

Sir

I am prompted to write to you because of your stated intention to review Centrelink Participation Requirements.

I am concerned that the previous Govt imposed a condition on the receipt of Parenting Payment that required the Primary Caregiver to enter the employment market – crucially-during those periods of the year when their school age children would normally be at home. I don't believe Parenting Payment should be considered welfare. Rather, it should be viewed as recompense for the work involved in producing adult citizens. There is no State without citizens, and no coherent state without healthy, well educated and well cared for citizens. The Primary Caregiver is not only best placed to provide for the well-being of their children, they have a natural right to do so. It is in the interests of the State to support families. It is money well spent –not charity.

Further, a Primary Caregivers' obligations are not first to the State, second to the Market, and only third to their children-unless one lives in a Totalitarian State. Since the Market is inflexible regarding the Primary Caregivers' obligation to their children, let voluntary work fulfil the entirety of Mutual Obligation. Mr. Costello put forward the issue of 'Capacity Constraints' in the economy as a reason for introducing this element of conditionality to Parenting Payment. However, not even when our country faced total war were Primary Caregivers required to relinquish the care of their children so that they could better serve the State. Voluntary work in Schools etc. is socially valuable and does not conflict with Primary Caregivers' prior obligations to their children.

From July 1 last year my wife and I have worked part-time and have so arranged the available working hours so that we can continue our commitment that one of us be personally available to our children at all times. This works during term time but not during the long school holidays. I have informed Centrelink that I cannot seek to increase my hours during this period, as this would force us to abandon our commitment to our four children and see them spending a significant period of their holidays in institutional care. We are now suffering an 8-week non-payment period (in reality 10 weeks) with the attendant financial hardship. We have always followed a Stay-At-Home model of parenting and we can't in good conscious abandon this, whatever pressure the Govt. applies. We should be supported in this choice as those who follow the Childcare model of parenting are supported –in their case through Childcare fee rebates. It is worth pointing out that most, if not all, of our Media and Political gatekeepers are emotionally and financially committed to the Childcare model of parenting and thus, perhaps, blind to the choices that other parents have made.

One of Centrelinks' taglines is 'support the system that supports you'. I don't feel that we are being supported and am very keen to hear your view.

Yours faithfully

Greg Walker