

Motherhood last on list

By Brad Crouch

GROWING numbers of women are putting childbirth last on their "must do" list as children run last to career, travel, education, financial security and socialising, new research indicates.

A social shift has seen more women wanting to achieve their goals in order rather than trying to juggle commitments such as career, children and financial security.

As a result many are prepared to delay childbirth until they are closer to menopause than puberty.

A study by Griffith University psychology researcher Melissa Beit surveyed 127 childless women aged between 19 and 44.

It found 82 per cent were pre-

Women seek social shift

pared to delay bearing their first child until they were 35 or older while a third were prepared to wait until they were more than 40.

Many blamed the financial burden and concern about their jobs as reasons for postponing children.

Ms Beit noted the delay put women at a higher risk of medical problems with pregnancies.

"Given the preparedness of women to postpone childbearing beyond a safe age, efforts must be made to educate the community about the potential consequences," she said.

"Women today still want to fit everything in but unlike the

superwoman ideal of the 1980s many are attempting to do this by achieving their goals sequentially.

"Ultimately this means leaving childbearing until last."

Many women in the study were distressed by the idea of time running out and feared they would only reach a stable relationship once it was "too late" to have children.

They were also distressed by the social stigma, citing hurtful, tactless or frustrating comments from family, friends and colleagues.

Many women said they wanted to travel, study or socialise unimpeded by children, with a

strong desire to "fit in everything" because of the fear "life ends after children".

"An essential part of such a view is the ability to delay childbearing to a convenient time," Ms Beit said.

"The unfolding tragedy of our time is that the convenient time might never arrive or might arrive too late."

Most of the women expressed a desire for more open discussion of the issue and wanted changes to prevent professional, personal and financial penalties for having children.

There was strong concern about becoming isolated, financially insecure and unemployable if they have children.



□ THE Griffith University study comes amid the push for paid maternity leave and as fertility rates drop to an all-time low of 1.7 births a woman.

□ IN 1990 in South Australia 205 women aged in their 40s gave birth, but that rose to 550 women a decade later.

□ MEDICAL advances also have played a role in women having babies later in life, and new techniques such as making eggs dormant in ovaries are expected to prolong fertility by at least 10 years.

Horse sense

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Photograph courtesy The Advertiser

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Temp staff demand increase

By Hannibal Rossi

DEMAND for temporary administrative staff in South Australia is accelerating in the lead-up to the end of the financial year.

Adelaide human resource firm Entree Recruitment said increasing numbers of temps are making a career out of changing jobs every few weeks on the back of this trend.

Key industries taking on the most temps include financial services, health and community services, mining and manufacturing.

Secretaries and personal assistants were thriving on the challenges that temp assignment offer, according to Entree general manager Nicole Underwood.

"A temp secretary could earn the same amount or more than a permanently employed secretary in 10 months," Ms Underwood said.

Temping suited administrators at any age from newcomers keen to gain experience rapidly to mothers wanting flexible working arrangements, she said. Her company has initiated a loyalty scheme where its temp pool accrues

points for every hour they work on their assignments and are rewarded with CDs and retail vouchers.

Many workers on Entree's database are career temps, according to its consultant Zoey Shearer, who matches staff to employers.

"Over the past few months we've more than doubled the number of temps on our books due to employer demand and the volume of people seeking flexible and rewarding working arrangements," she said.

Hender Consulting's Bernadette Dyer said about 40 per cent of the workforce was now employed on part-time, temporary or casual basis.

"Employers often want to manage peaks and troughs in their workloads without committing to permanent staff," she said.

Entree temp Helen Hanson, 53, said she had worked for much of her 36-year administrative career on that basis.

"In the early days a secretary worked one on one with a manager; these days you work more for a team," she said.

□ My Career, Page 114

Cattle hurting ozone layer

BRISBANE: Cattle are environmental vandals belching and passing 60 million tonnes of methane each year that is threatening the fragile ozone layer, researchers say.

By comparison, kangaroos seldom break wind - a characteristic scientists attribute to a microbe that marsupials carry in their stomach.

After studying their entrails, researchers with the Queensland Department of Primary Industries believe the microbe may help fight global warming.

Auction feature at dinner

THE Helpmann Academy's Maestros and Apprentices Black Tie annual dinner will be held on Friday, June 14.

The famous art auction again will be held on the night and features artwork by international artist Tom Cleghorn and Oscar-winning director Scott Hicks.

Tickets for the Adelaide Convention Centre event are \$140 including food, wine and entertainment.