

Police seek childcare bonuses

POLICE are demanding bonus childcare subsidies so they can afford to hire nannies to cover their 24/7 shifts.

The Police Federation of Australia has warned that women are dropping out of frontline policing because they cannot find or afford conventional childcare. It says paying officers higher taxpayer rebates for childcare would still be cheaper than the \$150,000 cost of training a new recruit every time a mother quit the force. "Policing is an essential service," the federation has told the Productivity Commission's childcare inquiry.

"Women officers are not returning to frontline policing due to difficulties accessing appropriate forms of childcare.

"Frontline policing cannot afford to lose women."

The federation has proposed a "top-up subsidy" for police officers who hire nannies, arguing they are more likely than the "average worker" to need flexible childcare. "We believe there is a case for a police specific 'top-up' subsidy," its submission states.

Many police face inflexible work schedules ... they have

much less control over their working patterns compared with other occupations, leading many to pay an above-average price for childcare.

"It is essential that police are able to access the flexible and affordable models of childcare they need to do their jobs."

The federation says 27 per cent of police officers are female, and more than half of all police officers have dependent children. The Productivity Commission's draft report supports extending childcare subsidies to nannies, to make childcare more flexible for shift workers. The federation has told the commission police commanders have advised staff struggling with childcare to quit, or transferred them to another post. One policewoman was told she could work part-time only if she agreed to work every weekend.

The Australian Industry Group has told the inquiry that a lack of after-school care is "putting pressure" on employers. Schools should be required to set up facilities to care for children before and after school so their parents can work a full shift, the AIG has told the inquiry.

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16 Sep 2014 The Australian