

More answer call of the workforce but Australia still lags

Hold that job for the new mum

VANESSA MARSH

NEW mums are returning to the workforce at an unprecedented rate, more than 75 per cent of them to their previous jobs.

But industry experts say Australia still has a long way to go to catch up to other developed countries, because high childcare costs and lack of employer flexibility are keeping many mums out of work.

New ABS data examining pregnancy and employment found that fewer women permanently left their pre-baby jobs last year, with 77 per cent keeping the same roles in 2017 – up from 71 per cent in 2011.

In a positive development, a higher proportion of those are now also returning to work with the same responsibilities, up from 59 per cent in 2011 to 65 per cent in 2017.

University of Queensland senior research fellow Michelle Brady said Australia had a lot of work to do to increase workforce participation rates among mothers.

"Because of the way our tax system and childcare subsidy system is set up, there's not really that incentive or support for women to go back to work," Dr Brady said.

"It's still common for women to be moved into less fulfilling roles after parenting leave or not be allowed to do as fulfilling work when they return on part-time hours.

"Australia has a long way to go and the overall picture is we're not making much progress at all. We really need to look at what other countries are doing and to work harder, otherwise it's going to be a very long time until we have greater equity."

Brisbane's Alexandra Marron is one of the many Queensland mums continuing to work after the birth of a child.

She took 12 months off from her marketing and communications job when she had first baby, Mia, almost two years ago.

She has now just started a second stint of maternity leave for her second baby and said she would head back to the same job after her leave.

"It is a privilege to have that time off with your child because you're never going to get this time back," Ms Marron said.

"I know my husband is jealous of the time I get to spend with our daughter and he wishes he had more of it, so I know that I'm in a privileged position to be able to have that time with her, but then also go back to a supportive workplace as well."

Ms Marron said she had never considered not returning to work.

"I've been building on my career for a good 12 years or so before I had Mia and my career is something that has always, and will continue, to be important to me."



IT WORKS: Alexandra Marron with daughter Mia, 2. Picture: Annette Dew

Driven into the drink

AN ALLEGED drink driver crashed a car into a pond behind a Gold Coast shopping centre yesterday morning.

Police were notified at 6.54am that a car had crashed into a pond behind the Helensvale Westfield shopping centre.

The female driver allegedly blew over the limit during a roadside breath test.

Police shared a photo of a small section of car surfacing from the water with the caption "Police are on scene at Helensvale where an alleged drink driver has driven her car into the drink aka a pond #worstplanB".

Labor wary on GST plan

OPPOSITION Treasury spokesman Chris Bowen will not commit to backing the proposed \$7.2 billion GST reforms which include \$518 million for Queensland.

The Turnbull Government last week announced a shake-up of the GST funds to the states, including benchmarking its distribution to the performance of NSW or Victoria.

Mr Bowen said that the Government should provide guarantees that its proposed top-up payments would continue, and that states would not lose money from another area of funding.

Two blazes in one year

THE operators of a large recycling plant in Melbourne say they are concerned that a second blaze in a year started at the site, and will work closely with investigators to determine the cause.

Bales of recycled material at SKM Recycling in Coolaroo began smouldering on Saturday night. It was extinguished just before midnight. Surrounding suburbs were warned of smoke.

Almost a year ago a major blaze at the plant burned for 11 days. It cost at least \$4 million to remove 30,000 tonnes of burnt waste from the site.



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