

Dad or a DVD – No contest

Most kids would rather spend time with their mum and dad than get a new Playstation, DVD or 'cool stuff'.

It might come as a surprise but, in fact, mum and dad time wins hands down according to Australian researcher Barbara Pocock.

Dr Pocock is the Director of the Centre for Labour Research at the University of Adelaide and the author of a book on work-life balance, which she instead calls "The Work Life Collision".

She was in New Zealand recently for a conference on pay and employment equity and a series of workshops on labour issues, organised by the National Advisory Council on the Employment of Women (NACEW).

Dr Pocock has interviewed 100 Australians aged between 10 and 17 for a forthcoming book which looks at work-life balance issues from a kids' perspective. She said the young people particularly wanted to spend more time with their dads. She was surprised that older adolescent boys spoke openly about missing their dads and wanted to have more time just 'mucking around' with them.

The young Australians she interviewed weren't blaming their dads for working hard but said it created distance between and that they didn't want to be like that when they became fathers.

Dr Pocock says she concluded from her research that perhaps too much time is spent on debating whether or not mothers should work rather than looking at what is happening to fathers.

Dr Pocock's findings provide more weight to the debate about work interfering with the amount of time parents and children have to spend time together. A survey carried out by the EEO Trust in 2003 found that 80% of fathers want to spend more time with their kids.

Work Life Balance is getting harder – and what to do about it

At a seminar in Wellington, Dr Pocock outlined why she believes the work life collision has come about and gave a ten point plan of what she needs to be done.

She identifies the 'collision' as being made up of:

- Changes at work
- Changes at home
- Not enough change in institutions
- Not enough change in dominant cultures

And what to do about it? Dr Pocock's solutions:

1. An improved leave regime
2. De-casualisation of 'permanent casual' jobs
3. Improved quality, accessible, affordable childcare
4. Better 'transition points' between care/work/types of jobs
5. Reduced hours of work and overtime
6. More flexibility in work regimes
7. New *cultures* for 'proper mothers', 'proper fathers', 'proper workers'
8. Shared domestic work and unpaid care
9. Improved family payments system: fairer and more effective
10. Decent minimum standards – via awards and legislation – to give all workers/carers fair leave, employment security and quality part-time work.

For more information on Dr Pocock, check out the following link:

<http://www.arts.adelaide.edu.au/socialsciences/people/gls/bpocock.html>

For more information on "The Work Life Collision", check out the following link:

<http://www.fedpress.aust.com/Books/Pocock.htm>