

Mary Owen thoughts on Child Care.

1. Should Child Care places only be for working parents?

NO.

All mothers work. Only some are paid for it.

2. All children deserve access to quality child care.

Neither motherhood nor fatherhood automatically fits people to care for children. Some folk are much better at it than others.

Love and Care are two different things. Children need both. In most cases mothers are the best people to provide love. They are not necessarily the best at providing care.

There are a few people who believe they can offer their children a better education than the school system – a very few. Most people believe qualified professional people do a better job at educating children than the average parent. Surely the first few years of life are the most important for setting life patterns. All children should have access to the best care.

Of course parents must decide for themselves whether to seek help with the care of their young children but good quality care from professionals should be an option.

3. Play groups in private homes can be very dangerous. They are almost impossible to supervise and usually the only people who can observe what happens there are the children.

As pointed out by the Working Women's Centre in its Bulletin No, 80/3 of July 1980, *"It becomes clear, when looking at the history of child care in Australia, that children's services have been provided largely to meet the needs of industry and the economy rather than the needs of women, children and families.*

The work done in caring for children is barely acknowledged and has little status. Therefore . . . it is often done at the expense of exploitation of child-minders. . . In a survey of Footscray workers it was discovered that in almost every case the workers were relying for their child care on either neighbours or close relations who were often paid very little and sometimes nothing for their services.

The above-mentioned Bulletin quotes Eva Cox as saying: *"Child-rearing practices, as with most other social constructs, reflect the values and needs of the society that spawns them"*.

I suggest WEL does not support government funding child care for the benefit of industry but for the benefit of children.

Yes, we need more child development centres. Schools are a good place to start.

4. Certainly child-care workers should be properly trained and qualified and paid as professionals. Like nurses and teachers, this is poorly paid because it is seen as women's work.
5. Government should direct funding to providing infrastructure and training of staff for public hospitals, schools and preschool care and withdraw its welfare in the form of tax concessions to upper income-earners for private health care and private school education.