

# PERSONAL OZ

## Work & Family



**HOME TRUTHS**  
**CHIP**  
**LE GRAND**

IN a dank, hole-in-the wall office buried in the foundations of Melbourne's Flinders Street Station there sits unclaimed, abandoned and in some cases altogether forgotten stuff that people have left on trains.

Backpacks and brief cases, umbrellas and coats, every article testament to a heartening yet sad truth: people are more kind than we think.

I discovered this place the other morning after what had been a wretched start to the day. Cold and raining. The kids were late out of the house and the train later still. Each passing stop on the way to work, another email arrived demanding more things be done. The only good feeling I had was the warmth of virgin wool snug on my head: a black driving cap I'd just bought to solve the middle-aged, bald bloke's dilemma of how to protect your scone from the elements with something other than a beanie.

It's a beaut cap, if a little pricey. Fully lined, made in Italy. Not a cap to be flipped backwards, like some Kangol-sporting wannabe gangster, but a gentleman's cap that can top off a suit and still do the job at St Kilda games.

Anyway, by the time the train pulled in to Flinders Street, I was mildly harried. The train was crowded, the platform slick with rain. I grabbed my bag and umbrella and braced for the walk across the Southbank bridge.

Over the bridge, past the smells of fresh coffee and stale Guinness, I made it as far as the front door of the office before realising my head was unadorned. A panicked search of my bag, then the sickening realisation. My new, beaut cap, gone. Bigger if I hadn't taken it off and left it in the train. Back down the lift, past the cafes and Irish pub, across the bridge, resisting the urge to call my wife and cry.

The train I'd come in on was long gone and with it, my cap. I imagined it halfway to Frankston, crammed in some school-wagging teenager's bag or worse — discarded on the floor of the carriage, trodden on by wet shoes. A sad, sodden flat cap, never to be worn again.

My mood as black as the cap that briefly warmed by head, I sought directions to the lost and found. I didn't expect it to be there, of course — platform staff are flat-out dealing with delays and confused tourists and what commuter would interrupt their morning rush to rescue someone else's stuff? But I figured that so long as I was here, I may as well leave my number in the unlikely event it turned up.

The lost and found was at the opposite end of the sprawling station, up one escalator, down another, halfway down a platform and through the Myki gates to a metal-shuttered kiosk. I approached the window. Before I could open my mouth my jaw had dropped. There was my cap, sitting on the counter. In my world, the rain stopped, the sun came out and a beautiful rainbow stretched over the beautiful people of Melbourne; especially the beautiful soul who had found my cap and carried it the breadth of Flinders Street Station to safe keeping.

I told the woman in the kiosk I didn't think people bothered returning things anymore. She smiled and gestured to the floor-to-ceiling rack jammed with bags and bits. If only the owners had enough faith in human nature to visit to lost and found. We sell ourselves short, sometimes.

I headed into work, over the wind-torn bridge, with a warm head and wide smile. When I told my wife that night, she said the person who found it probably thought the cap belonged to a 90-year-old man and couldn't stand the thought of a frail, aged fellow shuffling bare-headed through another Melbourne winter.

Perhaps that's true. But not even aspersions about my fashion sense could dampen my mood. Not knowing who performed this small act or why makes it all the more special, just like my cap. My lucky cap.

### Some women are pushing back against workplace assumptions that harm their careers

NATASHA ROBINSON

IT might well be called the double-glazed glass ceiling. While simply being female can restrict a woman's salary, the impact of having children on career advancement can be just as great.

Those who return to work part-time — the vast majority of mothers — frequently face silent assumptions that thwart ambition and depress earning capacity. Even those women who return to work full-time after having children can struggle to shake off the motherhood perception that is well documented in social research: they are seen as warm and approachable, but less competent at work than childless women. Promotions, and pay rises, pass working mothers by. It's an epidemic of underemployment, and it comes as a rude shock to ambitious women.

It's known as the motherhood penalty and it's increasingly being recognised as the major factor that amplifies the already large gap in pay equity that exists between women and men. It begins as soon as a pregnancy becomes visible, when women are immediately perceived to be "less committed to their roles, less authoritative, less dependable, more emotional and more irrational" than other female employees, according to *Parenting, work and the gender pay gap*, a perspective paper recently published by the federal Workplace Gender Equality Agency.

The penalty increases when parental leave begins, and becomes more punishing the longer the leave. It is estimated that women who return to work after 12 months of parental leave are subject to an average wage penalty of 7 per cent. But despite working hard at re-establishing themselves in the workplace, the penalty only increases as time goes on, extending to 12 per cent over the year after returning to work. Mothers' relative earnings reduce with each additional child. The outlook is depressing: "The human capital and earnings disadvantages that women incur at this point in their lives are rarely,

BY THE NUMBERS

Five personality traits that improve as we age

SOURCE: WSJ

CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

Organised, consistent, dependable

Increases as we become more invested in career and relationships.

AGREEABLENESS

Polite, trusting, prefers co-operation over competition, compassionate

Increases to meet expanding expectations of colleagues and family.

OPENNESS

Intellectually curious, inventive, sensitive to art and beauty, imaginative

Remains constant or decreases, but many of us work to develop this trait.

EXTROVERSION

Talkative, sociable, assertive, socially dominant

Diminishes as people work on maintaining relationships rather than seeking new ones.

NEUROTICISM

Worrying, stressed, feeling sad and anxious, moody

Tends to diminish as we learn to deal with strong emotions and avoid unpleasant situations.

# THE MOTHERHOOD PENALTY



Jane Wright, with Ben, 2, and Lauren Barel, with Cameron, 3, set up their own law firm after motherhood

RENEE NOWYTARGER

if ever, able to be recouped later in life," is the assessment of the WGEA. The cumulative loss of earnings after motherhood becomes irreversible.

For fathers, the opposite is true. Becoming a father is associated with "stronger career growth and higher pay compared to childless men". Working fathers are more likely to be hired, and more likely to be promoted. Yet fathers are reluctant to request flexibility in the workplace, fearful of being perceived as lacking career commitment.

We have a long way to go in managing the demands of a family without putting a career on ice, says WGEA director Helen Conway.

"The consequences are these: that if women choose to work part-time, more commonly than not they will work in jobs that aren't fully utilising their skills,

and they will be in a position where they won't be given the opportunity to get extra training and development and be promoted. It really is what we describe as the motherhood penalty."

Lawyers Jane Wright and Lauren Barel had for five years been managing a highly successful job-share in a top-tier city law firm before hitting exactly the kind of roadblock described by Conway.

The ambitious mothers — Jane has three young children and Lauren two — had established themselves back at work after the births of Jane's youngest, Ben, now 2, and Lauren's youngest, Cameron, 3, when they decided to push for a joint promotion.

"It never even crossed our minds that we couldn't be pro-

moted as a team," Wright says. "We had been working in a job share for so long and the feedback had been so positive from clients and partners."

But well into the application process, the lawyers were told that promotions were only awarded individually and that the women would have to compete against one another for a more senior role.

"It was very surprising," Wright says. "They had been extremely supportive of the job share, they had very generous maternity leave policies — we were like their poster girls for flexible work."

"But it soon became apparent that when it comes to promotion, that's when everyone starts

By the numbers

- Raising children accounts for an average 17% loss in lifetime earnings for women
- As a percentage of the labour force, 44% of women and 16% of men work part-time
- 84% of women who have a child under two years old work part-time
- 86% of men who have a child under two years old work full-time
- The hourly earnings of part-time employees were 25% less than full-time employees, a British study found

SOURCE: WORKPLACE GENDER EQUALITY AGENCY

essentials

CARS

A BUNCH of BMW apprentices in Germany has made a one-off Mini ute out of the Paceman model, allowing yet another variant of the fashionable runabout. They took a two-door Paceman and closed the passenger compartment behind the front seats, remaking it with a load tray and drop-down tailgate. Off-road tyres, a roof rack with a bank of lights and green duco complete the look. The **Paceman Adventure** uses the 135kW turbocharged four-cylinder engine from the Cooper S model, with drive to all four wheels.

PHILIP KING

TEENS

TEETOTAL teenagers are trending. According to the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, the proportion of adolescents who do not drink increased from 33 per cent in 2001 to just over 50 per cent in 2010. "The trend towards alcohol abstinence among Australian adolescents could have something to do with deep cultural beliefs, increased social concerns about young drinkers and subtle changes in immigration," says the centre's Michael Livingston. Separate research from the University of Western Australia Business School shows that **teenage binge drinking** is in fact influenced by the attitudes and behaviours of older adults, who have the opportunity to be positive role models.

SEAN PARNELL

GADGETS

GETTING children to brush their teeth can be tough work. Thankfully help is on the way in the form of Grush — short for "gaming toothbrush". It's a **wireless-connected child's toothbrush** with motion sensing technology that displays brushing action through an Android and iOS smartphone app. Grush includes games that should appeal to kids. In one game, it shows a monster lurking above certain teeth on the phone. The child is coaxed into brushing there to wipe the monster out, before it appears elsewhere, above some other neglected tooth. In another game, a child's brushstrokes are translated into the baton movements of an orchestral conductor. The toothbrush also connects to the "Grush cloud" via the app. It stores detailed brushing and motion information. Children get rewards and parents can access a child's brushing history. In addition, a dentist can view the history of how often a child brushes particular teeth, and take corrective action. Grush is an Indiegogo.com crowd-sourcing project that so far has raised \$US19,000 (\$20,500) out of its \$US50,000 target. Grushes are not cheap. Each will cost about \$US70 with two replacement brushing heads included. But repeated trips to the dentist can be expensive, too.

CHRIS GRIFFITH

TRAVEL

THE Danes are masters of form and function so it's little surprise they've taken the hassle out of traipsing from museum to museum in **Copenhagen**. The city's new **Parkmuseerne precinct** combines six museums in one garden trail. Check out the crown jewels at Rosenborg Castle then go next door to see the world's largest meteorite at the Natural History Museum. Close by are the National Gallery of Denmark, David Collection and Hirschsprung Collection, plus the Filmhouse cinema. A Parkmuseerne ticket (\$195 kroner, or \$39), launching on May 24, offers access to all venues. parkmuseerne.dk

MICHELLE ROWE

CHORES

CAN'T get the kids to clean up? It's all in the grammar. US researchers recommend nouns over verbs when parents want to motivate children in housework. Two experiments, involving about 150 kids aged 3-6, began with pep talks about helping out. One used a verb — "some children choose to help" — while the other referred to being "helpers". The second group was more likely to stop playing and help out when they were invited to pack away toys. "Using the noun may send a signal that helping implies something positive about one's identity," says University of California's Christopher Bryan.

JOHN ROSS

### IN PERSONAL OZ TOMORROW

#### FOOD & TRAVEL

## Max Allen goes to wine and drawing school

