

Community Services Training
Package (CHC08)
CHC30708 Certificate III in Children's Services
Regionally Developed Assessment
(Validation pending)



ASSESSMENT FOUR	CLUSTER TWO – CARE FOR CHILDREN
Candidate name:	
Units of competency:	CHCCN302A Provide care for children CHCCN305A Provide care for babies

"Childcare for babies is 'abuse', says author Mem Fox "

From: *The Sunday Mail (Qld)*

Controversial ... prominent children's author Mem Fox says putting babies into childcare is a form of abuse.

- Author says babies shouldn't be in childcare
- Babies need time, not posh clothes, she says
- Career Mums slams comments as "irresponsible"

PUTTING babies into childcare is a form of abuse, leading children's author Mem Fox claims.

Ms Fox, a children's literacy advocate and author of the best-selling *Possum Magic*, said she believed society would look back on the trend of allowing babies only a few weeks old to be put into childcare and wonder, "How could we have allowed that child abuse to happen?"

"I just tremble," she said. "I don't know why some people have children at all if they know that they can only take a few weeks off work."

"I know you want a child, and you have every right to want a child, but does the child want you if you are going to put it in childcare at six weeks?"

"I don't think the child wants you, to tell the honest truth. I know that's incredibly controversial."

She said a Queensland childcare worker had told her earlier this year: "We're going to look back on this time from the late '90s onwards - with putting children in childcare so early in their first year of life for such long hours - and wonder how we have allowed that child abuse to happen".

"It's just awful. It's awful for the mothers as well. It's completely heartbreaking," Ms Fox said. "You actually have to say to yourself, 'If I have to work this hard and if I'm never going to see my kid and if they are going to have a tremendous stress in childcare, should I be doing it?'"

"Babies have much higher levels of stress in childcare."

Fox, 62, who has a daughter Chloe, 38, said parents were sometimes distracted by "the trappings" of having a baby, such as designer clothing and decorated nursery.

"When they have the good house, the good car, the good job - we're talking about very advantaged people - they have everything and they think, 'Now we need a baby which we can dress up and make look perfect'," she said.

"But do they realise that child needs love more than anything else in the world? It needs love, time and attention."

Reactions

The Australian Family Association (AFA) said it was "largely supportive" of her comments.

"She's right, large amounts of research are coming in showing that - particularly for children under two but also under three - childcare is generally likely to be harmful to them," AFA spokeswoman Angela Conway said, pointing to research from the US and UK.

The founder and director of Career Mums, Kate Sykes, slammed Ms Fox's comments as "irresponsible", saying many couples have no choice but to place their infant children into childcare.

"There's so many pressures these days on just being a good parent that having negative coverage on childcare like that is very frustrating for a lot of parents," she told AAP.

Career Mums is an online careers centre for working parents and also advises workplaces on retaining working parents.

Ms Sykes said there were some "really good childcare centres" that were "doing a huge amount" for children.

"Things are different these days," she said in response to the Ms Fox's comments.

Economic pressures

"Over 65 per cent of families have both parents working and ... for a lot of people it's not about choice, it's because they have to.

"They both have to be earning money to pay off the mortgage."

Ms Sykes, who has a two-year-old and a four-year-old, said they had been in part-time child care since about eight months of age and "I think it does amazing wonders for their social skills".

"I don't see anything that's gone terribly wrong putting them into child care," she said.

The AFA said the association was "largely supportive" of Ms Fox's comments but the language used was "perhaps a little bit unfair".

"Childcare is not a good place for babies and we support her in that but we know that many families have elected to put very young children and infants into childcare because of serious economic pressures and ... we need to face up to that."

Ms Conway also said the childcare sector employed "strong marketing strategies" to convince

parents children were better off in care "and large numbers of parents have been convinced that their children should be in childcare at least one day a week".

She said a solution to the problem was for the Government to redirect the money it provided to childcare providers to families so parents could afford to choose whether to remain at home or not, free of financial pressures.

A Federal Government census of childcare services released this year found 757 children were attending long day care services for at least 60 hours a week in 2006.

A further 9426 children were in care for between 50 and 59 hours a week.

An Australian study that measured levels of the stress hormone cortisol in more than 100 children in childcare found children in centres with lower standards became more stressed throughout the day.

- *With the Sunday Mail (QLD) and AAP*

Assessment Task # 4.1

You are a career mum that is comfortable leaving your baby in care. You believe that the centre provides quality care.

A mother from the local swimming program stated that babies should not be in childcare and that it is irresponsible for mothers to leave them at such an early age.

To convince other parents that children are better off in care you will debate the positives and negatives.

This task assesses CHCCN305A EI 1.1, 1.4, 1.5, EI 2.3, 2.4, EI 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.6

Evidence for assessment was: Satisfactory Not satisfactory

Feedback to candidate / Action required:

Assessor:

Signature: Date:

Candidate Signature: Date: