full time carer. The findings of this research are that the child care needs of parents change according to the age of their children. Many respondents desire the opportunity to

care for their children on a full time basis while they are young; for some this is until their children reach school age, and for others it is when their children are able to take some responsibility.

## 11.7. Quality of child care

Respondents, whether seeking care for preschool or school aged children, consider both the need for a safe environment and availability of trustworthy caregivers as essentially prerequisites for all forms of care. Consequently any expansion of child care services for working parents would need to address these two issues so that working parents could have confidence in the level of quality of care provided.

There are many gaps in the regulations which govern the operation of formal child care services in Victoria. For example, existing regulations are not applicable for out of school hours care, they do not apply to family day care, and they fail to deal with developmental and educational issues relevant to children in care.

The need for action in regard to out of school hours care regulations seems to have been acknowledged by Government just as this research is being finalised. The Council of Community Services Ministers has developed draft national standards which are to apply to outside of school hours care and a national industry consultation process will soon commence with submissions due by June 30, 1994 (National Secretariat to the Council of Community Services Ministers 1994, p.4). The establishment of regulations for out of school hours care will be an important development in the desire to ensure quality of these services.

There are no common guidelines to control the operation of family day care. Each program determines issues such as recruitment and selection of caregivers, training and support for caregivers, safety standards which will apply, and programs or activities to be conducted. Each of these issues can have a direct impact on the quality of care, however there are no requirements for sponsoring bodies to seriously address such concerns. If the Government is reluctant to legislate, a Code of Practice could be established. This would at least give a practical guide to working parents about the minimum expected standards in the provision of homebased child care such as family day care.

The quality of child care services will have a direct impact on their viability. Parents have shown a reluctance to continue with care arrangements they are unhappy with. Issues related to quality control must be given serious consideration.

The existence of regulations gives parents some indication as to the standard of care which should be provided for their children. It is reasonable that all child care services be required to meet certain standards in relation to issues such as staffing levels, materials, health and safety, buildings and structures, play equipment.

It is also reasonable that working parents have access to care arrangements which provide quality care and address issues such as:

- the need for children to feel loved and cared for,
- programs which cater for them as individuals,
- services which offer a developed program rather than simply mind or occupy the children in any activity,
- positive interaction between staff and children, and
- effective communication between staff and parents.

The developmental needs of children needs to be addressed. Children are entitled to receive quality care whether they are in a child care centre, a family day care program, a school holiday program, or attending a before or after school program. Any regulations which are developed also need to address issues of enforcement and control.

## **11.8. Government responses**

An issue which deserves the attention of government is whether families will be able to exercise a right for one of them to care for their children full time. There is strong support among working parents for the opportunity to exercise such a choice.

This would necessitate a change in policy to that government funding was not concentrated mainly on the creation of additional child care places. Additional income in the form of some caregiver allowance would need to be established. However, a key to whether parents opt to take up such an opportunity will be directly related to the value of this allowance. It would need to be high enough to allow these parents to maintain an adequate level of income.

## **11.9. Unions and child care**

It is important that the rights of working parents are protected so their employment is not in jeopardy.

The findings of this questionnaire are a challenge to the union movement, particularly in relation to the lack of supportive action within the retail industry. The process of pursuing the child care needs of working parents as part of enterprise bargaining is in need of review primarily because the impact of this strategy on workers in general, and in the retail industry in particular, has been minimal.

There are fundamental questions about the capacity of enterprise bargaining to make an impact on those industries and occupations where it is most needed. In industries such as retail where there is a high proportion of females, child care issues will be more prominent. However there is no indication as yet that the retail industry is moving to embrace the opportunity for enterprise



agreements which contain provisions to benefit working parents. This research clearly shows that there are many child care related issues which affect working parents, and women in particular, but they have not been seriously addressed in the process of enterprise negotiations in the retail industry in Victoria.

The lack of attention given to the needs of working parents by both retail employers and the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association, Victorian Branch leaves working parents to address their problems with minimal support. In the light of this situation working parents in the retail industry can take little encouragement from the fact that the union movement seems committed to the process of enterprise bargaining. The risk is that it will be a long time before some industries or occupations, including retail, enjoy any benefits specifically designed to support working parents.

Consider for example the issue of care for sick children. Unfortunately most unions have not negotiated family leave provisions and only a small number of workers have the benefit of family leave in their enterprise agreements. The decision by the Australian Council of Trade Unions to run an award test case has the capacity to win benefits for a substantial number of workers as an award entitlement, rather than relying on change through negotiations on an enterprise basis.

It is therefore important for the union movement to focus attention on educating both employers and the workforce as to the concrete gains which can be derived from responding to the needs of working parents. If employers perceive there are benefits to their employees, and the company, they may be willing to develop a more responsive attitude.

### **Future directions**

Alberici (1994) notes that there are now 150 employers throughout Australia who fund services to care for their employees' children. However, at the conclusion of writing this thesis there was still no sign of any involvement by retail employers in Victoria in the provision of child care services for their employees who are working parents.

An important industrial development is a decision by the federal Industrial Relations Commission to grant a group of nurses the right to refuse to change their shifts if it interferes with their child care arrangements. Green (1994, p.1) reports that this decision is part of new industrial laws introduced by the federal Labor Government which take effect from 30 March, 1994. The broad thrust of these new laws is to set in place a national industrial framework which contains provisions to encourage workers and employers to establish their own enterprise agreements. A key aspect of these new laws, as far as working parents are concerned, is the necessity for the Industrial Relations Commission to take into account in its decisions the International Labor Organisation Convention 156 covering family responsibilities.

This has the capacity to speed workplace reform which would seriously address the many issues, concerns and problems experienced by working parents. However it will be equally important to

determine whether the process for change has to be solely through enterprise negotiations. It would seem such a process may continue to disadvantage those who work in industries such as retail and that the greatest hope of change is for award modifications to be imposed centrally through the Industrial Relations Commission.

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# Appendices

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# **Appendix 1: Developments in the USA and UK.**

## **Summary of developments in the United States of America.**

Australia was not the only country to look to employers for an increased role in the expansion of child care places for working parents.

In relation to day care services, Berns (1989, p.166) noted that the first day nursery in the United States of America opened in 1838 to care for children of seamen. During the 20th century most child care was custodial in nature and little government funding went into the provision of child care services for working parents. This set the basis of government action in relation to family support. Primarily the role of government was to provide welfare or emergency support to those in need (Majid 1989, pp.100-1).

After the second world war the number of women in the United States of America workforce grew rapidly. This resulted in an insufficient number of child care services to cater for the children of these parents. Most of the child care used by working parents was privately organised and parents were responsible for the cost of care (Phillips 1991, pp.163-4).

Child care gained prominence in the United States of America when the Head Start programs were funded by the government under the Economic Opportunities Act 1964. They were an initiative aimed at meeting the needs of underprivileged children (Picton & Boss 1981, p.62). Head Start was based on the belief that an early childhood education program could have a positive effect on those children considered disadvantaged or who had special needs. It was hoped that these children would then succeed in school because of this early intervention (Austin 1976, p.340 ).

Other than the Head Start Programs, there was little direct government financial support for child care services necessary for working parents. By the early 1980's day care centres catered for a small proportion of the care for the children of working parents. By the late 1980's there was a small increase in the proportion of care provided in day care centres and kindergartens (Hofferth & Phillips 1987, p.562)

Essentially the government role in provision of child care, and specifically the small role in the funding of services was at least in part due to the

"...traditional views of child rearing in this country have delegated the primary responsibility of child care to the mother." (Berns 1989, p.167).

The responsibility for children remained directly with parents irrespective of their employment status or needs. Under this philosophical approach, the government did not have any real role to play in funding and establishing child care services for working parents.

"The most fundamental values that have influenced day care policy in the United States concern prevailing views of the ideal family. This ideal family is self reliant, nurturing and economically self-contained. Privacy and domesticity have prevailed over any



sense of collective responsibility for children, and the younger the child, the stronger these views. Within the family, it is the mother who is cherished as the nurturer and socialiser of children." (Phillips 1991, p.176).

The financial support by the Government for working parents was primarily limited to the 1954 tax law which determined that

"...day care expenses are an ordinary and necessary business expense for working women." (Phillips 1991, p.172).

The Australian government was more active in the 1980's in its direct support for the expansion of services for working parents. However, as in Australia, attention in the United States focussed on what employers could do to assist with the problems faced by working parents. A small number of employers did provide direct support to their employees who were parents. Unfortunately,

"Despite tremendous hope that employers would assume increasing responsibility ... in the 1980's, only about 1800 employers out of a total of 6 million businesses in the United States now provide child care assistance." (Hofferth & Phillips 1987, p.564).

Employer involvement was concentrated mostly in hospitals and banks, and was limited primarily to helping families find care for their children in existing services.

".... employers would not appear to be a major source of expanded child care." (Hofferth & Phillips 1987, p.564).

## **Summary of developments in the United Kingdom**

Other overseas countries also experienced the need for additional child care, but had limited success in obtaining the involvement of employers in child care provision. For example in the United Kingdom, employers did not respond in any real way to the child care needs of workers with children. The support of the government in the United Kingdom fell short of that provided by the Federal Labor government in Australia.

In the United Kingdom since World War 2,

"Most employed mothers have had part-time jobs with care provided mainly by fathers and relatives; for the rest, private child minders have been the main form of care." (Moss 1991, p.121).

There was not a substantial governmental role in the provision of child care services for working parents because of the avoidance by successive governments of any role in the provision of child care services for working parents. The role of government was essentially restricted to support for families with welfare or special needs. In comparison to the increasing role of the Australian government in support for working parents, the government in the United Kingdom has been very slow to act. For example, parental leave is restricted to maternity leave totalling 11 weeks before and 29 weeks after the child's birth.

This left the onus for the creation of child care services as essentially a private responsibility. Where they do exist, nurseries are generally provided by local authorities and welfare agencies. However,

"Most day care for children under 3 is private, with no public funding involved ... (provided by) relatives and particularly maternal grandmothers..." (Moss 1991, p.122).

The majority of care was provided in the homes of the parents and most of the child care arrangements were privately arranged. As a result the

"Public funding of day care is for very specific and limited purposes ...where children are considered to be in need because of some developmental problem or because of the social or economic circumstances of their families. Public day care therefore is only available where children or parents claimed to be not coping or children are thought to be at risk..." (Moss 1991, p.122).

In late 1980's and early 1990's the situation is beginning to show some signs of change, particularly due to the increase of married women in the workforce. Yet government policy remained unaltered. Some employers showed signs of responding to the needs of working parents and increased the availability to flexible working patterns to suit the needs of women; expanded the availability of part-time work; and considered the introduction of voucher systems where subsidies could be used by working parents at the child care service of their choice (Moss 1991, p.137-9).

Despite these developments a number of important social issues have not been addressed.

"Broader issues of child welfare, equality of access to good quality services for women and children, how day care services relate to other services for children and families and the relationship between parenthood and employment have been ignored." (Moss 1991, p.139).

The only real government assistance regarding child care services for working parents came in the 1990 budget where some encouragement was offered to employers to become involved in the issue. The government itself did not intend to take any substantial active role in the funding or operation of services. The assistance to employers may be of some benefit and at this stage around 120 employers had a child care centre. In the 1990 decision the government offered

"... encouragement to employers by removing the liability for fringe benefits tax on employer contributions to child care, previously paid by the employee at a rate of 25 percent. This, however, is the only government assistance provided in relation to employer sponsored child care." (O'Donohue 1990, p.11).

Whilst this was a step forward, the majority of child care for working parents was arranged privately using some form of personal arrangement with nannies, au pairs relatives and so on (Department of Employment, Education and Training 1990, p.40).

Relatives cared for over two thirds of preschool children of mothers in the workforce. This was at least in part a response to the attitude of the government in the United Kingdom which perceived

"...child care as the responsibility of the individual." (Ochiltree 1991a, p.40).

Despite the expansion of preschool services in the United Kingdom since the Second World War, they did not provide a realistic option for working parents as

"Many services are unavailable for the children of working mothers because hours are unsuitable .... The limited number of free or low cost places ... are for children who are at risk or from disadvantaged families." (Ochiltree 1991a, p.41).

The only area of service growth for working parents was in the area of private or commercial child care.

"The number of private nurseries in the United Kingdom has doubled over the last two years as the demand for women in the labour market has grown and the Government has encouraged the business and private sector to provide child care services." (Ochiltree 1991b, p.43).

In regard to overseas experiences, the governments of both the United Kingdom and the United States have left child care provision for working parents essentially as the responsibility of the parents themselves.

"In the United States and United Kingdom most children receive private day care, mostly from relatives and child minders, with the remainder coming from 'nannies' and private nurseries. ...In both the UK and USA, children and their care are assumed to be private issues; public intervention in the provision of subsidising of services requires a powerful justification, and is limited very largely to families who are poor, inadequate or deviant." (Melhuish and Moss 1991, p.199).

# Appendix 2: Wages for shop assistants.

**Table 1:** Changes in Award Wages under the Shops Awards for the retail industry in Victoria.

As at December	Dollars
1980	180.10
1981	204.00
1982	225.00
1983	241.80
1984	251.70
1985	268.00
1986	274.20
1987	284.20
1988	303.90
1989	340.50
1990	362.30

Note: a) The four main awards in the retail industry have the same rates of pay for shop assistants. These are the General Shops Award, Clothing and Footwear; Electrical, Furniture and Hardware; and the Food Shops Award.

Source: Industrial Relations Commission of Victoria 1990, *General Shops Award*, No. 2 of 1990, Case no. 90/0548.

**Table 2:** Changes in Hotels, Resorts and Hospitality Award for classification of Snack bar attendant; food and beverage attendant; waiter or waitress.

As at December	Dollars
1980	164.90
1981	189.20
1982	212.30
1983	221.40
1984	230.50
1985	245.50
1986	251.10
1987	261.10
1988	286.10
1989	308.60
1990	321.10

Source: Industrial Relations Commission of Victoria 1990, *Hotels, Resorts and Hospitality Industry Award*.

# Appendix 3: Phone polls of preschool services.

Table 1: Phone poll of 58 preschool child care services contacted were:

Government Funded Centres	Phone	Private Centres	Phone	Family Day Care	Phone
Kalparin, Berwick	707 4660	Berwick Creche, Narre Warren	704 6497	Brighton	591 8613
Box Hill Central	890 4934	Barkly, Box Hill	890 1838	Chelsea	772 1422
Warrandyte Centre, Doncaster	844 1205	Altona North	314 8913	Dandenong	793 3499
Heidelberg	459 8998	Argyle, Kew	817 3467	Greensborough	435 5888
Knox	763 6104	Learn and Play, Doncaster East	842 3196	Heidelberg	459 2359
Melton Central	743 8770	Frankston North	786 1894	Kew	810 2444
Mentone	584 5169	Heidelberg Children's, Ivanhoe	497 1204	Hoppers Crossing	749 3911
Northcote	489 2949	Knox, Wantima South	801 1343	Eltham	431 1204
Nunawading	877 5364	Malvern	509 0739	Malvern	824 8212
Oakleigh	547 8747	Melton	743 3112	Upwey	212 8222
St Kilda	536 1495	Mentone	584 2768	Springvale	562 3500
Springvale	547 6536	Nunawading North	878 8510	Waverley	566 0299
St Albans	364 0220	Oakleigh	568 1240	Cranbourne	96 1000
Mordialloc	580 0781	Ringwood	870 1700	Berwick	705 5200
Upper Ferntree Gully	758 0357	Springvale	548 4197	Box Hill	895 9611
Hoppers Crossing	749 5612	Ultra, Mordialloc	580 7599	Broadmeadows	301 3200
Pascoe Vale	354 9137	Rosslake, St Albans	366 3718	Caulfield	524 3333
Sunbury	744 3796	Upwey	754 2338	Footscray	688 0200
		Keysborough	798 4633	Moorabbin	556 4200
		Thornbury	484 2440	Hawthorn	810 2444

Notes: a) Inquiries covered hours of operation, cost of services, and whether services opened on evenings or weekends.  
b) Phone poll conducted on May 24, 1991.

Table 2: Phone poll two of 14 services.

Government Funded Centres	Phone	Private Centres	Phone
Box Hill	890 4934	Mentone	584 2768
Upper Ferntree Gully	758 0357	Nunawading	878 8510
Oakleigh	547 8747	Springvale	548 4197
Hoppers Crossing	749 5612	St. Albans	366 3718
Heidelberg	459 8998	Oakleigh	568 1240
Warrandyte	844 1205	Berwick	704 6497
Sunbury	744 3796	Doncaster	842 3196

Notes: Inquiries covered care availability for full time and non full time workers, on either a full day or sessional basis, and the relative costs of this care.

# Appendix 4: Membership in principal retail union.

Table 1: Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association, Victorian Branch membership for Coles New World and Myer as at 1/3/92.

Age Group	Full-time	Part-time	Casual	Total	Percent of Members this age
Myer					
15 to 19 years					
Female	26	20	365	411	8
Male	14	8	156	178	4
Total	40	28	521	589	12
20 to 49 years					
Female	633	1126	1281	3040	61
Male	341	88	431	870	17
Total	974	1214	1712	3900	78
50+ years	146	275	91	512	10
Total Myer	1160	1517	2324	5001	100
Coles New World					
15 to 19 years					
Female	191	103	2646	2940	33
Male	117	59	1490	1666	18
Total	308	162	4136	4606	51
20 to 49 years					
Female	811	546	1581	2938	32
Male	414	67	755	1236	14
Total	1225	613	2336	4174	46
50+ years	57	112	139	308	3
Total Coles New World	1590	887	6611	9088	100

Source: Membership records of the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association, Victorian Branch as at 1/3/92.

**Table 2:      Membership of the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association, Victorian Branch as at 1/3/1992.**

Age group	Full-time	Part-Time	Total	Percent
<b>15 to 19 years</b>				
Female	1098	13085	14183	27.4
Male	662	6930	7592	14.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>1760</b>	<b>20015</b>	<b>21775</b>	<b>42.0</b>
<b>20 to 24 years</b>				
Female	2914	5537	8451	16.3
Male	1544	2836	4380	8.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>4458</b>	<b>8373</b>	<b>12831</b>	<b>24.8</b>
<b>25 to 29 years</b>				
Female	1254	1573	2827	5.5
Male	940	636	1576	3.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>2194</b>	<b>2209</b>	<b>4403</b>	<b>8.5</b>
<b>30 to 34 years</b>				
Female	530	1596	2126	4.1
Male	585	318	903	1.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>1115</b>	<b>1914</b>	<b>3029</b>	<b>5.8</b>
<b>35 to 39 years</b>				
Female	437	1684	2121	4.1
Male	399	175	575	1.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>836</b>	<b>1859</b>	<b>2695</b>	<b>5.2</b>
<b>40 to 44 years</b>				
Female	568	1748	2316	4.4
Male	301	132	433	0.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>869</b>	<b>1880</b>	<b>2749</b>	<b>5.3</b>
<b>45 to 49 years</b>				
Female	432	1415	1847	3.6
Male	208	70	278	0.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>640</b>	<b>1485</b>	<b>2125</b>	<b>4.1</b>
<b>50+ years</b>				
Female	440	1228	1668	3.2
Male	413	129	542	1.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>853</b>	<b>1357</b>	<b>2210</b>	<b>4.3</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>12725</b>	<b>39092</b>	<b>51817</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Victorian Shop Distributive and Allied Employees Association membership as at 1/3/92

# Appendix 5: Employment growth.

Table 1: Summary of employment changes between December 1980 and December 1990 by sex.

Employment and Sex	1980 (000's)	1990 (000's)	Change 1980-90 Percent
<b>Males</b>			
Full time	3860.6	4263.2	10.4
Part time	219.8	372.4	69.4
<b>Total Males</b>	<b>4080.4</b>	<b>4635.6</b>	<b>13.6</b>
<b>Married Females</b>			
Full time	788.9	1081.5	37.1
Part time	614.0	914.7	49.0
<b>Total Married Females</b>	<b>1402.9</b>	<b>1996.2</b>	<b>42.3</b>
<b>All Females</b>			
Full time	1507.8	1991.1	32.1
Part time	801.3	1314.5	64.0
<b>Total All Females</b>	<b>2309.1</b>	<b>3305.5</b>	<b>43.2</b>
<b>All Persons</b>			
Full time	5368.4	6254.3	16.5
Part time	1021.1	1686.8	65.2
<b>Total All Persons</b>	<b>6389.5</b>	<b>7941.2</b>	<b>24.3</b>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 1980 to 1990, *The Labour Force* 6203.0, December 1980 to December 1990, ABS, Canberra.



**Table 2: Comparison of workforce by age; Percent change from December 1980 to December 1990.**

Employment Category and age groupings In Years	1980 Number 000's	1980 Percent of total workforce	1990 Number 000's	1990 Percent of total workforce	Change: 1980-90 Percent
<b>Males</b>					
15 to 24	934.2	14.6	916	11.5	(1.9)
25 to 34	1095.4	17.1	1221	15.4	11.5
35 to 44	857.8	13.4	1173.3	14.8	36.8
45 to 54	688	10.8	814.1	10.3	18.3
55 to 64	434.9	6.8	434.3	5.5	(0.1)
65 and over	70.2	1.1	76.9	1.0	9.5
<b>Total Males</b>	<b>4080.4</b>	<b>63.9</b>	<b>4635.6</b>	<b>58.4</b>	<b>13.6</b>
<b>Married Females</b>					
15 to 24	155.2	2.4	140.2	1.8	(9.7)
25 to 34	433.3	6.8	567.5	7.1	31.0
35 to 44	420.4	6.6	713.5	9.0	69.7
45 to 54	280.5	4.4	428.6	5.4	52.8
55 to 64	104	1.6	129.5	1.6	24.5
65 and over	9.5	0.2	17	0.2	77.1
<b>Total Married Females</b>	<b>1402.9</b>	<b>21.9</b>	<b>1996.2</b>	<b>25.1</b>	<b>42.3</b>
<b>Non Married Females</b>					
15 to 24	577.4	9.0	684.7	8.6	18.6
25 to 34	149.8	2.3	289.3	3.6	93.1
35 to 44	68.8	1.1	169.9	2.1	146.9
45 to 54	58.8	0.9	102.0	1.3	73.5
55 to 64	40.9	0.6	52.6	0.7	28.6
65 and over	10.3	0.2	10.8	0.1	4.9
<b>Total Non Married Females</b>	<b>906.2</b>	<b>14.2</b>	<b>1309.3</b>	<b>16.5</b>	<b>44.5</b>
<b>Total All Persons</b>	<b>6389.5</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>7941.2</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>24.3</b>

Note: Figures in brackets are negative growth

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 1980 to 1990, *The Labour Force*, December 1980 to December 1990, Cat. no. 6203.0, ABS, Canberra.

**Table 3:      Change in employment of married females by employment status from December 1980 to December 1990.**

<b>Employment Category By Age In Years</b>	<b>Full Time Percent</b>	<b>Part Time Percent</b>
15 to 24	(9.4)	(3.7)
25 to 34	31.0	30.8
35 to 44	63.7	76.2
45 to 54	53.9	51.5
55 to 64	8.5	42.7
65 and over	n/a	52.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>37.1</b>	<b>49.0</b>

Note:            n/a denotes the percentage is not applicable as rate was not recorded in 1980 for this age group.

Source:        Australian Bureau of Statistics, *The Labour Force*, December 1980 to December 1990, Cat. no. 6203.0, ABS, Canberra.

# Appendix 6: Findings from interviews.

Table 1:      Employer location.

Employer location	Number	Percent
Melbourne, City	9	12
Highpoint	14	19
Geelong	5	7
Camberwell	8	10
Northland	6	8
Southland	8	10
Chadstone	10	13
Frankston Area	7	9
Gladstone Park/Sunbury	9	12
Total	76	100

Table 2:      Employers of those interviewed.

Employer	Number	Percent
Myer	26	34
Coles New World	5	7
Franklins	8	11
Target	13	17
Katies	1	1
K. Mart	2	3
McEwans	2	3
Safeway	10	13
Priceline	2	3
Big W	4	5
Venture	1	1
Tresurway	1	1
Tuckerbag	1	1
Total	76	100

Table 3:      Family structure.

Number of families	76
Number of children	134

Table 4:      Ages of children.

Age Group	Number	Percent
Up to 2 years	16	12
3 to 5 years	21	16
6 to 12 years	69	52
13 to 16 years	18	13
17 years and over	10	7
Totals	134	100

**Table 5:      Employment status.**

Employment Status	Number	Percent
Full-time	32	45
Part-time	29	40
Casual	11	15
Totals	72	100

**Table 6:      Number of hours worked by part-timers and casuals.**

Hours Worked	Number	Percent
9 hours or less	3	7
10 to 19 hours	10	25
20 to 29 hours	25	63
30 hours plus	2	5
Totals	40	100

**Table 7:      Notification of roster changes; how much notice interviewees received of their hours of work.**

Notice of change	Percent
Hours remain the same	98
One weeks notice	2
Total	100

**Table 8:      When parents work.**

Time	Number	Percent
Monday to Friday, School Hours No Nights	27	35
Monday to Friday, Any Hours No Nights	27	35
Monday to Friday, Any Hours Plus Nights	1	1
Monday to Friday, Nights Only	2	3
Monday to Saturday, School Hours No Nights	4	6
Monday to Saturday, Any Hours No Nights	2	3
Monday to Saturday, Any Hours Plus Nights	1	1
Two Week Roster (full-timers)	12	16
Total	76	100

**Table 9:      Age of respondents.**

Age Group	Number	Percent
Under 29 Years	17	22
30 - 39 Years	49	65
40 - 49 Years	10	13
Total	76	100

**Table 10: Marital status.**

Status	Number	Percent
Single, Never Married	6	8
Married	62	82
Defacto	1	1
Separated, Divorced	7	9
Total	76	100

**Table 11: Sex of parents interviewed.**

Sex	Number	Percent
Female	75	99
Male	1	1
Total	76	100

**Table 12: Child Care Arrangements.**

Care Arrangement	Monday to Friday Percent	After School or Saturday Percent	School Holidays Percent	Total Percent
Spouse, Partner, Defacto	9	21	8	14
Child Care Centre	23			4
Family Day Care	12		1	2
Friend/Neighbour		9	4	5
Relative	38	21	27	26
Privately Employed Carer	6	12	1	7
Child Cares For Self		21	4	11
Parent Cares At Work		3	1	2
Older Brother/Sister		8	1	4
Preschool	9			2
School Holiday Program			13	5
After School Program		3		2
Parent Takes Leave			1	1
Multiple Arrangements	3	2	39	15
Total	100	100	100	100

**Table 13: How happy parents were with their care arrangements.**

Level of happiness	Percent
Happy/Very Happy	81
Unhappy	19
Total	100

**Table 14: Comparison of form of child care with the level of happiness.**

Arrangement	Happy or Very Happy Percent	Unhappy Percent	Total Percent
Spouse, Partner	78	22	100
Child Care Centre	100	0	100
Family Day Care	100	0	100
Friend/Neighbour Relation	73	27	100
Privately Employed Carer	70	30	100
Child Cares For Self	93	7	100
Parent Cares At Work	58	42	100
Older Brother/Sister	40	60	100
Preschool	27	73	100
School Holiday Program	100	0	100
Parent Takes Leave	100	0	100
Multiple Arrangements	92	8	100

**Table 15: Reasons for level of parent happiness.**

Reason	Number	Percent
Contact With Other Children	2	2
Good For Child's Development	4	3
Child Likes Care, Is Happy	35	27
Safety Levels Are Good	7	5
Child Well Cared For	17	13
Guilty That Parent Is Not There	18	14
Child Is Used To Routine	7	5
Homely Environment	7	5
Cost Is Low	2	2
Leaving Child Is Ok	4	3
Child Is Unhappy	5	4
Different Rules From Parent And Carer	5	4
Child Older - More Accepting	4	3
Concerned About Safety	4	3
Cost Is High	4	3
Organised Activities Are Good	1	1
Prefer More Permanent Arrangement	2	2
Older Child Is Not Happy Being Carer	1	1
Total	129	100

**Table 16:     Reasons for selection of child care arrangements.**

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Care In A Home Environment	23	12
Good Quality Food	2	1
Cost Is Low	31	16
Chose A Carer I Know And Trust	38	20
Easy To Organise	12	6
Safe Environment	3	1
Contact With Older Children	2	1
Child Old Enough To Care For Self	6	3
Personal Attention For Child	7	4
Organised Activities	1	1
Guaranteed Care Arrangement	6	3
Child Needs Met	3	1
Good Equipment And Materials	1	1
Little Choice or Few Options Available	28	15
Best Option For Parents or Suits Needs	5	3
Didn't Like Other Options	11	6
Near Work	1	1
Educational Component In Care	3	1
Disabled Child	2	1
Parents Should Care For Their Child	5	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 17:     Affect of child care arrangements on parents**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No Negative Effects	19	19
Under Stress Or Pressure	7	7
Want More Time With Children	5	5
Feel Guilty if Not With Child	20	21
Rush Getting Organised	3	3
Travel Pressures	1	1
Parent Ok If Child Ok	16	16
Hard At First, Then Became Ok	4	4
Concerned About Child Safety	2	2
Good To Get Out Of House	3	3
Good Child Is Close To Work	1	1
Parent Misses Child's Development	11	11
Prefer To Change Care	1	1
If Child Is Unhappy; Parent Unhappy	2	2
Work Must Come First	2	2
Feel Guilty Taking Carer's Time	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 18: Parental view on the happiness of each of their children in the care arrangements.**

Response	Number	Percent
Very Happy	47	39
Happy	39	32
Unhappy	34	28
Very Unhappy	1	1
Total	121	100

**Table 19: Reasons for the level of child happiness with care arrangements.**

Response	Number	Percent
Child Wants Mum Home	25	22
Child Likes Care	30	27
Child Feels Insecure	3	3
Unhappy With Care By Older Child	5	4
Care Benefits Child	8	7
Child Misses Out On Activities	7	6
Child Happy Overall, Sometimes Not	19	17
Child Wants More Parent Attention	6	6
Child Happy Mum Or Dad Are Carers	9	8
Total	112	100

**Table 20: Parental response if child is unhappy in care arrangements.**

Response	Number	Percent
Fix At Centre	2	3
Find Best Care Option	38	47
Parents Compromise Their Work	14	17
Parents Give Up Work	26	32
Unsure	1	1
Total	81	100

**Table 21: Needs of children in a care situation.**

Response	Number	Percent
Child Feels Secure	43	20
Child Needs Personal Attention	68	32
Need For Trained Staff	12	6
Stability In Care Arrangement	5	2
Set And Organised Activities	24	12
Educational Activities	25	12
Quality Physical Environment	23	11
Outside Play Area	4	2
Company Of Other Children	7	3
Total	211	100



**Table 22: Was it hard for parents to leave their children at the actual arrangement and then go to work?**

Response	Number	Percent
Yes	33	51
No	18	28
First Hard Then Ok	10	15
Ok For One Child, Hard The Other	2	3
Child Older More Accepting	2	3
Total	65	100

**Table 23: Can parents prepare for the separation from placing their children in care?**

Response	Number	Percent
Yes	33	66
No	14	28
Unsure	3	6
Total	50	100

**Table 24: How can parents prepare for the separation?**

Response	Number	Percent
Child To Know Carer/Environment	7	15
Best Use Of Parent Time With Child	2	4
Gradual Separation	21	44
Child To Get To Know Carer	4	8
Parent/Child Talk About Care	13	27
Will Always Be Hard	1	2
Total	48	100

**Table 25: Problems from placing children in care arrangements.**

Response	Number	Percent
No Problems	11	7
High Cost Of Care	4	2
Pressure/Stress	11	7
Sick Child Care	45	27
School Changes	6	3
Organisational Problems	5	3
Transport	1	1
Punctuality At Work	1	1
Personal Guilt	11	7
Unsatisfactory Arrangement	14	8
Family Life Pressured	24	15
Different Rules Carer/Parent	7	4
School Holidays Hard	11	7
Pressure On Kids	2	1
No Flexibility In Care	3	2
Access To Care	3	2
More Sickness Due To Care	2	1
Break For Carer	2	1
Need Assistance At Home	2	1
Total	165	100

**Table 26: Can child care problems affect parents at work?**

Response	Number	Percent
Yes	72	95
No	3	4
Unsure	1	1
Total	76	100

**Table 27: Specific affects which child care problems can have on employment.**

Response	Number	Percent
Arrive Late, Leave Early	1	1
Stress At Work, and Lesser Performance	52	52
Interruptions To Work	5	5
Stress At Work, but Performance Ok	2	2
Time Off Work	21	21
Leave, Absence In School Holidays	4	4
Employer Understanding	1	1
Worker Understanding	14	14
Total	100	100

**Table 28: What are your main reasons for working?**

Response	Number	Percent
Money, Survival	96	69
Social Contact	29	21
Pocket Money	1	1
Handicapped Child	1	1
Career Reasons	9	7
Break From Kids	2	1
Total	138	100

**Table 29: Has the need to provided care for your children limited your workforce involvement?**

Response	Number	Percent
Yes	41	57
No	30	42
Yes For My Spouse	1	1
Total	72	100

**Table 30: How has your workforce participation been limited?**

Response	Number	Percent
Can't Get A Promotion	2	3
Can't Attend Training Courses	3	5
Would Work Longer Hours	17	15
Altered Hours, more with child	25	37
Delayed Workforce Entry	14	21
Discriminated Against By Employers	1	1
Hard To Change Career	4	6
Disrupts Work; Time Off	1	1
Spouse Altered Work Hours	1	1
Total	68	100

**Table 31:     What is your opinion about workbased child care? ( includes shop stewards)**

Response	Number	Percent
Good Idea	89	92
Not A Good Idea	5	5
Unsure	3	3
Total	97	100

**Table 32:     Where do you consider child care services should be located for working parents?**

Response	Number	Percent
At Or Near The Workplace	41	57
At Or Near The Home	5	7
Either Of These	24	33
Neither Of These	2	3
Total	72	100

**Table 33:     Reasons for choosing where child care services for working parents should be located.**

Response	Number	Percent
Near Workplace because:		
Lower Cost, Less Time In Centre	4	3
Disrupts Work Too Close	2	1
With Child Longer, Travel Together	13	8
Psychologically Closer to Child	9	6
Transport Arrangements Easier	48	31
Easier Access Parent-Child	46	30
Harder Near Home	1	1
Near Home because:		
Child Happier In Local Area	14	9
Less Disruption For Child; Less Travel	17	11
Total	154	100

**Table 34:     Would employers benefit from locating child care services near the workplace?**

Response	Number	Percent
Yes	57	84
No	9	13
Unsure	2	3
Total	68	100

**Table 35:     Benefits for employers having child care services located near the workplace?**

Response	Number	Percent
Available For Overtime If Asked	1	1
Less Employee Time Off Work	21	28
Less Pressure, Better Work	24	32
Fewer Interruptions; Less Phone Calls	4	5
Less Time Out Of Workforce	7	10
Better Punctuality And Timekeeping	6	8
Less Disruption In School Holidays	3	4
Employers Have Selection Of New Employees	9	12
Total	75	100

**Table 36:     Should parents be involved in the running of child care services attended by their children?**

Response	Number	Percent
Yes	68	91
No	4	5
Unsure	3	5
Total	75	100

**Table 37:     How should parents be involved in the running of child care services attended by their children?**

Response	Number	Percent
Volunteer Work At The Centre	17	25
Fund Raising Activities	4	6
Kept Informed About What's Going On	13	19
A Say In Management And Decisions	31	45
Little Role As Up To Staff To Run It	3	4
No Role At All	1	1
Total	69	100

**Table 38:     Should parents pay a significant part of the cost to build child care services?**

Response	Number	Percent
Agree	10	12
Disagree	58	68
Unsure	15	18
Some Cost	2	2
Total	85	100

Note:           Includes responses of shop stewards.

**Table 39:     Should parents pay fees as part of the running costs of child care services?**

Response	Number	Percent
Agree	79	94
Disagree	3	4
Unsure	2	2
Total	84	100

Note:           Includes responses of shop stewards.

**Table 40:     Should parents have the main say in how workbased child care services are run?**

Response	Number	Percent
Agree	48	55
Disagree	14	16
Unsure	3	4
Some Say	22	25
Total	87	100

**Table 41: Should employers provide some form of child care support for their employees?**

Response	Number	Percent
Yes	64	78
No	12	15
Unsure	6	7
Total	82	100

Note: Includes responses of shop stewards.

**Table 42: How should employers be involved in the child care needs of their employees?**

Response	Number	Percent
No Role	7	13
No Mandatory Role	8	15
Provide A Child Care Centre	11	21
Subsidise Employee Costs:		
Financial Assistance	8	15
Better Understand Employee Needs	6	11
Assist In Any Way Will Help	8	15
Leave To Care For Sick Child	4	8
Flexibility In Hours Of Work	1	1
Don't Discriminate Against Working Parents	1	1
Total	54	100

**Table 43: Should employers pay a significant part of the cost to build a child care centre?**

Response	Number	Percent
Agree	63	66
Disagree	18	19
Unsure	12	12
Pay Some Cost	3	3
Total	96	100

Note: Includes responses of shop stewards.

**Table 44: Should employers pay part of the ongoing running costs of a child care centre?**

Response	Number	Percent
Agree	62	65
Disagree	25	26
Unsure	9	9
Total	96	100

Note: Includes responses of shop stewards.

**Table 45: Should employers provide information about child care services that are available?**

Response	Number	Percent
Agree	88	91
Disagree	6	6
Unsure	3	3
Total	97	100

Note: Includes responses of shop stewards.

**Table 46:     Should employers have the main say in how a workbased child care centre is run?**

Response	Number	Percent
Agree	6	6
Disagree	75	78
Unsure	11	12
Some Say	4	4
Total	101	100

Note:           Includes responses of shop stewards.

**Table 47:     Should employers be involved in running seminars for their employees about child care issues?**

Response	Number	Percent
Agree	52	54
Disagree	33	34
Some Say	12	12
Total	97	100

Note:           Includes responses of shop stewards.

**Table 48:     Should employers allow their employees some flexibility to work at times when child care is available?**

Response	Number	Percent
Agree	88	91
Disagree	5	5
Unsure	4	4
Total	97	100

Note:           Includes responses of shop stewards.

**Table 49:     Should employers pay part of their employees present child care costs?**

Response	Number	Percent
Agree	39	41
Disagree	41	43
Unsure	16	16
Total	96	100

Note:           Includes responses of shop stewards.

**Table 50:     Should employers have a company policy which is supportive of the needs of their employees who are working parents?**

Response	Number	Percent
Agree	87	90
Disagree	4	4
Unsure	6	6
Total	97	100

Note:           Includes responses of shop stewards.

**Table 51: Present child care costs per week.**

Cost	Working Week		School Holidays	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
No Cost	40	67	36	81
\$1 To \$40	5	8	2	5
\$41 To \$80	12	20	4	9
\$81 To \$120	2	3	2	5
\$121 To \$160	0	0	0	0
\$161 Or More	1	2	0	0
Total	60	100	44	100

**Table 52: Should child care be profit or non profit services?**

Response	Number	Percent
Non-Profit Organisations	47	65
Profit Making Businesses	6	8
Either Of These	17	23
Unsure	3	4
Total	73	100

**Table 53: Should unions be involved in child care issues?**

Response	Number	Percent
Yes	70	79
No	8	9
Unsure	11	12
Total	89	100

Note: Includes responses of shop stewards.

**Table 54: What is the role of unions in relation to child care?**

Role	Number	Percent
Not Mandatory But Would Help	1	3
Encourage Employers To Act	7	23
Is An Industrial Issue	20	65
Financial Assistance From Union	2	6
Role In Management Of Centres	1	3
Total	31	100

**Table 55: Should unions encourage employers to build child care centres for their employees use?**

Response	Number	Percent
Agree	85	89
Disagree	6	6
Unsure	6	5
Total	97	100

Note: Includes responses of shop stewards.

**Table 56:Should unions provide a child care information service?**

Response	Number	Percent
Agree	90	93
Disagree	4	4
Unsure	3	3
Total	97	100

Note: Includes responses of shop stewards.

**Table 57: Should unions run seminars for parents regarding child care issues or problems?**

Response	Number	Percent
Agree	71	73
Disagree	19	20
Unsure	7	7
Total	97	100

Note: Includes responses of shop stewards.

**Table 58: Should unions encourage employers to develop policies that are supportive of the child care needs of working parents?**

Response	Number	Percent
Agree	85	89
Disagree	5	5
Unsure	6	6
Total	96	100

Note: Includes responses of shop stewards.

**Table 59: What stewards believe are the important features of a workbased child care centre ?**

Response	Number	Percent
Hours Of Operation And Cost	14	21
Child Feels Secure/Wanted	4	6
Personal Attention From Staff	3	5
Trained Centre Staff	19	29
Stable Care Arrangement	1	1
Set Activities	1	1
Educational Activities	4	6
Good Physical Environment Resources	13	20
Outside Play Area	7	11
Total	66	100

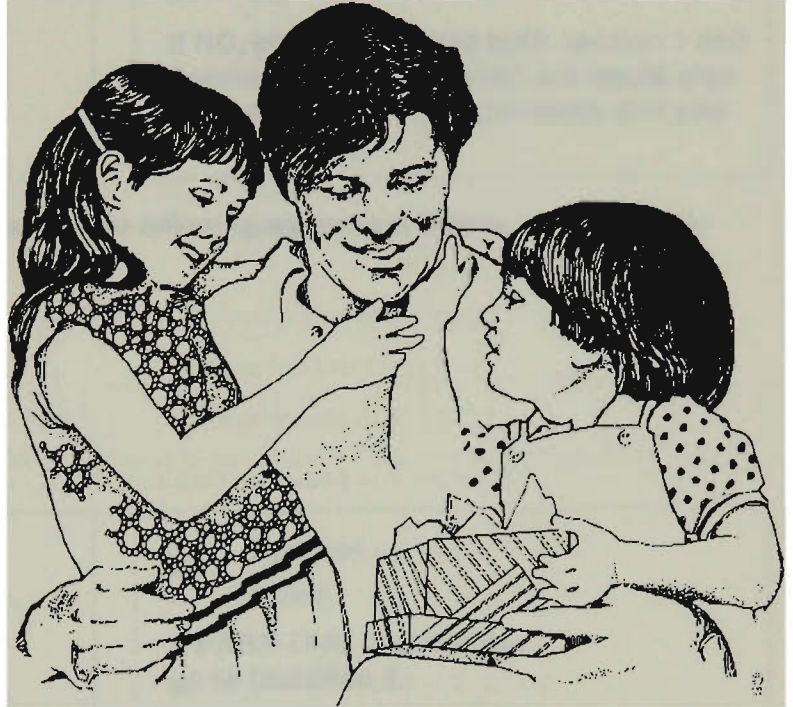
**Table 60: Given your role as a shop steward, do you consider there is a role for shop stewards in relation to the child care needs of working parents?**

Response	Number	Percent
Assist Parents With Problems	10	32
Involvement In Running Of Centres	1	3
Provide Information For Parents	10	32
Assist Union In Any Way Possible	7	23
No Role For Stewards	2	7
Unsure	1	3
Total	31	100



# CHILD CARE

***What's  
in it for  
you?***



***Do you have any children aged under 13?***

***Do you hope to have children in the near future?***

***Then this is the opportunity to have your say.***

This questionnaire is part of a research project into the child care needs of working parents in the retail industry. Please take the 10 to 15 minutes needed to fill it in.

This survey is part of a post-graduate Masters Research thesis being undertaken at the Victorian University of Technology in conjunction with the Shop Distributive and Allied Employees Association.

For further information contact Gerard Mansour on 282 0400.

***This questionnaire is confidential and anonymous.***

***Do not write your name or address on it.***



Tick the box next to the answer of your choice ☒

SECTION  
1

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Do you have any children aged 12 years or under?

☐ Yes

If YES, go to Question 2.

☐ No

If NO, please complete both Section 1 and Section 6 ONLY. However, we would also appreciate any other comments that you wish to make.

2. How many children do you have in each of the following age groups? If none, write "0" in the space provided.

\_\_\_\_\_ Under 3 years of age

\_\_\_\_\_ 3 to 5 years and not at school

\_\_\_\_\_ 5 to 12 years and at school

3. How are you presently employed?

☐ Full-time

If FULL-TIME,  
go to Question 6.

☐ Part-time

☐ Casual

If PART-TIME or CASUAL,  
go to Question 5.

4. If PART-TIME or CASUAL, how many hours do you usually work each week?

☐ 1 to 10 hours per week

☐ 21 to 30 hours per week

☐ 11 to 20 hours per week

☐ 31 or more hours per week

5. If PART-TIME or CASUAL, how much notice do you get in advance of your rostered hours and days of work?

☐ Rostered hours stay the same each week

☐ About 2 to 3 days notice

☐ About 1 week notice

☐ About 2 to 3 weeks notice

☐ Other, please state \_\_\_\_\_

6. How often do you work EVENINGS until after 7pm, each week?

☐ Never work evenings

☐ One evening each week

☐ Rarely work evenings

☐ One evening every two weeks

☐ Two evenings each week

☐ One evening every three or four weeks

7. How often do you work SATURDAYS?

☐ Never work Saturdays

☐ One Saturday every two weeks

☐ Rarely work Saturdays

☐ One Saturday every three or four weeks

☐ Each Saturday

8. Your present age? \_\_\_\_\_ years

9. In what suburb do you live? \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Your present marital status?**

- ☐ Single, never married
- ☐ Married
- ☐ Widowed
- ☐ Separated/Divorced
- ☐ Defacto

**11. What is the employment status of your spouse or partner?**

- ☐ Full-time employment
- ☐ Homeduties; homekeeper
- ☐ Pensioner
- ☐ Other, please state \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Part-time or casual employment
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Unemployed

**12. Your sex?**

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male

**13. What is the location of the warehouse in which you work? Eg, name of suburb.**

Warehouse location \_\_\_\_\_

**14. Are you intending to have any, or more, children in the future? (This will help indicate future child care needs.)**

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes, within 2 years
- ☐ Yes, within 5 years
- ☐ Yes, at some time in the future
- ☐ Unsure

**15. What are your main reasons for working? You may tick more than one answer.**

- ☐ Money or financial reasons
- ☐ Get out of house; social contact; have a break from the kids
- ☐ Career reasons; to build or develop a career
- ☐ Other, please state \_\_\_\_\_

**16. What is your gross family income each week? That is, combined income of you and your spouse or partner.**

- ☐ Under \$200 per week
- ☐ \$201 to \$300 per week
- ☐ \$301 to \$400 per week
- ☐ \$401 to \$500 per week
- ☐ \$501 to \$600 per week
- ☐ \$601 to \$700 per week
- ☐ \$701 to \$800 per week
- ☐ \$801 or more per week



***If you have preschool children, go to Section 2.***

***If you have school aged children, go to Section 3.***

***If you do NOT have children, go to Section 6.***

CHILD CARE FOR YOUR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

17. How are your PRESCHOOL children cared for when you are at work? (That is, DURING THE DAY and if relevant on EVENINGS/SATURDAYS.) Please tick ALL the types of care you use and how regularly you use them.

	DURING THE DAY		EVENINGS/ SATURDAYS	
	Use Regularly	Use Sometimes	Use Regularly	Use Sometimes
Spouse or defacto	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child Care Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family Day Care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Friend or neighbour	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relative, eg, grandmother	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Privately employed carer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You care for them at work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Occasional Care Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Older brother or sister	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kindergarten	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

18. How important were the reasons listed below, in your decision to use these forms of child care? Please answer each reason (a) to (i).

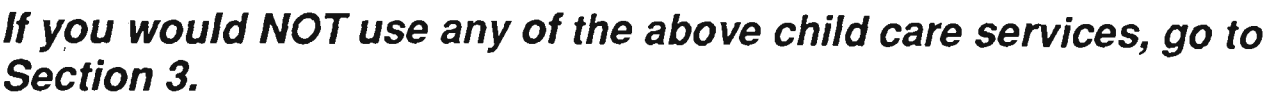
	Very Important	Important	Slightly Important	Unsure	Not Important
(a) The cost of child care had to be low	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) I had confidence in the person caring for my child	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) The care was to be in a home environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) There were few child care options to choose from	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(e) I wanted my child to have contact with other children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(f) I wanted care that was near my work place	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(g) I wanted care that was near my home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(h) I wanted a safe environment for my child, eg, materials, equipment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(i) Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

19. How happy are YOU with these arrangements for your preschool children?

	Very Happy	Happy	Unsure	Unhappy	Very Unhappy
(a) During the day	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) Evenings and Saturdays	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

20. Would you use any of the following child care services if they were available? Answer (a) to (d).

	Would Use	Might Use	Would Not use
(a) Child care centre near your work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) Child care centre near your home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Family day care program near work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) Family day care program near home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



☐ Monday to Friday, during the day

☐ Thursday or Friday evenings

☐ Saturdays

\_\_\_\_\_ hours per week

☐ \$1 to \$30 per week      ☐ \$91 to \$120 per week

☐ \$31 to \$60 per week      ☐ \$121 to \$150 per week

☐ \$61 to \$90 per week      ☐ \$151 or more per week



# 3

## CHILD CARE AND SCHOOL AGED CHILDREN

**24. How are your SCHOOL AGED children cared for when you are at work? (That is, during EVENINGS/SATURDAYS, SCHOOL HOLIDAYS, and BEFORE/AFTER SCHOOL if relevant.) Please tick ALL the types of care you use and how often you do so.**

[illegible]

**25. How important were the reasons listed below, in your decision to use these forms of child care? Please give an answer for each reason.**

	Very Important	Important	Slightly Important	Unsure	Not Important
(a) The cost of child care had to be low	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) I had confidence in the person caring for my child	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) The care was to be in a home environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) There were few child care options to choose from	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(e) I wanted my child to have contact with other children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(f) I wanted care that was near my work place	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(g) I wanted care that was near my home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(h) I wanted a safe environment for my child, eg, materials, equipment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(i) Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**26. How happy are YOU with these arrangements for your school aged children while you are at work? Please answer each of the following if appropriate.**

	Very Happy	Happy	Unsure	Unhappy	Very Unhappy
(a) Before and after school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) During school holidays	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Evenings/nights and Sundays	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**27. Would you use the following before or after school programs if they were available?**

	Would Use	Might Use	Would Not use
(a) Before school program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) After school program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**28. Would you use the following school holiday programs if they were available?**

	Would Use	Might Use	Would Not use
(a) School holiday program near work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) School holiday program near home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



***If you would NOT use either of the above school holiday programs, go to Section 4.***

**29. How many hours per week would your child attend a SCHOOL HOLIDAY PROGRAM? Write down the number of hours in the space provided.**

\_\_\_\_\_ hours per week

**30. How much would you be prepared to pay to use a SCHOOL HOLIDAY PROGRAM?**

<input type="checkbox"/> \$1 to \$30 per week	<input type="checkbox"/> \$91 to \$120 per week
<input type="checkbox"/> \$31 to \$60 per week	<input type="checkbox"/> \$121 to \$150 per week
<input type="checkbox"/> \$61 to \$90 per week	<input type="checkbox"/> \$151 or more per week

COST OF CHILD CARE

During the normal working week

31. What is your average weekly cost of child care for all your children, preschool and school aged?  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_ on average per week

32. How reasonable do you consider this cost of child care for all your children to be?

- ☐ Very expensive
- ☐ Expensive
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Reasonable
- ☐ Very reasonable

During school holidays

33. What is your average weekly cost of care for all of your children during the school holidays?  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_ on average per week

34. How reasonable is this cost of school holiday care for all your children?

- ☐ Very expensive
- ☐ Expensive
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Reasonable
- ☐ Very reasonable

PROBLEMS WITH CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS

35. Below are some of the common problems experienced by working parents who need or use child care. How much of a problem has each issue been for you? Please answer all problems (a) to (j).

	No Problem	Moderate Problem	Major Problem
(a) Location of child care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) Travel to or from care location	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Caring for a sick child	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) Quality of care is below standard	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(e) Hard finding care when you need it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(f) Finding school holiday care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(g) Finding before or after school care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(h) Finding care for under 3 year olds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(i) Finding care for 3 to 5 year olds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(j) Finding care in the same centre/service for two or more children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

36. How many days, if any, have you had to take off work in the past 12 months for reasons related to child care? If none, write "0" in the space provided.

REASONS

DAYS ABSENT

- (a) Care for sick child

\_\_\_\_\_
- (b) Child care arrangements broke down

\_\_\_\_\_
- (c) School holidays (not including your own leave)

\_\_\_\_\_

**37. Have any of the following child care problems or difficulties occurred since you have been working? Please answer all problems (a) to (j).**

	No Problem	Moderate Problem	Major Problem
(a) Getting to work late or leaving early	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) Having to change your roster for child care reasons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Taking time off work to care for a sick child	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) Taking leave during school holidays	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(e) Not being able to attend job training or product information nights	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(f) Not being able to work extra hours or overtime	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(g) Not being able to get a promotion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(h) Getting interrupted at work, eg, phone calls from your child	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(i) Being held up at work and then late picking up your child	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(j) Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SECTION  
**6**

**YOUR OPINIONS ABOUT CHILD CARE**

**38. To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements? Please answer (a) to (e).**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
(a) Employers should pay the cost needed to establish a work based child care centre	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) Working parents should be entitled to have unpaid extra leave during school holidays to care for their children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) It is necessary to establish an information service to help employees find out about child care that is available	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) When I am having difficulties with child care, the standard of my work performance is reduced	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(e) If I could afford it, I would stay at home looking after my children instead of working	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

***Thank you for your assistance in completing this questionnaire.***



**RETURNING YOUR QUESTIONNAIRE**

It is important that you return this questionnaire immediately to:

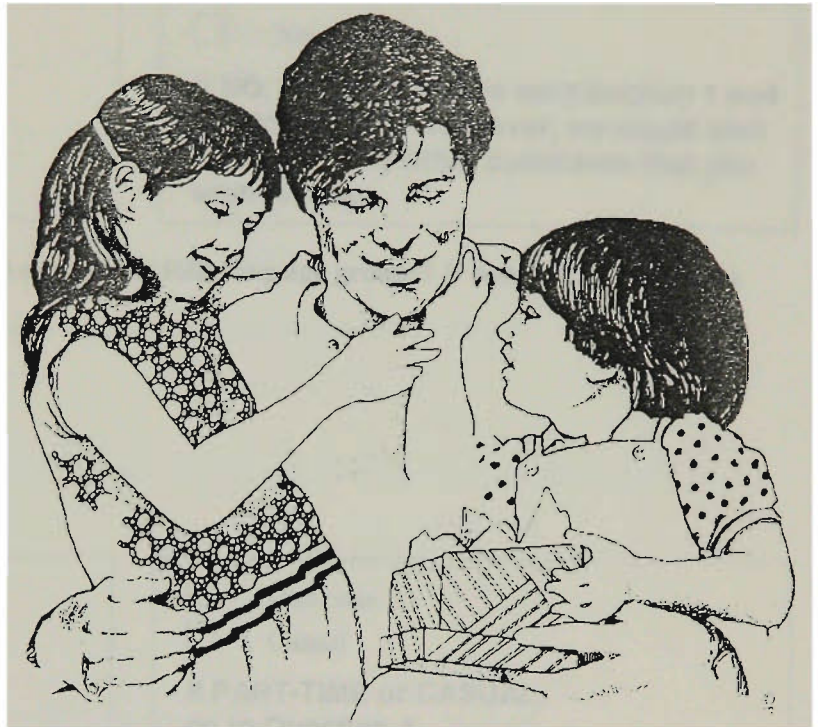
- your shop steward or contact person in your store
- your union organiser
- or mail it in the reply-paid envelope provided

***Please return your questionnaire immediately.***



# CHILD CARE

***What's  
in it for  
you?***



***Do you have any children aged under 13?***

***Do you hope to have children in the near future?***

***Then this is the opportunity to have your say.***

This questionnaire is part of a research project into the child care needs of working parents in the retail industry. Please take the 10 to 15 minutes needed to fill it in.

This survey is part of a post-graduate Masters Research thesis being undertaken at the Victorian University of Technology in conjunction with the Shop Distributive and Allied Employees Association.

For further information contact Gerard Mansour on 282 0400.

***This questionnaire is confidential and anonymous.***

***Do not write your name or address on it.***



Tick the box next to the answer of your choice ☒

SECTION

1

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Do you have any children aged 12 years or under?

☐ Yes

If YES, go to Question 2.

☐ No

If NO, please complete both Section 1 and Section 6 ONLY. However, we would also appreciate any other comments that you wish to make.

2. How many children do you have in each of the following age groups? If none, write "0" in the space provided.

\_\_\_\_\_ Under 3 years of age

\_\_\_\_\_ 3 to 5 years and not at school

\_\_\_\_\_ 5 to 12 years and at school

3. How are you presently employed?

☐ Full-time

If FULL-TIME,  
go to Question 6.

☐ Part-time

☐ Casual

If PART-TIME or CASUAL,  
go to Question 4.

4. If PART-TIME or CASUAL, how many hours do you usually work each week?

☐ 1 to 10 hours per week

☐ 11 to 20 hours per week

☐ 21 to 30 hours per week

☐ 31 or more hours per week

5. If PART-TIME or CASUAL, how much notice do you get in advance of your rostered hours and days of work?

☐ Rostered hours stay the same each week

☐ About 2 to 3 days notice

☐ About 1 week notice

☐ About 2 to 3 weeks notice

☐ Other, please state \_\_\_\_\_

6. What shift do you usually work?

☐ Day shift

☐ Afternoon shift

☐ Night shift

7. How often do you usually work SUNDAYS?

☐ Never work Sundays

☐ Rarely work Sundays

☐ Each Sunday

☐ One Sunday every two weeks

☐ One Sunday every three or four weeks

8. Your present age? \_\_\_\_\_ years

9. In what suburb do you live? \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Your present marital status?**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single, never married | <input type="checkbox"/> Separated/Divorced |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Married               | <input type="checkbox"/> Defacto            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed               |   |

**11. What is the employment status of your spouse or partner?**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Full-time employment      | <input type="checkbox"/> Part-time or casual employment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Homeduties; homekeeper    | <input type="checkbox"/> Student                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pensioner                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please state _____ |   |

**12. Your sex?**

- |                                 |                               |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Female | <input type="checkbox"/> Male |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|

**13. What is the location of the warehouse in which you work? Eg, name of suburb.**

Warehouse location \_\_\_\_\_

**14. Are you intending to have any, or more, children in the future? (This will help indicate future child care needs.)**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> No                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, at some time in the future |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, within 2 years | <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, within 5 years |  |

**15. What are your main reasons for working? You may tick more than one answer.**

- |   |
|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Money or financial reasons                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get out of house; social contact; have a break from the kids |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Career reasons; to build or develop a career                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please state _____                                    |

**16. What is your gross family income each week? That is, combined income of you and your spouse or partner.**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Under \$200 per week    | <input type="checkbox"/> \$501 to \$600 per week |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$201 to \$300 per week | <input type="checkbox"/> \$601 to \$700 per week |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$301 to \$400 per week | <input type="checkbox"/> \$701 to \$800 per week |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$401 to \$500 per week | <input type="checkbox"/> \$801 or more per week  |



***If you have preschool children, go to Section 2.***

***If you have school aged children, go to Section 3.***

***If you do NOT have children, go to Section 6.***

SECTION  
2

CHILD CARE FOR YOUR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

17. How are your PRESCHOOL children cared for when you are at work? (That is, DURING THE DAY and if relevant on EVENINGS/NIGHTS and SUNDAYS.) Please tick ALL the types of care you use and how regularly you use them.

	DURING THE DAY		EVENINGS/NIGHTS SUNDAYS	
	Use Regularly	Use Sometimes	Use Regularly	Use Sometimes
Spouse or defacto	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child Care Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family Day Care Program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Friend or neighbour	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relative, eg, grandmother	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Privately employed carer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You care for them at work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Occasional Care Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Older brother or sister	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kindergarten	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

18. How important were the reasons listed below in your decision to use these forms of child care? Please answer for each reason.

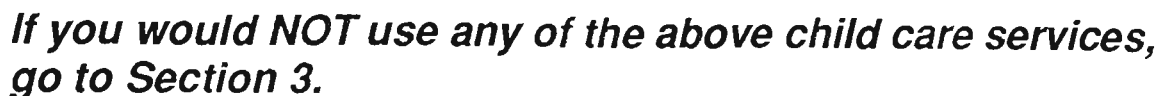
	Very Important	Important	Slightly Important	Unsure	Not Important
(a) The cost of child care had to be low	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) I had confidence in the person caring for my child	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) The care was to be in a home environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) There were few child care options to choose from	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(e) I wanted my child to have contact with other children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(f) I wanted care that was near my work place	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(g) I wanted care that was near my home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(h) I wanted a safe environment for my child, eg, materials, equipment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(i) Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

19. How happy are YOU with these arrangements for your preschool children?

	Very Happy	Happy	Unsure	Unhappy	Very Unhappy
(a) During the day	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) Evenings/nights and Sundays	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

20. Would you use any of the following child care services if they were available? Answer all.

	Would Use	Might Use	Would Not use
(a) Child care centre near your work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) Child care centre near your home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Family day care program near work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) Family day care program near home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



☐ Monday to Friday, during the day

☐ Evenings/nights

☐ Sundays

\_\_\_\_\_ hours per week

☐ \$1 to \$30 per week

☐ \$31 to \$60 per week

☐ \$61 to \$90 per week

☐ \$91 to \$120 per week

☐ \$121 to \$150 per week

☐ \$151 or more per week



***If you do NOT have school aged children, go to Section 4.***

## CHILD CARE AND SCHOOL AGED CHILDREN

[illegible]

25. How important were the reasons listed below, in your decision to use these forms of child care? Please give an answer for each reason.

	Very Important	Important	Slightly Important	Unsure	Not Important
(a) The cost of child care had to be low	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) I had confidence in the person caring for my child	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) The care was to be in a home environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) There were few child care options to choose from	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(e) I wanted my child to have contact with other children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(f) I wanted care that was near my work place	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(g) I wanted care that was near my home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(h) I wanted a safe environment for my child, eg, materials, equipment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(i) Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

26. How happy are YOU with these arrangements for your school aged children while you are at work? Please answer each of the following if appropriate.


	Very Happy	Happy	Unsure	Unhappy	Very Unhappy
(a) Before and after school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) During school holidays	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Evenings/nights and Sundays	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

27. Would you use the following before or after school programs if they were available?

	Would Use	Might Use	Would Not use
(a) Before school program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) After school program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

28. Would you use the following school holiday programs if they were available?

	Would Use	Might Use	Would Not use
(a) School holiday program near work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) School holiday program near home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

 If you would NOT use either of the above school holiday programs, go to Section 4.

29. How many hours per week would your child attend a SCHOOL HOLIDAY PROGRAM? Write down the number of hours in the space provided.

\_\_\_\_\_ hours per week

30. How much would you be prepared to pay to use a SCHOOL HOLIDAY PROGRAM?

<input type="checkbox"/> \$1 to \$30 per week	<input type="checkbox"/> \$91 to \$120 per week
<input type="checkbox"/> \$31 to \$60 per week	<input type="checkbox"/> \$121 to \$150 per week
<input type="checkbox"/> \$61 to \$90 per week	<input type="checkbox"/> \$151 or more per week

SECTION  
4

COST OF CHILD CARE

During the normal working week

31. What is your average weekly cost of child care for all your children, preschool and school aged?  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_ on average per week
32. How reasonable do you consider this cost of child care for all your children to be?
- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very expensive | <input type="checkbox"/> Reasonable      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Expensive      | <input type="checkbox"/> Very reasonable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure         |  |

During school holidays

33. What is your average weekly cost of care for all of your children during the school holidays?  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_ on average per week
34. How reasonable is this cost of school holiday care for all your children?
- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very expensive | <input type="checkbox"/> Reasonable      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Expensive      | <input type="checkbox"/> Very reasonable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure         |  |

SECTION  
5

PROBLEMS WITH CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS

35. Below are some of the common problems experienced by working parents who need or use child care. How much of a problem has each issue been for you? Please answer all problems.

	No Problem	Moderate Problem	Major Problem
(a) Location of child care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) Travel to or from care location	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Caring for a sick child	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) Quality of care is below standard	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(e) Hard finding care when you need it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(f) Finding school holiday care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(g) Finding before or after school care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(h) Finding care for under 3 year olds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(i) Finding care for 3 to 5 year olds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(j) Finding care in the same centre/service for two or more children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

36. How many days, if any, have you had to take off work in the past 12 months for reasons related to child care? If none, write "0" in the space provided.

REASONS	DAYS ABSENT
(a) Care for sick child	_____
(b) Child care arrangements broke down	_____
(c) School holidays (not including your own leave)	_____

**37. Have any of the following child care problems or difficulties occurred since you have been working? Please answer for all problems.**

	No Problem	Moderate Problem	Major Problem
(a) Getting to work late or leaving early	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) Having to change your roster for child care reasons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Taking time off work to care for a sick child	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) Taking leave during school holidays	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(e) Not being able to attend job training or product information nights	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(f) Not being able to work extra hours or overtime	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(g) Not being able to get a promotion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(h) Getting interrupted at work, eg, phone calls from your child	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(i) Being held up at work and then late picking up your child	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(j) Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SECTION

6

**YOUR OPINIONS ABOUT CHILD CARE**

**38. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Please answer for all statements.**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
(a) Employers should pay the cost needed to establish a work based child care centre	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) Working parents should be entitled to have unpaid extra leave during school holidays to care for their children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) It is necessary to establish an information service to help employees find out about child care that is available	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) When I am having difficulties with child care, the standard of my work performance is reduced	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(e) If I could afford it, I would stay at home looking after my children instead of working	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

***Thank you for your assistance in completing this questionnaire.***



**RETURNING YOUR QUESTIONNAIRE**

It is important that you return this questionnaire immediately to:

- your shop steward or contact person in your store
  - your union organiser
- or mail it in the reply-paid envelope provided.

***Please return your questionnaire immediately.***



**Appendix 8: Interview proformas.**

**Appendix 8A: Interview proforma for working parents.**

**Background Information.**

**Q-01. How many children do you have?**

- a) Total number of children in your family: \_\_\_\_\_
- b) Ages of your children:

**Child 1:** Age: \_\_\_\_\_ (School or Pre-school)

**Child 2:** Age: \_\_\_\_\_ (School or Pre-school)

**Child 3:** Age: \_\_\_\_\_ (School or Pre-school)

**Child 4:** Age: \_\_\_\_\_ (School or Pre-school)

**Q-02. How are you presently employed?**

- 1. Full-Time
- 2. Part-Time
- 3. Casual

(If FULL-TIME, go to Q-05)	(If PART-TIME or CASUAL, go to Q-03)
-------------------------------	--

**Q-03. If PART-TIME or CASUAL, how many hours of work do you usually average each week?**

- a) Number of hours: \_\_\_\_\_

**Q-04. If PART-TIME or CASUAL, how much notice in advance do you get of your rostered days and hours of work?**

- 1. Rostered hours stay the same
- 2. About 2 to 3 days notice
- 3. About 1 weeks notice
- 4. About 2 to 3 weeks notice
- 5. Other

**Q-05.**     *How many hours do you usually work on EACH DAY of the week, over an average period of 4 weeks.*

Day	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				

**Q-06.**     *Your present age: Years*

**Q-07.**     *In what suburb do you live?*

**Q-08.**     *Your present marital status.*

- 1. Single, never married
- 2. Married
- 3. Defacto
- 4. Separated/Divorced
- 5. Widowed

**Q-09.**     *Your sex.*

- 1. Female
- 2. Male

**Q-10.**     *Your employer:*

Name:  
Location:

**USE OF CHILD CARE**

**Q-11.**     *In what way are your children cared for when you are at WORK?  
(Working hours; term holidays; christmas holidays)*

- Child 1: (Age:    \_\_\_)
Type of care:    Hrs @ week
- Child 2: (Age:    \_\_\_)
Type of care:    Hrs @ week
- Child 3: (Age:    \_\_\_)
Type of care:    Hrs @ week
- Child 4: (Age:    \_\_\_)
Type of care:    Hrs @ week

**Q-12.**     *Please explain why you decided to send your children to the above forms of child care?*

- Child 1: (Age:    \_\_\_)
- Child 2: (Age:    \_\_\_)
- Child 3: (Age:    \_\_\_)
- Child 4: (Age:    \_\_\_)

**CHILD CARE AND YOU**

**Q-13A.**   *How happy are YOU with these arrangements for each child?*

		Very Happy	Happy	Unhappy	Very Unhappy
child 1:	(Age:___)	1	2	3	4
child 2:	(Age:___)	1	2	3	4
child 3:	(Age:___)	1	2	3	4
child 4:	(Age:___)	1	2	3	4

**Q-13B.**   *Please explain why.*

- Child 1: (Age:    \_\_\_)
- Child 2: (Age:    \_\_\_)
- Child 3: (Age:    \_\_\_)
- Child 4: (Age:    \_\_\_)

**Q-14.**     *How has your child's involvement in child care affected YOU?*

**Q-15.**     *What problems or difficulties, if any, have you had as a result of using child care? (Past or present.)*

**Q-16.**     *Can such problems or difficulties have an affect on parents while they are at work? In what way?*

**NEEDS OF CHILDREN IN CARE.**

**Q-17A.**   *How happy are your children with these arrangements?*

		Very Happy	Happy	Unhappy	Very Unhappy
child 1:	(Age:___)	1	2	3	4
child 2:	(Age:___)	1	2	3	4
child 3:	(Age:___)	1	2	3	4
child 4:	(Age:___)	1	2	3	4

**Q-17B.** *Please explain why and HOW has child care affected them?*

**Child 1:** (Age: \_\_\_\_)

**Child 2:** (Age: \_\_\_\_)

**Child 3:** (Age: \_\_\_\_)

**Child 4:** (Age: \_\_\_\_)

**Q-18.** *In your opinion, what should parents do if their child is unhappy with their child care arrangement?*

**Q-19.** *What do you think children need from the child care service they attend?*

**SEPARATION FROM YOUR CHILD**

**Q-20.** *Was it or is it difficult for YOU to leave your child in care?*

**Q-21.** *In your opinion, can parents and their children prepare for the separation that child care brings? How? Practical ideas.*

**WORK AND CHILD CARE**

**Q-22.** *What are your main reasons for working?*

**Q-23.** *Has your need for child care, or the lack of it, limited your involvement in the workforce? How? Why?*

**LOCATION OF CHILD CARE SERVICES**

**Q-24.** *What is your opinion about work based child care? Thoughts. Ideas.*

**Q-25.** *In your opinion, where should child care for working parents be located?*

- 1. At or near your workplace
- 2. At or near your home
- 3. Other:

**Q-26.** *What are the advantages and disadvantages of child care, for working parents, being located near their workplace and near their home?*

Workplace	Home
-----------	------

**Q-27.** *Are there any benefits to EMPLOYERS from locating child care centres (for use by employees), at or near the workplace?*

**PARENT INVOLVEMENT.**

**Q-28A.** *In your opinion, should parents be involved in the running or operation of the service that their child attends?*

- |        |       |              |
|--------|-------|--------------|
| 1. Yes | 2. No | 3. Uncertain |
|--------|-------|--------------|

**Q-28B.** *How do you consider parents should be involved? What is their role?*

**Q-29.**     *In your opinion, should parents be involved in any of the following ways?*

**PARENTS SHOULD:**

*A.     Pay a significant part of the cost needed to establish a work based child care service.*

1. Agree                      2. Disagree                      3. Unsure

*B.     Pay part of the ongoing running costs of a work based child care service. (staffing; food; materials)*

1. Agree                      2. Disagree                      3. Unsure

*C.     Have the main say in how a work based child care service is run on a day to day basis. (Programs; standards; staffing; hours; facilities)*

1. Agree                      2. Disagree                      3. Unsure

**EMPLOYERS AND CHILD CARE.**

**Q-30A.**    *In your opinion, should EMPLOYERS provide some form of child care support for their employees?*

1. Yes                      2. No                      3. Uncertain

**Q-30B.**    *What form of support should employers provide? What is their role in regard to the child care needs of employees?*

**Q-31.**     *In your opinion, should employers be involved in any of the following ways?*

**EMPLOYERS SHOULD:**

*A.     Pay a significant part of the cost needed to establish a work based child care service (for their employees' use).*

1. Agree                      2. Disagree                      3. Unsure

*B.     Pay part of the ongoing running costs of a work based child care service for their employees use. (staffing; food; materials)*

1. Agree                      2. Disagree                      3. Unsure

*C.     Provide information to assist employees find out about existing child care services that may suit their children.*

1. Agree                      2. Disagree                      3. Unsure

*D.     Have the main say in how a work based child care service is run on a day to day basis. (Programs; standards; staffing; hours; facilities)*

1. Agree                      2. Disagree                      3. Unsure

*E.     Run seminars to help parents cope with child care issues and problems that confront them.*

1. Agree                      2. Disagree                      3. Unsure

*F.     Allow individual employees some flexibility to work at times when child care is available.*

1. Agree                      2. Disagree                      3. Unsure

G. *Pay for at least part of the present child care costs of employees.*

1. Agree                      2. Disagree                      3. Unsure

H. *Develop company policies that give a commitment to assist working parents with their child care needs.*

1. Agree                      2. Disagree                      3. Unsure

#### **COST OF CHILD CARE.**

**Q-32A.** *What is your present AVERAGE WEEKLY COST of child care, in total, while you work?*

Child 1: (Age:     ) Per week \$\_\_\_\_\_

Child 2: (Age:     ) Per week \$\_\_\_\_\_

Child 3: (Age:     ) Per week \$\_\_\_\_\_

Child 4: (Age:     ) Per week \$\_\_\_\_\_

**Q-32B.** *In your opinion, how reasonable is this cost? (For each child or service)*

#### **RUNNING CHILD CARE SERVICES.**

**Q-33A.** *In your opinion, should child care services operate as:*

1. Non-profit organisations
2. Profit making businesses
3. Either of these; non-profit or profit making businesses

**Q-33B.** *Please explain the reasons for your answer.*

#### **ROLE OF UNIONS.**

**Q-34A.** *In your opinion, should UNIONS provide some form of child care support for their MEMBERS?*

1. Yes                      2. No                      3. Uncertain

**Q-34B.** *What form of support should unions provide for their members? Their role?*

**Q-35.** *In your opinion, should UNIONS be involved in any of the following ways with the child care needs of their members?*

#### **UNIONS SHOULD:**

A. Encourage employers to establish work based child care services for use by their employees.

1. Agree                      2. Disagree                      3. Unsure

B. Provide an information service to assist employees find out about existing child care services that may suit their children.

1. Agree                      2. Disagree                      3. Unsure

- C. Run seminars to help parents cope with child care issues and problems that confront them.  
1. Agree                      2. Disagree              3. Unsure
- D. Encourage employers to develop policies that give a commitment to assist working parents with their child care needs.  
1. Agree                      2. Disagree              3. Unsure

**Q-36.**     *Are there any further comments you would like to make about child care or work based child care?*

**FURTHER ASSISTANCE.**

**Q-37A.**     *Would you be prepared to be involved in a small discussion group to talk about your experiences and share your ideas?*

1. Agree                      2. Disagree              3. Unsure

**Q-37B.**     *When would you be available to meet?*

**Q-37C.**     *How can you be contacted?*

Name:

Address:

Phone:

**Appendix 8B: Schedule used as a group discussion prompt, and as a questionnaire at the end of a group discussion with Shop Stewards.**

**CHILD CARE USE.**

Think about those members in your work place who have children under 13 years of age. The questions listed below relate to these members.

- Q-01. In what ways are the children of members cared for while they are at WORK? Please refer to workers with preschool and school aged children. (Consider working hours; term holidays; Christmas holidays)*
- Q-02. Do you know the reasons why members have chosen these forms of care for their children?*
- Q-03. Do you know of any problems or difficulties members experience from being a working parent with child care responsibilities?*
- Q-04. Can such problems or difficulties have an affect on parents while they are at work? In what ways?*
- Q-05. What should working parents do if their child is unhappy with their child care arrangement?*
- Q-06. What do you think children need from any child care arrangement they attend?*
- Q-07. What are the main reasons why members, with children, are in the work force?*

**LOCATION OF CHILD CARE SERVICES**

- Q-08. Child care for working parents can be located near their work place or near their home. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each?*

Near Workplace	Near home
----------------	-----------

- Q-09. As a shop steward, what is your opinion about work based child care? (Locating a child care centre at or near the work place)*
- Q-10. What features do you think a work based centre would need to have before our members would use it? Refer to your answers in Q-01, and consider programs, standards, staffing, hours and facilities.*
- Q-11. Do you think there are any benefits to EMPLOYERS from locating child care centres (for use by employees), at or near the work place?*

**PARENT INVOLVEMENT.**

- Q-12. Should parents be involved in the running or operation of a work based child care centre? What role parents should have?*
- Q-13. Should parents be involved in any of the following ways with work based child care?*

**Parents Should:**

- A. Pay a significant part of the costs needed to establish and build a work based child care centre.*



1. Agree                      2. Disagree                      3. Unsure

B. *Pay part of the ongoing running costs of a work based child care service. (staffing; food; materials)*

1. Agree                      2. Disagree                      3. Unsure

C. *Have the main say in how a work based child care service is run on a day to day basis.(Programs; standards; staffing; hours; facilities)*

1. Agree                      2. Disagree                      3. Unsure

## **EMPLOYERS AND CHILD CARE.**

**Q-14.**     *Should EMPLOYERS provide some form of child care support for their employees Please explain the role that employers should have.*

**Q-15.**     *In your opinion, should employers be involved in any of the following ways?*

### **EMPLOYERS SHOULD:**

A. *Pay a significant part of the cost needed to establish a work based child care service (for their employees' use).*

1. Agree                      2. Disagree                      3. Unsure

B. *Pay part of the ongoing running costs of a work based child care service for their employees use. (staffing; food; materials)*

1. Agree                      2. Disagree                      3. Unsure

C. *Provide information to assist employees find out about existing child care services that may suit their children.*

1. Agree                      2. Disagree                      3. Unsure

D. *Have the main say in how a work based child care service is run on a day to day basis.(Programs; standards; staffing; hours; facilities)*

1. Agree                      2. Disagree                      3. Unsure

E. *Run seminars to help parents cope with child care issues and problems that confront them.*

1. Agree                      2. Disagree                      3. Unsure

F. *Allow individual employees some flexibility to work at times when child care is available.*

1. Agree                      2. Disagree                      3. Unsure

G. *Pay for at least part of the present child care costs of employees.*

1. Agree                      2. Disagree                      3. Unsure

H. *Develop company policies that give a commitment to assist working parents with their child care needs.*

1. Agree                      2. Disagree                      3. Unsure

### **RUNNING CHILD CARE SERVICES.**

**Q-16A.**     *In your opinion, should work based child care services operate as:*

1. Non-profit organisations
2. Profit making businesses
3. Either of these; non-profit or profit making businesses

**Q-16B.** *Please explain the reasons for your answer.*

## **ROLE OF UNIONS.**

**Q-17.** *In your opinion, should UNIONS be involved in the child care issue in support of the needs of their members who are working parents? What is the role of the union?*

**Q-18.** *In your opinion, should UNIONS be involved in any of the following ways with the child care needs of their members?*

## **UNIONS SHOULD:**

A. Encourage employers to establish work based child care services for use by their employees.

1. Agree                      2. Disagree              3. Unsure

B. Provide an information service to assist employees find out about existing child care services that may suit their children.

1. Agree                      2. Disagree              3. Unsure

C. Run seminars to help parents cope with child care issues and problems that confront them.

1. Agree                      2. Disagree              3. Unsure

D. Encourage employers to develop policies that give a commitment to assist working parents with their child care needs.

1. Agree                      2. Disagree              3. Unsure

**Q-19.** *What do you consider to be the role of shop stewards in relation to the child care issue and the child care needs of union members who are working parents?*

**Q-20.** *Are there any further comments you would like to make about child care or work based child care?*

**Q-21.** *Your details (optional):*

Name:

Address:

Phone:

**Q-22.** *Your employer:*

Name:

Location:

# Appendix 9: Endorsement of questionnaire.

**Table 1:      Endorsement by Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association, Victorian Branch, enclosed with each copy of the questionnaire.**

12 December, 1990

Dear Member,

Your assistance in completing the enclosed questionnaire will be greatly appreciated.

The SDA. is conducting a research project into the provision of accessible and quality Child Care facilities for working parents.

Our decisions in this important area need to be based upon proper research, which adequately identifies the particular needs and views of our members.

This confidential and anonymous questionnaire is an integral part of our research in establishing the real needs of our members now and in the future. Please complete and return this questionnaire as soon as possible.

Many thanks,

Yours faithfully

Maurice G. Reed

State Secretary.

# Appendix 10: Findings from the Questionnaire.

This is a presentation of the findings from the questionnaire.

Table 1:      Number of completed questionnaires.

Parents	Number	Percent
In Shops	779	87.2
In Warehouses	114	12.8
Total	893	100

Table 2:      Children aged 13 years or under.

Response	Number	Percent
Yes	713	79.8
No	180	20.2
Total:	893	100

Table 3:      Children of respondents listed by their age groups.

Age group	Number	Percent
Children Under 3	250	21.0
Children 3 to 5 Years	219	18.4
Children 5 to 12 Years	723	60.6
Total	1192	100

Table 4:      Employment status of respondents.

Response	Number	Percent
Full-Time	390	44.6
Part-Time	316	36.1
Casual	169	19.3
Total	875	100

Table 5:      Hours worked by part time and casual respondents.

Weekly hours	Number	Percent
1 - 10 hours	100	21.0
11 - 20 hours	218	45.7
21 - 30 hours	148	31.0
31 or more hours	11	2.3
Total	576	100

Table 6:      If part-time or casual, notice received as to rostered hours and days of work.

Amount of Notice	Number	Percent
Same Hours	345	72.8
1 Day or Less	14	3.0
2 - 3 Days	38	8.0
1 Week	47	9.9
2 - 3 Weeks	18	3.8
Other	12	2.5
Total	474	100

**Table 7: Comparison of employment status and notice of rosters for non full time workers.**

Amount of Notice	Part time		Casual	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Same Hours	255	83.6	87	52.4
1 Day or Less	1	0.4	13	7.8
2 - 3 Days	15	4.9	23	13.9
1 Week	19	6.2	28	16.9
2 - 3 Weeks	11	3.6	7	4.2
Other	4	1.3	8	4.8
Total	305	100	166	100

**Table 8: How often respondents work evenings until after 7 pm, each week? (for shop workers only)**

How often	Number	Percent
Never work evenings	383	52.0
Rarely work evenings	124	16.9
Three/four per week	7	1.0
Two evenings per week	68	9.2
One evening per week	127	17.3
One every two weeks	15	2.0
One every three/four weeks	12	1.6
Total	736	100

**Table 9: Shift warehouse parents are working.**

Shift	Number	Percent
Day shift	93	82.3
Afternoon shift	11	9.7
Night shift	9	8.0
Total	113	100

**Table 10: How often shop assistants work Saturdays.**

How often	Number	Percent
Never work Saturday	399	53.6
Rarely work Saturday	122	16.4
Each Saturday	132	17.7
One every two weeks	69	9.3
One every three/four weeks	23	3.0
Total	745	100

**Table 11: How often warehouse workers are rostered to work Sundays.**

How often	Number	Percent
Never work Sunday	86	75.4
Rarely work Sunday	15	13.2
Each Sunday	8	7.0
Once every two/three weeks	5	4.4
Total	114	100

**Table 12:     Age of respondents.**

Age group, Years	Number	Percent
15 to 19	28	3.2
20 to 24	113	13.1
25 to 29	192	22.2
30 to 34	239	27.7
35 to 39	169	19.6
40 to 44	95	11.0
45 to 49	20	2.3
50 and over	7	0.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>863</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 13:     Average age of respondents.**

Age group	Average (years)
All Respondents	<b>31.7</b>
With Children Under 13	<b>32.7</b>
No Children Under 13	<b>27.6</b>

**Table 14:     Where respondents reside listed by Victorian LGA's.**

LGA	Number	Percent
Doncaster - Templestowe	24	2.7
Eltham	19	2.2
Waverley	18	2.1
Nunawading	19	2.2
Ringwood	13	1.5
Diamond Valley	29	3.3
Bulla	13	1.5
Croydon	13	1.5
Frankston	18	2.0
Knox	37	4.2
Lilydale	29	3.3
Werribee	73	8.4
Berwick	18	2.1
Cranbourne	29	3.3
Keilor	34	3.9
Springvale	17	1.9
Altona	15	1.7
Whittlesea	31	3.6
Broadmeadows	33	3.8
Oakleigh	15	1.7
Sunshine	25	2.9
Preston	14	1.6
Gippsland	59	6.8
Bendigo	15	1.7
Geelong	51	5.8
Ballarat	20	2.3
All Others	192	22.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>873</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 15: Marital Status of respondents.**

Marital Status	Number	Percent
Single, never married	126	14.3
Married	647	73.3
Widowed	3	0.3
Separated/divorced	54	6.1
Defacto	53	6.0
Total	883	100

**Table 16: Employment status of spouse.**

Response	Number	Percent
Full-Time	657	85.8
Homeduties	35	4.6
Pensioner	2	0.2
Part-Timer/Casual	3	5.9
Student	45	0.8
Unemployed	6	2.3
Other	18	0.4
Total	766	100

**Table 17: Sex of respondents.**

Sex	Number	Percent
Female	789	89.5
Male	93	10.5
Total	882	100

**Table 18: Location of workplace for shops only.**

Suburb/Shopping Centre	Number	Percent
Werrimbee Plaza	59	7.9
Gippsland	56	7.5
Geelong	45	6.0
Northland Shopping Centre & Preston	41	5.4
Melbourne	39	5.2
Eastland Shopping Centre & Ringwood	35	4.7
Doncaster & Shopping Centre	24	3.2
Knox City Shopping Centre	24	3.2
Broadmeadows	23	3.0
Highpoint West Shopping Centre	22	2.9
Chadstone Shopping Centre	21	2.8
Frankston	19	2.5
Ballarat	18	2.4
Greensborough Shopping Centre	17	2.3
Camberwell	15	2.0
Southland Shopping Centre	15	2.0
Whittlesea	14	1.9
Bendigo	14	1.9
Gladstone Park Shopping Centre	14	1.9

<b>Table 18: continued Suburb/Shopping Centre</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Brunswick	13	1.7
Chimside Park Shopping Centre	12	1.6
Cranbourne	11	1.4
Caulfield	10	1.3
Williamstown	10	1.3
Airport West Shopping Centre	10	1.3
Altona Gate Shopping Centre	10	1.3
Box Hill Shopping Centre	9	1.2
Forest Hill Shopping Centre	8	1.1
Fountain Gate Shopping Centre	8	1.1
All Others	135	18.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>751</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 19: Warehouse location.**

<b>Warehouse</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Safeway, Mulgrave	10	8.9
Coles, Port Melbourne	10	8.9
Coles, Hampton Park	11	9.8
Just Jeans or Target Altona	10	8.9
Myer Direct	18	16.1
Davids, Maidstone	11	9.8
Target, Footscray	12	10.8
All Other Warehouses	30	26.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 20: Any future children.**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No	502	57.4
Yes within 2 Years	148	16.9
Yes within 5 Years	39	4.4
Yes, sometime	118	13.5
Unsure	68	7.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>875</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 21: Reasons for working (respondents could give more than one answer).**

<b>Reasons</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
		<b>Proportion of All Responses</b>
Money	825	94.6
Social Contact	225	25.8
Career	83	9.5
Other	7	0.8



**Table 22:     Respondents reasons for working.**

Reasons for working	Proportion of Respondents	
	Number	Percent
Only for Financial Reasons	585	67.6
Only Social Contact	25	2.9
Only Career	18	2.1
Both Financial and Social Contact	174	20.1
Both Financial and Career	38	4.4
Both Social Contact and Career	2	0.2
All Financial, Social Contact and Career	23	2.7
Total	865	100

**Table 23:     Gross family income per week.**

Weekly Income	Number	Percent
Under \$200	27	3.3
\$201 to \$300	76	9.4
\$301 to \$400	110	13.6
\$401 to \$500	13	16.1
\$501 to \$600	175	21.6
\$601 to \$700	125	15.5
\$701 to \$800	75	9.3
\$801 or more	91	11.2
Total	809	100

**Table 24:     Care for preschool children during the day.**

Care Arrangement	Regular Care		Infrequent Care	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Spouse/Defacto	72	16.4	33	21.2
Child Care Centre	61	13.9	9	5.8
Family Day Care Program	39	8.9	10	6.4
Friends/Neighbours	38	8.7	38	24.4
Relatives	145	33.2	39	25.0
Private Carer	22	5.0	5	3.2
You Care At Work	0	0	2	1.3
Occasional Care	3	0.7	4	2.6
Older Brother/Sister	19	4.3	10	6.4
Kindergarten	36	8.2	6	3.8
Other	3	0.7	0	0
Total	438	100	156	100

Table 25: Care for preschool children on evenings or weekends.

Care Arrangement	Regular Care		Infrequent Care	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Spouse/Defacto	110	57.6	17	22.4
Child Care Centre	0	0	1	1.3
Family Day Care Program	2	1.0	5	6.6
Friends/Neighbours	12	6.3	16	21.1
Relatives	58	30.4	22	28.9
Private Carer	3	1.6	6	7.9
You Care At Work	0	0	2	2.6
Occasional Care	0	0	1	1.3
Older Brother/Sister	6	3.1	5	6.6
Kindergarten	na	na	na	na
Other	0	0	1	1.3
Total	191	100	76	100

Table 26: Reasons behind choice of preschool child care.

Reason	Percent					
	Very Important	Important	Slightly Important	Unsure	Not Important	Total Number
The cost of child care had to be low	54.2	25.8	11.3	1.9	6.8	310
I had confidence in the person caring for my child	97.0	2.4	0.6	0	0	334
The care was to be in a home environment	57.3	16.6	15.0	4.1	7.0	314
There were few child care options to choose from	37.8	20.2	10.5	18.7	12.8	257
I wanted my child to have contact with other children	42.9	29.7	13.9	1.0	12.5	296
I wanted care that was near my workplace	45.9	25.8	7.6	0.7	20.0	290
I wanted care that was near my home	48.3	30.4	11.7	1.0	8.6	290
I wanted a safe environment for my child, eg materials, equipment	90.9	8.5	0.6	0	0	307

Table 27: Happiness of respondents with their care arrangements.

Response	During the Day		Evening and Weekend	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Very Happy	194	60.8	105	59.3
Happy	92	28.9	54	30.5
Unsure	15	4.7	10	5.7
Unhappy	17	5.3	6	3.4
Very Unhappy	1	0.3	2	1.1
Total	319	100	177	100

**Table 28: Other preschool child care options which could be available.**

Type of care	Would Use		Might Use		Not Use	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Child Care Centre near work	138	41.8	109	33.0	83	25.2
Child Care Centre near home	120	37.3	120	37.3	82	25.4
Family Day Care Program near work	114	36.4	110	35.2	89	28.4
Family Day Care Program Near Home	111	35.7	114	36.7	86	27.6

**Table 29: When would parents want care to be available.**

When care needed	Number of responses	Proportion of all respondents with a preschool child
Monday to Friday, during the day	263	70.7
Thursday or Friday evenings	51	13.7
Weekends	55	14.8

**Table 30: Hours parents would use such services if available.**

Hours per week	Number	Percent
1 to 10	67	24.4
11 to 20	84	30.6
21 to 30	40	14.5
31 to 40	54	19.6
41 to 50	25	9.1
51 and over	5	1.8
Total	275	100

**Table 31: What parents would pay to use other preschool services.**

Weekly Payment	Number	Percent
\$1 to \$30	113	39.1
\$31 to \$60	103	35.6
\$61 to \$90	50	17.3
\$91 to \$120	19	6.6
\$121 to \$150	3	1.0
\$151 or more	1	0.4
Total	289	100

Table 32: Care for school aged children (percent).

Types of care	Evenings/Saturdays Percent		Before/After School Percent	
	Regular	Sometimes	Regular	Sometimes
Spouse/Defacto	47.5	18.1	27.0	23.4
Before/After School Program	0.9	2.6	7.0	4.9
Friends/Neighbours	9.7	25.2	16.8	23.9
Relative	23.1	26.5	19.9	19.8
Private Carer	2.6	1.9	4.4	1.8
You Care At Work	0	0.6	0	0
Occasional Care	0.9	0	0.5	0.5
Older Brother/Sister	9.1	11.0	12.6	12.6
Children Alone	3.5	7.7	8.9	9.5
Child Care Centre	0.3	2.6	0	1.3
Family Day Care Centre	1.2	0.6	2.1	1.8
Other	1.2	3.2	0.8	0.5
Total	100	100	100	100
Number of Responses	341	155	382	222

Table 33: Care for school aged children on school holidays (percent).

Type of care	Regular Percent	Sometimes Percent
Spouse/Defacto	23.8	16.4
School Holiday Program	8.4	11.2
Friends/Neighbours	10.3	20.5
Relative	34.1	24.9
Private Carer	3.9	2.0
You Care At Work	0.6	1.5
Occasional Care	0.6	1.2
Older Brother/Sister	12.0	10.6
Children Alone	3.9	7.6
Child Care Centre	0.5	0.9
Family Day Care Centre	1.3	2.3
Other	0.6	0.9
Total	100	100
Number of Responses	466	341

Table 34: Reasons for selection of care for school aged children.

Reason	Percent					Total Number
	Very Important	Important	Slightly Important	Unsure	Not Important	
The cost of child care had to be low	58.3	25.1	8.1	1.5	7.0	343
I had confidence in the person caring for my child	92.1	7.1	0	0.3	0.5	369
The care was to be in a home environment	57.5	19.6	10.5	1.5	10.9	341
There were few child care options to choose from	45.6	20.1	8.0	14.2	12.1	274

<b>Table 34: Continued</b>	<b>Very Important</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Slightly Important</b>	<b>Unsure</b>	<b>Not Important</b>	<b>Total Number</b>
I wanted my child to have contact with other children	35.4	22.5	21.2	2.3	18.6	311
I wanted care that was near my workplace	42.7	18.4	9.9	1.0	28.0	304
I wanted care that was near my home	56.9	22.5	10.6	0.6	9.4	320
I wanted a safe environment for my child, eg materials, equipment	84.8	11.9	1.2	0	2.1	329

**Table 35:     Happiness with school aged child care arrangements.**

<b>Level of Happiness</b>	<b>Number</b>		
	<b>Before/ After School</b>	<b>School Holidays</b>	<b>Evenings or weekends</b>
Very Happy	183	163	142
Happy	120	105	59
Unsure	34	41	22
Unhappy	21	47	11
Very Unhappy	10	15	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>371</b>	<b>241</b>

**Table 36:     Would parents use before or after school programs.**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Before school</b>		<b>After school</b>	
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Would Use	95	25.4	147	36.1
Might Use	110	29.4	143	35.2
Not Use	169	45.2	117	28.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 37:     Would parents use school holiday programs.**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Near Work</b>		<b>Near Home</b>	
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Would Use	155	39.4	155	40.2
Might Use	126	32.1	130	33.8
Not Use	112	28.5	100	26
<b>Total</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 38:     Hours parents would use a school holiday program.**

<b>Hours per week</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
1 to 10 hours	58	26.8
11 to 20 hours	78	35.9
21 to 30 hours	40	18.4
31 to 40 hours	30	13.8
41 to 50 hours	11	5.1

**Table 39:     What parents would pay to use a school holiday program**

Weekly Payment	Number	Percent
\$1 to \$30	100	62.6
\$31 to \$60	84	26.9
\$61 to \$90	56	6.2
\$91 to \$120	30	3.9
\$121 to \$150	10	0
\$151 or more	4	0.4
Total	284	100

**Table 40:     Average weekly child care costs**

Weekly Cost	Number	Percent
Nil	237	45.5
\$1 to \$30	100	19.2
\$31 to \$60	84	16.1
\$61 to \$90	56	10.7
\$91 to \$120	30	5.8
\$121 to \$150	10	1.9
\$151 or more	4	0.8
Total	521	100

**Table 41:     Average weekly cost of child care**

Average weekly cost for all parents is	\$29.05
Average weekly cost for parents who pay for child care	\$54.22

**Table 42:     Range of weekly child care costs in school holidays**

Weekly Cost	Number	Percent
Nil	206	50.6
\$1 to \$30	47	11.5
\$31 to \$60	65	16
\$61 to \$90	39	9.6
\$91 to \$120	29	7.1
\$121 to \$150	9	2.2
\$151 or more	12	2.9
Total	407	100

**Table 43:     Average weekly costs during school holidays**

Average weekly cost for all parents is	\$32.34
Average weekly cost for parents who pay for child care	\$66.77

Table 44: Satisfaction with cost of child care

Response	During the week		During school holidays	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Very expensive	27	7.8	29	10.9
Expensive	55	15.8	44	16.5
Unsure	14	4	23	8.6
Reasonable	123	35.3	82	30.7
Very Reasonable	129	37.1	89	33.3
Total	348	100	267	100

Table 45: Common problems experienced by respondents

Child care problem	No Problem		Moderate Problem		Major Problem	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Location of child care	277	63.0	103	23.4	60	13.6
Travel to or from care location	277	62.4	118	26.6	49	11.0
Caring for a sick child	122	26.7	144	31.4	192	41.9
Quality of care is below standard	334	79.2	49	11.6	39	9.2
Hard finding care when you need it	188	42.4	140	31.5	116	26.1
Finding school holiday care	208	49.2	120	28.4	95	22.4
Finding before or after school care	257	62.4	83	20.1	72	17.5
Finding care for under 3 year olds	254	69.8	63	17.3	47	12.9
Finding care for 3 to 5 year olds	265	75.7	48	13.7	37	10.6
Finding care in the same centre/service for two or more children	254	68.1	55	14.7	64	17.2

Table 46: Number of days that respondents took off work in the past 12 months for the listed reasons.

Number of Days	Care for Sick Child		Care Arrangements Broke Down		Care during School holidays	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Nil	283	45.9	492	80.5	534	87.5
1 - 3	187	30.4	85	13.9	31	5.1
4 - 6	87	14.1	26	4.3	16	2.6
7 - 9	27	4.4	2	0.3	5	0.8
10 - 20	28	4.6	6	1.0	20	3.3
21 or more	4	0.6	0	0	4	0.7
Total	616	100	611	100	610	100
Total days off work	1471		368		647	

**Table 47: Respondents who had child care problems or difficulties since working.**

Problem or difficulty	No Problem Percent	Moderate Problem Percent	Major Problem Percent	Total Number
Getting to work late or leaving early	42.3	50.3	7.4	542
Having to change your roster for child care reasons	62.6	26.3	11.1	524
Time off work to care for a sick child	39.7	44.6	15.7	562
Taking leave during school holidays	58.6	24.4	17	519
Not being able to attend training or product information nights	76.7	14.2	9.1	515
Not being able to work extra hours or overtime	40.7	35.9	23.4	548
Not being able to get a promotion	74.6	13.6	11.8	500
Getting interrupted at work, eg phone calls from you child.	75.9	19.2	4.9	531
Being held up at work and late picking up your child	55.9	30.5	13.6	535

**Table 48: Employers should pay the cost needed to establish a work based child care centre.**

Response	Number	Percent
Strongly agree	190	24.5
Agree	205	26.4
Unsure	199	25.7
Disagree	131	16.9
Strongly disagree	50	6.5
Total	775	100

**Table 49: Working parents should be entitled to unpaid extra leave during school holidays to care for their children.**

Response	Number	Percent
Strongly agree	279	35.2
Agree	286	36.1
Unsure	90	11.4
Disagree	111	14
Strongly disagree	26	3.3
Total	792	100

**Table 50: It is necessary to establish an information service to help employees find out about child care that is available.**

Response	Number	Percent
Strongly agree	374	48.1
Agree	312	40.1
Unsure	50	6.4
Disagree	31	4.0
Strongly disagree	11	1.4
Total	778	100



**Table 51:    When I am having difficulties with child care, the standard of my work performance is reduced.**

Response	Number	Percent
Strongly agree	180	24.2
Agree	274	36.9
Unsure	114	15.3
Disagree	140	18.9
Strongly disagree	35	4.7
Total	743	100

**Table 52:    If I could afford it, I would stay at home looking after my children instead of working.**

Response	Number	Percent
Strongly agree	435	55.8
Agree	139	17.8
Unsure	93	11.9
Disagree	89	11.4
Strongly disagree	24	3.1
Total	780	100