

Home Education Foundation

PO Box 9064, Palmerston North 4441, New Zealand
Ph. +64 6 357-4399 Fax: +64 6 357-4389 mail@hef.org.nz www.hef.org.nz
Charities Commission Registration Nbr.: CC24585 G.S.T. Nbr.: 55-380-562

Media Release – Australian Benefit Reforms Bow to Parents’ Rights

December 6, 2012

Palmerston North, NZ – As the Select Committee hears submissions on the proposed Social Security (Benefit Categories and Work Focus) Amendment Bill, which threatens compulsory preschool for beneficiaries’ children and tightens work test requirements for sole parents, similar Australian welfare reforms acknowledge the value of family-based work.

Under new regulations brought in this year, Australian single mothers receiving a parenting payment will be transferred to the lower Newstart benefit when their child turns eight. The Australian government estimates that this will save about AU\$700 million over four years.

To be eligible for the Newstart benefit mothers will need to apply for a certain amount of jobs per fortnight and be obviously seeking employment.

“The situation is similar to what we have in the Social Security Bill with increased work test obligations and sole parents being transferred to a jobseeker benefit once their youngest child reaches a certain age,” explains Barbara Smith, National Director of the Home Education Foundation of New Zealand.

“But unlike our Minister for Social Development, Paula Bennett, the Australian legislators found a way to recognise and affirm home education as a valid parental choice.”

When Australian single mothers expressed their concern about the welfare reforms, employment minister Bill Shorten assured them that mothers who home educate their children will not be forced to put their children in school and look for work under the new legislation.

Home educators on a benefit will be exempt from work or study requirements if they can provide evidence of registration to home educate (where required) or that home education is occurring (where registration is not required). Additionally, their benefit will not be reduced.

“This is wonderful,” says Mrs Smith. “Australia is recognising the great work that home educators do. Every child needs the care and attention of his or her parents, not an endless stream of detached caretakers.

“Early preschooling and schooling is linked to severe social disadvantages for children. But that’s not the only benefit of home education.”

The Home Education Foundation estimates that a home educating mother in New Zealand saves the government up to \$8,500 in schooling fees per child per year. If a special needs child is involved, the saving may be as much as \$160,000 per child per year.

“The Australian reforms also allow women to put their families first,” says Mrs Smith. “Most of us would be offended if the government told us that women can only hold certain jobs. But that’s exactly what the Social Security Bill does. Thousands of women want to be at home caring for and teaching their children. This Bill wants to tell them that the only valuable work is nine-to-five wage-slavery. Their whanau is not important.”

Mrs Smith believes that welfare reform is necessary. "It's wonderful that the government wants to address this area," she says.

"But home educating parents already have to satisfy the Ministry of Education that their home educating program will benefit their children as much as conventional schooling.

"They're saving the government money and raising secure, responsible citizens.

"Australia has affirmed that and it's time for New Zealand to recognise it too."

More information on the bill can be found at www.hef.org.nz.

About the Home Education Foundation

The Home Education Foundation has been informing parents for 27 years about the fantastic opportunity to de-institutionalise our sons and daughters and to embrace the spiritual, intellectual and academic freedom that is ours for the taking. Through conferences, journals, newsletters and all kinds of personal communications, we explain the vision of handcrafting each child into a unique individual, complete with virtuous character, a hunger for service to others, academic acumen and a strong work ethic. For more information, please visit www.hef.org.nz or more specifically hef.org.nz/2012/make-a-submission-reject-compulsory-early-education-for-3-year-olds/

Contact

To learn more about this bill, please contact

Barbara Smith
National Director
PO Box 9064
Palmerston North 4441
New Zealand
ph. 06 357-4399
06 354-7699
barbara@hef.org.nz

